

Governments Behaving Badly

"Governments across Australia are subsidising the motor-racing industry with hundreds of millions of dollars. We have seen critical auditor-general reports in Victoria, NSW, Queensland and the ACT. Victorians will cover an estimated \$50 million operating loss for this year's grand prix. But the many extra government subsidies are not exposed. For example, V8 Supercars Australia boasted it gained \$71 million last year from governments; Victoria has just signed a five-year contract with the same body – for how much, and is it coming from the secret major events budget? Economists across the political spectrum have said the grand prix brings no benefit to Victoria. Our Auditor-General had a similar conclusion, using an industry standard cost-benefit analysis and, further, found no evidence of an increase in tourists because we have a grand prix."

Ref: Peter Logan, The Age, 10/8/10

"The \$71m was reported in Carpoint.com.au and it appears The Age also obtained the same leaked document from V8 Supercars Australia. I note that the major events cap is now 'cabinet in confidence' (the Liberals' Louise Asher failed to find out how much is in the events budget) and wonder if there is more motor racing money in that budget as our payment to Ecclestone went down last year and we have just signed up V8 Supercars for five years. We'll find out in 30 years but the electoral cycle is four years."

Peter Logan, 10/8/10



"Ah, the smell of F1 fuel and taxpayers' dollars burning."

"A map submitted by the [Victorian] state government to Canberra for a freeway linking the Eastern Freeway with the Metropolitan Ring Road in Greensborough shows it next to the grounds of the Heide Museum of Modern Art in Bulleen. The map was included in a funding application for the \$6 billion freeway given to the Rudd government in November 2008. It was released to Greens MP Greg Barber by the Department of Transport after an 18-month court battle. Mr Barber, whose party could ask for the Transport Ministry if it wins the balance of power in November's election, said the freeway should not be built. 'For the price of this unnecessary road tunnel you could have world-class public transport across the whole eastern suburbs', he said. The freeway's route is identical to one outlined in government planning documents from 2001, which the government denied existed until they were revealed in a court case."

Ref: Clay Lucas, The Age, 31/8/10

Call for Investigation into PT Spending

"New railway stations priced at \$20 million each four years ago are now set to cost Victorian taxpayers \$55 million each, according to Public Transport Minister Martin Pakula. Mr Pakula has admitted in a statement to Parliament that the average expected cost of stations the government promised in 2006 at Lynbrook, Williams Landing and Cardinia Road in Pakenham had almost tripled. ... Opposition upper house MP Ed O'Donohue, whose electorate takes in the Cardinia Road station, said it was hard to see how the new stations would cost an average \$55 million each. 'The Pakenham site is just grass, the existing train line and not much else', he said yesterday. 'Even \$20 million for that in 2006 seemed high to me so this is just unbelievable'. ... 'The Department of Transport is out of control; they have no capacity to cost anything meaningfully', RMIT transport planner Dr Paul Mees said. 'There needs to be a royal commission into that organisation. How can these four new stations cost so much? There is no complex engineering required with any'.

"Public Transport Users Association president Daniel Bowen also said the estimate for the four new stations was 'ludicrously expensive'. Mr Bowen cited the single-platform Marshall station, near Geelong, which was built in 2005 for \$5 million, and which included a passenger shelter and ticket sales area, toilets, landscaping, a bus interchange and parking for 100 cars. 'How can the cost for Marshall be so different?' he said." "The cost of extending the Epping line four kilometres to South Morang would be about \$8 million, later revised to \$45 million. The South Morang extension, now due for completion in 2013, will cost \$650 million."

Ref: Clay Lucas, The Age, 19/8/10

On Light Rail for Brisbane

"The density argument is nonsense. There are many cities with densities well below that of Brisbane that carry respectable levels of passengers. The Sydney Light Rail service requires no passenger operating subsidy and the Dublin LUAS light rail service is running operating surpluses! The role of buses is to be a feeder service to railways and light rail. This way the strength of both modes can combine to work together. All busways should be examined for LRT conversion, as should all the BUZ routes. There should be a debate whether LRT should be above, below ground or a mix. The City of Ottawa, the busway model for Brisbane, is now converting their busway to Light Rail. ..."

"TransLink recorded, for all the buses, trains, ferries in 2008-2009 181.9 million passenger journeys over South East Queensland. Yarra Trams (27 tram lines + heritage tram line) recorded for the 2009-2010 year 180 million passenger journeys. The Melbourne Tram system is doing an excellent job. And it gets more interesting: Brisbane has just over 1000 buses, while Melbourne has about 500 or so trams. Brisbane transport has over 1700 drivers, while Yarra Trams has over 1150. So not only does Yarra Trams manage to carry well over twice the number of journeys than Brisbane's buses do, it manages to do so using half the number of vehicles and with less drivers than Brisbane does."

Ref: 'BrisUrbane', Brisbane Times, 17/8/10

<http://brisurbane.wordpress.com/2010/08/17/the-melbourne-tram-network> and
<http://brisurbane.wordpress.com/light-rail>

On Heavy Rail for SE Queensland

"A new rail line in Brisbane's north is a key component of a 20-year state government plan to encourage more commuters to use public transport. Premier Anna Bligh today announced the 15-kilometre link from Alderley to Strathpine as part of a pledge to triple rail users by 2031. The initiative also includes introducing high-speed trains between the Gold and Sunshine coasts and Brisbane. ... While rail services are at the centre of the strategy, Transport Minister Rachel Nolan today said the government's Integrated Regional Transport Plan would also establish new bikeways, a 'ring road' around Brisbane and a heavy investment in freight services. ... Premier Anna Bligh this morning said the government wanted trains and buses to arrive every 15 minutes making timetables redundant. She said new high-frequency, high-reliability services would operate along core rail and bus routes between 6am and 9pm, seven days a week."

Ref: Tony Moore, Brisbane Times, 31/8/10

Key initiatives in SEQ transport plan:

www.brisbanetimes.com.au/queensland/list-key-initiatives-in-20year-transport-plan-20100831-14a2i.html?rand=1283215616074

And Also ...

"The total weight of materials used for the Alice Springs to Darwin railway line was 2,800,000 tonnes - equivalent to 53 Sydney Harbour Bridges. If the rail track was not restrained, it could contract as much as 830m and expand as much as 340m as a result of the range of temperatures encountered over the length of the track. If the line were one degree off its planned bearings it would have finished either 2.5 kilometres in the sea or 2.5 kilometres inland from the Port of Darwin."

Ref: BlueScope Steel, On Track! August 2010



South-east Queensland's proposed 2031 rail network

EcoBus Trial in Sydney

"From next year, fuel-efficient hybrid EcoBuses will be trialled in Sydney in an effort to reduce NSW's carbon footprint. Two Australian companies - Bus and Coach International Pty Ltd (BCI) and Custom Coaches - will share a \$1 million tender awarded by the NSW government to build and trial the buses. Each company will use a different type of hybrid technology for its single prototype, which will be compared over a 12-month trial period starting in early 2011. The state is catching up to similar trials already undertaken by governments in Victoria and Queensland since July last year."

Ref: AAP, SMH, 7/8/10

> Seattle trialled at least six alternative fuels back in 2006 and as far as I know, that information is freely available. To mix a metaphor: how slowly the reinvented wheel turns!

Fixing Public Transport (Part 1)

"Peter Mares: *The problem with public transport, we're often told, is the shape of our cities: Australian sprawl is impossible to service effectively with trains and trams and buses. So we end up reliant on the car, and stuck in traffic.*

If only Australia's capitals were more compact, more closely settled, more ... I don't know ... European! Then we could really make mass transit work. Our next guest says this argument is bunkum, and just an excuse for doing nothing. He says we can have efficient public transport without rebuilding the 'burbs. ...

"Paul Mees: *Every single aspect of an urban region's public transport needs to be planned and organised from a central basis in order that all the different bits and pieces of the network can be fitted together so that essentially you can transfer from one public transport service to another in a way that's as if it was just turning from one road in a road system into another. Because what public transport needs to do, but usually fails to do, is to match the 'anywhere, any time' convenience that you get from a car. The only way it can actually do that is through interlocking the different routes and modes and lines to form a network that passengers then access through transferring.*

"Peter Mares: *So that means obviously having one ticket that you can use on the train or the tram or the bus or whatever other, perhaps the ferry of whatever other public transport technology might be employed, that's one part of it?*

"Paul Mees: *That's right, and transfers have to be free, it's not just about being able to do them on the same ticket, you shouldn't have to pay to transfer, because transferring is an inconvenience, and to be charged extra is really adding insult to injury to people.*

"Peter Mares: *And the other aspect is to have co-ordination, so that rather than I suppose your bus route mimicking your tram route, and being in competition with it, you have your bus route feeding your tram route, or feeding your trains, so that you have the system as a network...*

"Paul Mees: *Yes, well the traditional pattern in Australian cities, it varies a little bit, it's probably most extreme in Brisbane, possibly followed by Sydney, is for buses and trains in particular, compete with each other, instead of with the car. There are all sorts of theoretical economic arguments that can be presented in favour of doing that, but –*

"Peter Mares: *Competition being the main one I presume, competition is supposed to drive efficiency.*

"Paul Mees: *But in fact the evidence seems to be that you spread your patronage so thinly when you do that, that you're not able to offer high service levels, and all the different routes, the cross-city routes as well as the radial routes, the off-peak and weekend services, as well as the peak hour services, so what actually needs to happen is that the buses need to feed the trains and trams rather than duplicating them, and at the same time, fill in the gaps between trains and trams, like the cross-suburban trips and the areas that are beyond walking distance from stops and stations.*

"Peter Mares: *So instead of what we typically have as the series of routes coming into the city centre, that we know so well in Australia, you have those routes, but you have then more like a spider web.*

"Paul Mees: *Yes, that's right. In fact one of my pin-up public transport authorities from a little Swiss town called Schaffhausen actually uses the expression 'spider web' to try and explain what they're doing. The Australian pattern is for star-shaped or radial systems in which everything converges on the*

city centre, and if there are other services provided they're generally of such poor quality that they might as well not exist, and sometimes they don't.

"Peter Mares: And that means for example, as is the case where I live, if I want to go to a neighbouring suburb I actually have to go into the city and back out again.

"Paul Mees: Yes, indeed, and of course nobody who has the choice of using a car is going to put up with that. So the alternative is to use cross-suburban services which are either not there at all or kind of like, you know, once every half-hour and nothing at night or on the weekends, and that's the typical pattern in Australian cities, but it doesn't have to be like that. ..." {Continued in #171}

Ref: National Interest, ABC Radio National, 30/4/10

www.abc.net.au/rn/nationalinterest/stories/2010/2887416.htm

Congestion Charging for Delhi

"India's business newspaper, the Economic Times, has reported that before the 2010 Commonwealth Games, the Delhi Government is planning to begin levying a charge on motorists for driving in congested areas of the capital. Speaking at the discussion, 'Clean air before the Commonwealth Games' – organized by the Centre for Science and Environment – Delhi Environment secretary Dharmendra said: 'The step would help in controlling the number of vehicles in busy areas during the sporting event. There has been a quantum jump in the number of vehicles plying on roads in the capital in the past few years and such steps can help in checking inflow of vehicles on Delhi roads'. ...



"The Indian capital is among the most-polluted cities in the world, with over five million vehicles and another four million coming to the metropolis from towns in the national capital region in adjoining states. Many European countries already levy congestion charges on motorists. In London, for instance, motorists travelling within the Congestion Charge Zone in the city are required to pay £8 (US\$12) every day for each vehicle that travels within the zone between 07.00hrs and 18.00hrs (Monday-Friday). The charge aims to reduce congestion and raise investment funds for the transport system."

Ref: Traffic Technology Today, 11/5/10

Whisky and Go

"A new whisky-based biofuel that can power cars has been developed by scientists in Scotland. Researchers found a formula to make the fuel from whisky by-products ... Professor Martin Tangney, director of the Biofuel Research Centre at Edinburgh Napier University, said: 'The EU has declared that biofuels should account for 10% of total fuel sales by 2020. While some energy companies are growing crops specifically to generate biofuel, we are investigating excess materials such as whisky by-products to develop them. This is a more environmentally sustainable option and potentially offers new revenue on the back of one of Scotland's biggest industries'. The drink-it-then-drive-it research was based on technology once used to manufacture explosives during WWI and WWII. However, there is no confirmation yet that it will make your car go like a rocket."

Ref: James Mathews, Sky News, 17/8/10

And Also ...

"Mailing an entire building has been illegal in the U.S. since 1916 when a man mailed a 40,000-ton brick house across Utah to avoid high freight rates."

Ref: PIA Victoria Weekly Bulletin, 11/6/10

The Benefits of Light Rail (Part 2)

"Light rail also has the potential to stimulate associated investment activity, such as urban renewal projects and residential and commercial development, often in areas that were previously inaccessible or unviable. The longevity, durability and branding appeal of light rail infrastructure sends a positive message to planners and developers. Light rail is also seen to have a positive effect on property values. The table below shows the increased value of various properties within 800 metres of a light rail system over and above the value of comparable properties beyond this proximity."

Premium value of properties within 800m of light rail			
Property	Location	Distance from Station	Premium
House	St Louis	30m	32%
Apartment	Santa Clara County	400m	45%
Office	San Jose	400m	120%
Retail	Dallas	400m	30%

"The question is, how can we move away from the current, disjointed transport system – buses running for bus customers, trams for tram customers etc – to a system where people are mobility customers, who want a system that serves their mobility needs in the best possible way, and doesn't destroy the city in the process. We have to learn to provide better, more integrated transport in the low density cities that we have, much like Europe has."

Ref: Nicholas Low, Greenfleet eNews, 5/7/10

"This premium value paves the way for transit oriented development strategies, which increase both density along light rail corridors and increase patronage – improving the cost benefit of the system. This type of development can lead to urban renewal and improve liveability. The Victorian Government recently identified tram corridors as key areas for infill development in its Melbourne @ 5 Million plan."

"With this in mind, there is also opportunity to use light rail in major redevelopments of inner urban areas, such as Barangaroo in Sydney. Incorporating light rail into the planning phase enables the usual problems of competition for road space and signal priority to be mitigated prior to construction, creating greater efficiency once the operation commences. By encouraging increased investment, economic activity and higher returns for property owners, light rail is a sound plan for existing medium to high density areas and a sensible transport option for targeted areas requiring urban renewal."

"Good light rail systems have an 'iconic' value that is attractive to tourists as well as commuters and residents. Whereas bus routes can be difficult for domestic and international visitors to negotiate, light rail networks are often perceived to be simpler and more reliable, largely owing to the fact that routes are permanent and highly visible. Transport is a key element in the visitor experience and an efficient public transport system can significantly enhance a city's reputation among travellers. In addition, a strong light rail brand can be incorporated into tourism marketing campaigns and information material. Melbourne's world-class tram system is integral to its image as a sophisticated, 'liveable' destination; it is one of the city's tourism signatures."

"Light rail is an energy-efficient and sustainable form of transport with a number of environmental advantages over modes powered by internal combustion engines. In particular, electricity to power light rail can be generated at a distance from the urban environment – meaning greenhouse gas emissions are taken away from the point of operation. There is also considerable scope to run light rail on electricity generated from renewable sources. A number of overseas light rail systems are powered entirely by renewable energy, including the Tenerife network in Spain and the Calgary network in Canada. Furthermore, the introduction of light rail in multiple transport networks has resulted in a significant modal shift, reducing the environmental impact of congestion. A review of new light rail systems in the United States and United Kingdom by Parsons Brinckerhoff found up to 20 per cent of the light rail market previously used cars for travel."

"Improved public transport encourages interaction between communities and individuals and attracts skilled workers. Light rail improves liveability and amenity by attracting investment along routes. A recent study of resident attitudes and travel behaviour in Salt Lake City, Utah found that light rail commuters have more healthy walking habits, lower car use, lower prevalence of obesity, higher place

attachment and neighbourhood satisfaction, and are more positive about transit-oriented development. In addition, light rail commuters report that light rail enhances city liveability.” {Continued in #171}

Ref: Tourism and Transport Forum Position Paper, March 2010

See full report at:

<http://www.ttf.org.au/DisplayFile.aspx?FileID=762>

And Also ...

“A Queensland woman says there is fat chance she'll fly with Jetstar again after she claims she was discriminated against for being overweight. Samantha Scafe, an IT expert who weighs 160kg, said she was forced to pay for a second seat for herself for a flight from Cairns to Coolangatta today – and discovered the seats weren't even next to each other!”

Ref: Courier Mail/Cairns Post, 3/2/09

More on Business Transport Decisions

“Here are some simple examples that could be implemented in your workplace:

- *Install video, web or tele-conferencing.*
- *Allow staff to work from home or offer flexible working hours.*
- *Install shower and change room facilities.*
- *Move the business to a location with good public transport access.*
- *Start a car pooling program.*
- *Alter freight delivery times and adjust freight loads.*
- *Undertake a vehicle needs analysis and make sure vehicle maintenance is up-to-date.*
- *‘Green’ the fleet and teach staff about eco driving*

“By taking up more sustainable transport options in your business you can help reduce Australia's overall transport footprint, benefit your bottom line and make the workforce healthier.”

To help your organisation reduce its transport.”

Ref: Greenfleet News, 18/8/10 See their Guide:

http://www.greenfleet.com.au/library/scripts/objectifyMedia.aspx?file=pdf/9/56.pdf&siteID=1&str_title=Sustainable%20Transport%20Guide.pdf

Counterpoint on Counterpoint

“I can't let Mark Broadly's comments {in #169} go unanswered. I will not attempt to cover the reasons why public transport is important but rather suggest to Mark that presently he is a very fortunate person. There are many people in our society who cannot paddle a kayak, or ride a bike, or drive a car. The reasons that some people have to rely on public transport include:

- *some are too young to drive a car;*
- *some are too old;*
- *[some] are disabled [and can't drive]; and*
- *some cannot afford to own a car.*

“How fortunate you are Mark that you don't fall into any of these categories ... yet! And when you do need public transport I do hope that it is there for you. Some people actually choose public transport despite owning a car. I will leave the reasons aside and again suggest that Mark is fortunate to be physically, mentally and financially able to travel ... in his car.”

Andrew Blair, 24/8/10

Bus Lanes and Politics in Auckland

“Auckland City Council's policy of fining motorists \$150 for driving more than 50m in a bus lane is not supported by more than half the wider Auckland population, according to a Herald-DigiPoll survey. ... The backlash against bus lane infringements has spilled over into the Super City elections after it was revealed that Auckland City Mayor and Super City mayoral candidate John Banks and his Citizens & Ratepayers allies set out to raise \$12 million more in bus lane and parking fines this term to hold down rates. Mr Banks ... claimed wide support for the bus lanes on the basis that 98 per cent of drivers kept out of them.”

Ref: Bernard Orsman, NZ Herald, 16/8/10

MISTER

"A Polish engineer who lived in Auckland for a decade has proposed a solution to the city's transport woes. ... Ollie Mikosza has designed a personal rapid transit (PRT) system consisting of electric cars suspended from an overhead track that he says can be built for a fraction of the cost of alternatives. When a rail link to the airport was on the Auckland Regional Council transport committee's agenda three weeks ago, Mikosza emailed councillors from Poland with details of his system ... By the time a railway line to the airport has been researched, designed and built, PRT would be well established around the world, Mikosza claimed in his email. 'PRT is 10 to 50 times less expensive than any rail for the same capacity. And PRT can be built much quicker, requires almost no land, less planning, is faster, safer and profitable in operation', he wrote to the councillors. ... On paper, at least, Mikosza's system looks compelling. But getting it from paper to physical reality is proving [to be] a mission.

"The system, called MISTER (Metropolitan Individual System of Transportation on an Elevated Railway) is an idea born of impatience. In 1999 Mikosza was working as a software engineer in the San Francisco Bay area of northern California. For his daily 40km commute, he either had to leave at 5am, or go an hour later and expect to be stuck on the freeway for as long as three hours. 'I thought there must be a better way to lead my life than spend it in a traffic jam'. Standing still is clearly not something Mikosza enjoys. He was born in Poland and found himself in the US after a decade in South Africa, followed by a decade in New Zealand, where he became a citizen. His route to the US was via Asia and in 2002 he found himself back in Poland, in Opole, a city of 150,000 people. 'Now I've not so much grown roots again but got stuck for the past five years or so with this Mister project'.



Prototype MISTER System in Poland

"His design is for a lightweight - 60kg per metre - overhead track from which five-person pods, powered by small electric motors, are suspended. The unladen pods are also relatively light - 300kg - and can carry a 400kg load at 50km/h. Mikosza says at about €5 million (NZ\$9 million) a kilometre, it could be built for a fifth of the cost of light rail and less than a 10th of an underground railway's cost, and much more quickly and with less disruption. Yet its passenger-carrying capacity over a given distance would be a match for a subway. 'Our system is designed to replace a subway, whether in Sydney or New York or London'. Stations would be about 150m apart and the computer-controlled system - similar in complexity to software Mikosza wrote to track 15,000 workers in a South African platinum mine - would take passengers directly to their destination without intermediate stops. If Mikosza could get Mister off the ground, that is.

"He has got part way there by selling the family home and using the proceeds to build a working prototype that sat for some time in the Opole town square. Last year he made a breakthrough with a €6 million European Union grant, which was matched by a Swiss investor. The money was to have been used to build a track on land donated by Opole so the system could be safety-certified. But the EU grant got tangled up in Polish bureaucracy and the Swiss money went elsewhere. The EU cash has since been released by Polish authorities but Mikosza now needs a new private investor. If he can gain certification, five Polish cities, including Opole, have approved Mister projects, which puts him ahead of rival British, Dutch and Korean PRT systems that are being built on private land, including Heathrow Airport. ... The Mister system is an example of Personal Rapid Transit - automated vehicles for individuals or small groups, travelling on dedicated tracks, direct from one point to another, without stopping at intermediate stations. Many such systems have been proposed. One of the few to be built is at London's Heathrow airport and is due to open this year."

Ref: Anthony Doesburg, NZ Herald, 9/8/10