

## Expert Panel on Cities

*"This month we are celebrating 100 years since Andrew Fisher formed the world's first majority Labor Government. One of Fisher's legacies for Australia was the transcontinental railway. ... We are focusing on our cities – on their critical infrastructure and planning needs. This is greenfield work addressing national challenges – the growing cost of urban congestion, declining housing affordability, a changing climate, a growing, ageing population. We cannot address them unless we work together – all levels of government, the private sector and the community. This week, the Government announced the membership of the Expert Panel to guide the review of capital city strategic planning systems. The Expert Panel will be chaired by Brian Howe, former Deputy Prime Minister and urban policy pioneer. The Deputy Chair Lucy Turnbull, a former Lord Mayor of Sydney who brings her hands on experience to the table. And the other members are Rod Pearce, Jude Munro, John Denton, Sue Holliday, Duncan MacLennan and Meredith Sussex. Geoff Gallop, Deputy Chair of the COAG Reform Council, will also play an important role linking the Reform Council with the panel. This formidable team sends a clear message – we are in the business of improving our cities."*

**Ref: Anthony Albanese, Federal Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, 22/6/10**

## City Congestion

*"The Lord Mayor [of Sydney, Clover Moore] describes the current situation on Sydney's roads as unsustainable and says part of the solution to climate change is electric vehicles and other sustainable initiatives like car sharing. 'Each day more than 700,000 cars travel throughout the Sydney Local Government Area, significantly contributing to smog, greenhouse gas pollution, congestion and noise'."*

**Ref: James Rowe, Reportage Enviro, 30/6/10**

*"A new report by Infrastructure Australia that ... recommends governments consider 'congestion charges' – such as London's toll to enter the CBD - to pay for transport projects. While conceding congestion charges might be unpopular with road users in the short term, Infrastructure Australia said they should be given serious consideration and 'will be necessary if the required investment in road and public transport infrastructure is to be delivered'."*

**Ref: David Rood, The Age, 3/7/10**

## Adelaide Rail Freight Movement Study

*"The Adelaide Rail Freight Movement Study [is] one of the most comprehensive reviews into the rail infrastructure needs of the Adelaide region. The [\$3 million] Study's key finding is that the existing line will have the capacity to handle the expected freight traffic up until at least 2025."* **Ref: Federal Government Media Release, 22/6/10**

Article you won't see this week:

### **\$3 Million Provided to Investigate Fast Ferries**

*'The study will explore options for increasing the efficiency and capacity of the freight network right around Port Phillip Bay. It will inform governments and industry on ways to improve the competitiveness of freight while minimising the impact on the community. There will be obvious benefits for commuters as well. This innovative study will provide a useful result.'*

## A New Era for Rail in the Yarra Valley

The first regular timetabled train service within the Yarra Valley in 30 years was launched this month at Healesville railway station with RM22 (pictured).

**Ref: Yarra Valley Railway Invite, July 2010**

**And Also:** The cover letter said: "... an invitation to celebrate a new error at the Yarra Valley Railway, the Opening of Train Passenger Services." – We hope not!



## Tearing Down Motorways (Part 4)

*"Also damaged in the Loma Prieta quake was the Central Freeway, which ran as a spur into the city. The thoroughfare was closed in 1992 and a few years ago rebuilt as a surface road named Octavia Boulevard. Though the boulevard is well-used, it's no more congested than the far larger highway that it replaced, showing that traffic responds the environment in which it is placed."*

**Ref: Yonah Freemark and Jebediah Reed, The Infrastructurist, 6/7/09**

[www.infrastructurist.com/2009/07/06/huh-4-cases-of-how-tearing-down-a-highway-can-relieve-traffic-jams-and-help-save-a-city/](http://www.infrastructurist.com/2009/07/06/huh-4-cases-of-how-tearing-down-a-highway-can-relieve-traffic-jams-and-help-save-a-city/)

*"I can honestly say that the teardowns are a great thing for the city. The end of Octavia Blvd is capped by a small park where the freeway once stood. The park is frequently packed by people of all ages. Not only that, but the Hayes Valley area has gone through a remarkable transformation into a more active community of San Francisco. The freeway pushed people away, the local central park invites people back – as far as the Ferry Building area. The former freeway served as a strong line of demarcation between the central city and its waterfront. People would hardly ever venture out to the water and look at the beautiful view of the Oakland-Bay Bridge or Treasure Island."* **Ref: 'Mojo', Comments, The Infrastructurist, 7/7/09**



**Before and After Case 4:  
San Francisco Central Freeway**

*"A cautionary note about the SF Central Freeway case: the 'boulevard' part of this project was oversold and may end up inciting more antipathy than it deserves. I voted many times to tear the old freeway down. And I think the replacement is a big improvement in terms of integrating traffic into a network of surface streets. Traffic flows as well as before under normal loads and much, much better during peak congestion because traffic can divert to other routes more easily. But the designers that envisioned a classic boulevard missed the mark. There simply is not enough room for what they designed. The result is misplaced pedestrian amenities too close to traffic, unwanted crossover between the local outer lanes and the inner travelling lanes. I think and hope the design can be fixed. But beware of overreaching design goals."* **Ref: 'KC', Comments, The Infrastructurist, 6/7/09**



*"What people often forget is that one major function of traffic congestion is that it encourages people not to drive, and thus choose public transit instead. Building more roads simply makes driving more appealing, and ultimately leads to more congestion in the long run."*

**Ref: Ben Ross, Comments, The Infrastructurist, 7/7/09**

*"Roads along the banks of the Seine built by former French president Georges Pompidou as part of the great 'expressway' program are to be closed after 43 years in an attempt to return them to their former 'beauty'. Paris mayor, Bertrand Delanoë – who introduced Paris-Plages, when the banks of the Seine become a temporary beach every summer – said that removing cars all year round from sections of the riverbank would help cut pollution and boost the capital's international standing. Up to 70,000 cars a day travel along the Seine's left bank and what is known as the Pompidou expressway - a dual carriageway along the right bank built in 1967. Pompidou was an avid motorist who once declared: 'The French love their cars'."*



*"But Mr Delanoë has declared war on the 'unacceptable hegemony' of cars, introducing new trams, bike and bus lanes and the popular Velib cycle rental scheme since taking office in 2001. The moves have been welcomed by most non-motorists but car and taxi drivers have complained that congestion has become intolerable. Undeterred, the mayor said he planned to pedestrianise a 2-kilometre stretch on the left bank ... 'The idea is to transform an urban auto-route into a living space with areas where there will be no cars', Mr Delanoë said."*

**Ref: Henry Samuel, UK Telegraph, 14/4/10**

➤ Now for Victoria Street, Melbourne!

## Transforming Portland, Oregon (Pt 3)

*"On August 19, 1969, because of the citizen outcry, Governor McCall instructed the Intergovernmental Task Force working on the issue to hold a public hearing on the future of Harbour Drive. [They] drafted three options:*

- *The original plan to widen Harbour Drive to six lanes in its current location, and straighten it.*
- *A cut and cover plan, which would under-ground Harbour Drive and build a park above it.*
- *A plan to widen Harbour Drive to six lanes and relocate it to Front Avenue, a block further from the riverfront.*

*"Because of the traffic engineers' objections, the Task Force did not even consider the option of closing Harbour Drive. State Highway Engineer Forrest Cooper said that would be totally impossible, because his projections showed there would be 90,000 trips per day in the corridor by 1990. On October 14, 1969, the Task Force held the hearing, which lasted an entire day. The headline in the Portland Oregonian the next day neatly summarized the testimony: 'Speakers Criticize Proposals of Waterfront Development Task Force'.*

*"Glenn Jackson, Chair of the Task Force, promised that the public's input would be taken into consideration before any final decision was made, and he admitted that the public clearly wanted to consider the possibility of completely eliminating Harbour Drive, wanted the state to hire independent professional consultants to work out a plan, and wanted the state to work more closely with the public. In November, 1969, as a result of this hearing, Governor McCall urged that a citizen's advisory committee be appointed to help plan the project. In December 1969 the 18 member citizens' committee held its first meeting, and it hired the independent consulting firm DeLeuw Cather & Company, San Francisco, to study Harbour Drive options.*

*"Once again, the traffic engineers said it was impossible to convert Harbour Drive to a park. DeLeuw-Cather recommended creating a couplet of two wide one-way streets to carry the Harbour Drive traffic: Harbour Drive would be replaced by a surface street carrying traffic in one direction, and Front Avenue (the next street up from Harbour Drive) would be made one-way to carry traffic in the other direction. Richard Ivey, a planning consultant based in Portland, disagreed with the DeLeuw-Cather recommendation. He argued that Front Avenue alone could carry the traffic if it had better traffic lights, a median, and repaving that would support truck traffic.*

*"Glenn Jackson, chair of the Governor's Task Force, was under pressure from Governor McCall to kill the DeLeuw-Cather Plan and replace Harbour Drive with a park. McCall was a steadfast environmentalist: two years before being elected, he had produced a documentary about the health of the Willamette River named Pollution in Paradise, and one of his goals as governor was to give the public more access to the river. On the day Jackson had to present a plan to the Portland City Council, he called Ivey to his office. He told Ivey that Portland Traffic Engineer Don Bergstrom was saying that closing Harbour Drive would back traffic up all the way to Lake Oswego. He showed Ivey an editorial in that day's Oregonian saying that it was impossible to close Harbour Drive, because the traffic engineers in Salem & Portland said it would not work. Then he shrugged and said he wanted to close the freeway: 'Hell, all I'm trying to do is help the Governor. My boys tell me that you can't close it. What are we going to do?'*

*"Jackson talked to Ivey for three hours, and then he had Ivey's plan for the road drawn up by the state's engineers. He presented the City Council with this plan and with Ivey's theory that, if the public was notified about the closure in advance, traffic would simply be diverted from Harbour Drive to parallel freeways with extra capacity. The council was convinced. The state began closing portions of Harbour*

Drive on May 23, 1974, after the Fremont Bridge would be completed to carry traffic to parallel roads. By the end of 1974, the entire road was closed and development of the park began. This park opened in 1978 and was renamed Tom McCall Waterfront Park in 1984.

"On the day Harbour Drive closed to through traffic, Ivey happened to run into Portland Traffic Engineer Don Bergstrom, who had said that closing the freeway was impossible. Bergstrom greeted Ivey by saying, 'Well, Dick, you must be a mighty proud fellow today'. Ivey asked why he should be proud: he had gone on to other things, and he was not even following the issue any longer. Bergstrom explained, 'They closed Harbour Drive today and there wasn't a ripple'."

{Continued in #163}

**Ref: Preservation Institute, 2007**

[www.preservenet.com/freeways/FreewaysHarbor.html](http://www.preservenet.com/freeways/FreewaysHarbor.html)

## EU Tyre Labelling

"From November 2012 all new tyres on sale in Europe will be classified and labelled for fuel efficiency, wet grip and noise performance. The labelling will be similar to that required for household appliances and potential buyers will be able to compare tyre characteristics before making a purchase. ... The tyre label will use classes ranging from best-performance, green 'A' class to worst red 'G' class. Besides indicating how much the tyre affects the car's fuel efficiency, it will also give information about its performance in wet conditions and its external rolling noise in decibels. From November 1, 2012, suppliers of tyres for passenger cars, light and heavy duty vehicles, C1, C2 and C3 tires, will have to inform consumers about fuel efficiency, wet grip and noise classes in any technical promotional material, including websites. Re-tread tyres, off-road professional tires and racing tires will be exempt from this requirement. All C1 and C2 tires produced after July 1, 2012 must either have a sticker or be accompanied by the label when distributed from the factory to a shop or a garage. Unlike household appliances, tyres are not always on display in the shops, so MEPs insisted that retailers be obliged to show the label to the buyer before the sale and also on, or with, bills.

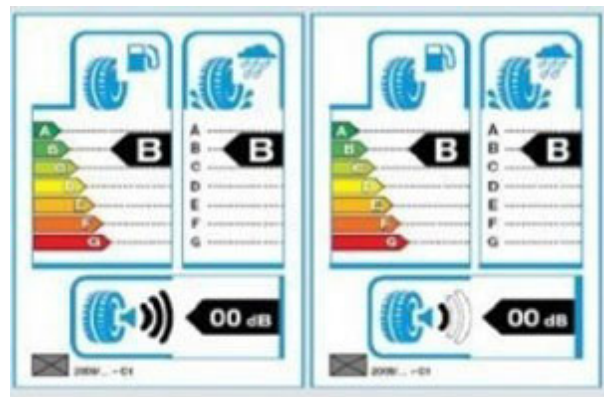
"To promote very quiet tyres, the [European] Parliament negotiated a re-design of the noise pictogram. The level of external rolling noise will be indicated by ascending numbers of black 'waves' emitted from the 'speaker'. Quiet tyres for cars, those producing noise below 68 decibels for example, will be labelled with one black and two white 'waves' next to the value in decibels. ... 'This is a typical win-win situation where consumers and fleet managers will be able to choose safer and low-noise tires and save on their fuel bills, while the European Union as a whole will benefit from reduced road transport emissions', says Energy Commissioner, Andris Piebalgs."

**Ref: Traffic Technology Today, 27/11/09**

## Problems with Tyres

"The former [Queensland] Environmental Protection Agency announced a blitz on illegal tyre disposal in 1998 and wrote to about 900 auto retail businesses warning them tyres were regulated waste. It came after complaints from waste contractors that motorists were paying millions of dollars in so-called environment charges to dispose of used tyres only for them to be illegally dumped."

**Ref: Brian Williams, Courier Mail, 11/5/10**



Some of the illegally dumped used tyres which pose an unacceptable fire risk and provide potential breeding grounds for mosquito larvae.

**Photo: The Courier-Mail**

## More on Traffic Lights

*"Research by British online used car retailer, Autoquake.com, has revealed that more than half of all UK drivers don't know the traffic light sequence. 1,000 drivers were asked to name the signal after amber. Just under half (48%) correctly chose red. Worryingly, nearly four out of ten (39%) thought an amber light was about to change to green. Almost one in ten (7%) expected a green and amber signal next, while 6% thought red and amber would appear. ... Welsh drivers were most disappointing, with only 40% expecting red to follow amber. Just 45% of Scottish drivers answered correctly. ... The first traffic lights were installed outside the Houses of Parliament on December 10, 1868. Semaphore-style arms were used in the day and gaslights at night. However, less than a month after being installed a gas lantern exploded. The more modern electric traffic light is an American invention and was first installed in Salt Lake City, Utah, in 1912."*

**Ref: Traffic Technology Today, 2/5/10**



## The Curse of Cars (Part 3)

*"The purported health cost caused by cars? Cars do not prevent people from exercising. In fact cars can enable people to exercise by been able to drive to a gym or sporting field or drive the kids to play soccer."*

**Ref: 'Anthony', Comments, SMH, 19/2/10**

*"I love this idea that 'you need a gym to exercise'. It sums up a lot of our societies problems. Reality Check: all you need to exercise is a working body and some self discipline. Feel free to try this at home: do some sit-ups and push-ups, then put on some shoes and walk around the block (or run if you are feeling energetic). Repeat daily. That's exercise. Cars have just let us build huge sprawling undisciplined urban landscapes that ultimately cannot be sustained without cheap oil. They are fun, but only necessary when you give your society no other option than to use them."*

**Ref: 'LS', Comments, SMH, 19/2/10**

*"My point is that cars add enormous benefits to us and Australia (which is why we use them to the extent we do) and these benefits should be considered in an article that outlines the negativities of high car usage. In relation to productivity the fact is that cars open up areas which we wouldn't otherwise be able to get to productively. They enable people living in areas to work in areas that would take too long on public transport. As to my comments on driving to the gym ... Not everyone lives within a few hundred metres of a gym or other sporting facilities. I am not anti-public transport (I get the train to work and do ride a bike) but I am sick of these anti-car activists who want to limit access to cars through policy measures higher petrol excises, more road tolls and congestion taxes and stopping land release for new housing and forcing people to move into more crowded housing, exaggerate the cost."*

**Ref: 'Anthony', Comments, SMH, 19/2/10**

*"Anthony, those 'new areas' only exist because of the car; true. Could we exist without those areas; true. The sprawling suburbs of the Hills District with circuitous roads, terrible public transport and horrendous congestion are proof that the 'miracle new areas' are only available because of the car and they are crippled by the car. After living in Shanghai for a bit over a month, and other cities in China for at least another month or so, I am yet to see many truly genuinely obese Chinese people in China. I have visited poor low-socioeconomic areas where the usual problems occur, but in comparatively rich, affluent areas of China, there are few obese people. Almost everyone walks, rides a bike, catches buses or trains. Australian and American societies are the typical 'sprawling car-dependent' suburb cultures and we have the very high rates of obesity. Cities in China, with increased density, comparatively low levels of car ownership, high public transport use or pushbike/scooter/mo-ped use from my own observations have very little obesity. It's not a big fancy empirical study; it's just cold simple observation. I'm not an 'anti-car' activist, but honestly our society needs to suck it up, lose the 1/4 acre-block fantasy, lose the 2.5 cars per home and get used to the future. Sydney will have 6mil people, we can't afford the costs (taxes, trains, petrol, lost time, poor health) of sprawling out city out further. Density is not our enemy; it will be our friends and a way to have communities again instead of sleeping-suburbs at the ends of highways towards working-suburbs. This is without worrying about what Peak Oil pricing might do to the cost of the car."*

**Ref: 'Andrew', Comments, SMH, 19/2/10**



*"It is simply not true to say that public transport can only work in very high density cities. Stockholm is a great example of a small city spread over many islands and with far greater complexities to solve than Sydney and it is about a quarter of the population numbers of Sydney. It's public transport is brilliant. It just takes brains to work it out and courage to do it!"*

**Ref: 'Lesm', Comments, SMH, 19/2/10**

## Giant Expressway Re-Routed

*"A Polish conservationist has won a key environment prize for leading a campaign that halted a giant expressway that would have sliced through one of Europe's last swathes of undisturbed wilderness. Malgorzata Gorska ... was recognised for her leadership in harnessing European Union regulations to stop the planned expressway from cutting through the Rospuda Valley, a pristine area in north-eastern Poland. ... Developers began plans in 1996 to build the Via Baltica that was to link Warsaw to Helsinki, Finland, by cutting through the Rospuda Valley. The highway has been rerouted to circumvent the pristine area. ... The EU, as a result of her campaign, filed suit against Poland's government in 2007, forcing it to suspend work until the court could examine the case. While the European Court of Justice did that, a Polish court found the route violated national laws, and in 2009 the Polish government gave up its plans to build the expressway through the valley."*

**Ref: AP, SMH, 20/4/10**

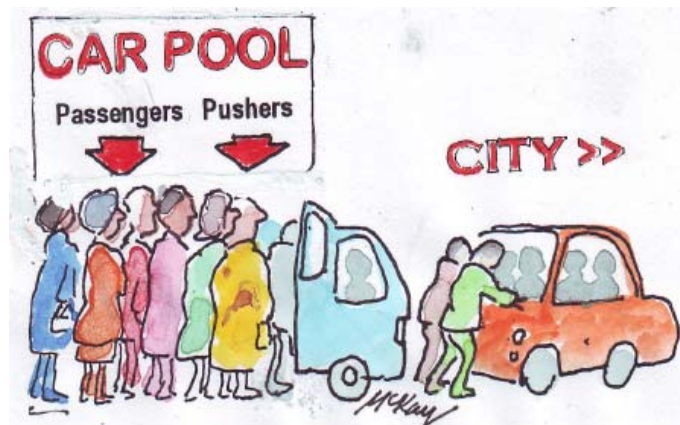


## Transition Towns

*"Sydney residents concerned about peak oil and government inaction on climate change are taking matters into their own hands, forming groups to turn their suburbs into low-carbon 'transition towns'. The movement, which began in the town of Totnes, in Devon, is called Transition Towns and aims to reduce reliance on global sources of energy and food. The Sydney umbrella organisation is now adapting the strategy - which evolved in British rural areas - to the needs of a large Australian city. 'The basic philosophy is working at the local level to build resilience', the co-founder of Transition Sydney, Peter Driscoll, said. 'It's getting off the global grid as much as possible'. 'Relocalising', or sourcing needs from within, can mean growing and sharing produce, car pooling schemes, forming insulation clubs, reuse and repair workshops, creating local currencies and barter systems."*

*"The first Australian Transition Town was established on the Sunshine Coast in 2007 and last year the hinterland town of Maleny introduced its own currency called the Baroon Dollar to encourage local buying. In Sydney the Transition Towns phenomenon is still at the embryonic stage, but chapters have started in places such as Surry Hills, Darlinghurst, Marrickville, Lane Cove, Bondi and on the northern beaches. 'In retrospect we [originally] fell into the same trap as everyone else, preaching doom rather than the solution' Mr Driscoll said. The focus of each Sydney group varies, from permaculture to reusing goods, trading skills, buying locally or collaborating with councils on sustainable living strategies. 'It's trying to bridge the gap between what might happen at the government level and what individuals are doing to reduce their energy consumption and live cleaner, greener lives', Mr Driscoll said. A member of Transition Marrickville, Michele Margolis, said Transition was about connecting city dwellers who shared the same sustainability goals but might be working on different projects. 'They're thinking in the same direction in terms of sustainability but they're only working in their own very narrow field'."*

**Ref: Cosima Marriner, SMH, 2/1/10**



**Circa 2020 - cars exercise people.**

## Urban Villages

*"We have become accustomed to alienation from neighbours and even family members and don't question the idea that each of us individually should be economically self-sufficient. But a sustainable locality can be a better place to live. Housing estates need to be replaced by small, multi-function villages. Think of the vitality of traditional European villages and small towns. Backyards can be shared rather than fenced. A neighbourhood can generate electricity, capture water and feed gardens. Sharing food surpluses is a great way to feel part of a neighbourhood and part of the earth. Local streets can become commons where children play safely among fruit trees. Primary schools have the potential to expand their role as community hubs by co-locating some essential everyday services nearby. Such an environment will make strip shops and parks viable again, and walking and cycling will be the normal form of transport. This fosters community connections, reduces environmental footprints and reduces how often and for how long we need to travel. A suburban street full of life and connections is safer. Connecting with neighbours and working and shopping locally can provide resilience in the face of the increasing costs and impact of energy, food and water scarcity."*

**Ref: Peter Cock, The Age, 26/4/10**

## Valuing Cyclists and Pedestrians

*"It is accepted as conventional practice in Australian Cities today that the majority of roads are vehicular driven. There are only a minority of streets where pedestrian and cyclists are valued as that of equal or above vehicles. This basic assumption of vehicular supremacy in street design should trigger traffic engineers to question whether this is really the best format for Australian cities. Especially when considering how to make cities greener, more efficient and exceptional environments for social interaction. Streets have great potential for social interaction & community building which benefits all of society. The questions that should be considered include: 'Who is adapting to whom – the City or the Vehicle?' And, 'Should vehicles really be given priority in Australian cities over pedestrians and cyclists?'"*

*"If pedestrians or cyclists were valued equally or higher than vehicles; the whole format of Australian cities could be transformed. In roads designed to equally value vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists; pedestrians could be empowered to capitalise on safe access to public transport which is a greener way for people to move around cities. One consequence of this change may be the transformation of our city format into linked sub-centres rather than one major centre with sprawling suburbs. These sub-centres could be composed of residential areas within walking or cycling distance to a centre of shops and entertainment facilities with public transport links to other sub-centres and the major centre."*

**Ref: Tamara Gough, The Flyer, 23/4/10**

[www.scapestrategy.com.au/anit-vehicular-supremacy/#more-503](http://www.scapestrategy.com.au/anit-vehicular-supremacy/#more-503)

## And Also ...

*"A planned naked bike ride [in Adelaide] to protest car pollution turned pedestrian when cyclists failed to fully disrobe. .... A heavy police presence – one officer for very two protesters – saw the 15 riders get on their bikes ..."*

**Ref: David Nankervis, Adelaide Now, 13/3/10**