

Victorian Election

The Labor Government invested in regional rail which seems to have paid dividends but they have been punished for under-investment in suburban public transport and spin. Building the Frankston Bypass, clearways, Myki and funding the Grand Prix clearly haven't helped:

Paul Austin: "Labor, having had a very bad result, a very bad election across Victoria, has actually done better than it might have been expected to do in regional Victoria ..."

Brian Costar: "[But] it doesn't seem to have been a good position for a Labor member in a marginal seat sitting on a [Melbourne] train line."

Peter Mares: "The Frankston train line in particular that runs to the SE of Melbourne ..."

Brian Costar: "...and of course Frankston itself. So if public transport was the issue, or an issue in a part of Melbourne, then it seems as though that did have an electoral impact." ...

Peter Mares: "Paul Austin, what do you think ... the Opposition got right?"

Paul Austin: "I think they got right seeking to make this a referendum on Labor's record with regard to services. Brian's just mentioned public transport, ... the Liberal party ... were able to point out the very many 'running sores' ... that Victorians have at the moment, they include very poor or at least overcrowded public transport ..."

Peter Mares: "Helen Shardey from the Liberal Party, ... if we read that as Labor's failure to deliver on services, in a very rapidly growing city – Melbourne – then a Liberal Premier ... will face exactly the same problems ..."

Helen Shardey: "... Of course ... [it's an] area where the population [is] wanting to use public transport – and it's a much larger population – and there just hasn't been the investment by the Labor Party ... to ... provide those services."

Peter Mares: "Carlo Carli, do you agree, from the Labor Party's perspective that public transport really has damaged Labor ...?"

Carlo Carli: "There's no doubt that we got a hit because of public transport, and in a sense it's ironic because in the ten years of Labor Government the public transport use has doubled ..."

Peter Mares: "... But the number of trains and trams hasn't ..."

Carlo Carli: "No. Exactly. And we've got a whole series of capacity problems and difficulties in meeting those challenges ... and we've had generations of neglect ..."

Peter Mares: "The last fixed train line in Melbourne was built in 1929. ..."

Carlo Carli: "That's right. ... We have heavily invested in the system ... [but] the infrastructure hasn't kept up ... [so] we do need a Federal Government that's also prepared to commit itself to infrastructure investment because of the sheer scale ... [of investment] that needs to be made."

Ref: National Interest, ABC Radio, 28/11/10

www.abc.net.au/rn/nationalinterest/stories/2010/3078576.htm

"Too little, too late. Labor had 11 years to get the train services right and failed. Commuters living in key outer suburban seats have taken revenge for years of being forced to stand on trains – and that's if the service turned up on time."

Ref: Sunday Herald Sun, 28/11/10

"Labor knew voters were in a punishing mood over public transport ..."

Ref: Melissa Fyfe, The Age, 28/11/10

"The Coalition campaign ... [had] an emphasis on ... extending public transport."

Ref: Shaun Carney, The Age, 28/11/10

"Labor didn't heed the warnings about transport – Mordialloc, Carrum and Frankston electorates have fallen, did you notice? ALL Frankston line electorates, and we all know about the Frankston line. I hope that whatever Government we get, they take notice of that fact."

Ref: On-Line Comment, The Age, 28/11/10

"I just do not understand why Labor was not committed to addressing the clear and growing needs of public transport in Melbourne. That's what governments are for. But Labor just threw buses at public transport problems when clearly Melbourne's public transport is getting worse and is going to need better solutions in the future. I just don't understand why they did not act. It was the rail line to Doncaster and Avalon and planning for Melbourne Airport that swayed my vote."

Ref: On-Line Comment, The Age, 29/11/10

"Making all politicians use public transport instead of being limo driven everywhere would be a good start. Might remove some of that elitist attitude and also would probably result in Victoria getting a world-class transport system in no time."

Ref: On-Line Comment, The Age, 28/11/10

Airport Screening

"Advanced explosive detection technology with the potential to remove the need for passengers to discard their oversize containers of shampoo, water, soft drink, hair product and alcohol before they board an international flight will be trialled at Melbourne and Sydney domestic airports. ... Every month some 1,250 Duty Free items (e.g. perfume and alcohol) and approximately 8,000 non valuable items (e.g. water bottles) are surrendered to screening staff at Sydney International Airport."

Ref: Federal Media Statement, 24/11/10



Photo AFP, SMH, 2/1/10

And Also ...

"Amid the furore over airport security, Sam Wolanyk had a plan to avoid his second intrusive pat down in a week ... he stripped off. But Mr Wolanyk, who had previously campaigned for the right to openly carry guns, was arrested. He stripped to his underwear at San Diego International Airport but refused a body scan and pat-down search because 'it was obvious that my underwear left nothing to the imagination'."

Ref: AFP, The Age, 22/11/10

Building Friendlier Neighbourhoods

While Victoria can not point to a single new suburb that meets the sustainable ideal, there are excellent examples of older suburbs, designed before automobile-domination, where traffic is calmed, walking and cycling encouraged, public (read trams) transport is reasonable, the streets are safe and where people talk to each other. Less cars = more walkers and cyclists = safer streets.

It was a pleasure to return home from travelling overseas and be greeted on the way from the tram by complete strangers. It was also nice to receive, in the letterbox, an invitation from the local burghers to a street party – in this case a whole block. These are things that help make better places, and I note that the City of Port Phillip has produced:

Your Guide to Organising a Successful Block Party. "Block parties are designed to bring people together, break the ice and share the benefits of living in a friendly neighbourhood. This guide will give you a few tips on how to organise a block party and things you may want to take into consideration. Block parties are a new, exciting and clever way to celebrate our streets and places we live."

See the guide at:

www.portphillip.vic.gov.au/block_party_kit.pdf

Question on High Speed Rail

"Thanks for the newsletter. It is great to get your thoughts on issues that are important to us here in New Zealand. [In #174]: 'We know that high-speed rail has a number of advantages. ... We know that rail is particularly climate friendly ...' My understanding is that slow rail has lower low emissions than aircraft, and high speed rail has emissions comparable commercial aircraft. I'd be grateful if you could clarify this point."

Chris Watson, 29/9/10

This might be of help:

"Switching from aviation to less carbon-intensive modes of transport can also help mitigate GHG emissions. High speed rail (HSR) is especially suited to replace short-distance passenger air travel in some circumstances, such as in high density corridors. The energy use per passenger -mile for HSR could be as much as 65 to 80% less than air travel, but the overall reduction in GHG emissions would depend on a number of factors, including the design of the system (operating speeds and distances between stops) and passenger load factors (i.e., capacity utilization). The European and Japanese experience has shown high speed rail to generally be competitive with air travel on routes of up to 300-500 miles, where there is existing high demand for intercity travel and where several high-population areas can be connected along a single corridor. The total infrastructure and operations environmental impact should be considered for valid comparison of modes."

Ref: Pew Centre on Global Climate Change

www.pewclimate.org/technology/factsheet/Aviation

From a financial point of view on the hand, John Whitelegg in the UK makes the case [see Newsletter #136] that it is far better to spend the money required for HSR on improving regional rail. I think that is certainly the case in NZ. For Australia on the Melbourne - Canberra - Sydney - Newcastle - Brisbane route there is probably a case for HSR, particularly as Australians move around a lot between these cities. I'd certainly rather catch the HSR between Melbourne and Sydney (in three to four hours) than fly, or alternatively take a very slow overnight train [as described in #136].

Stephen Ingrouille, 29/9/10

Direct Democracy & Transport

"Annabelle Quince: Today we're taking a look at Switzerland's political system. And in particular, the way their system of direct democracy works.

"Bruno Kaufmann: Direct democracy is like a mirror to society. It shows which things are of concern, and very much so also you can say, that the use of direct democracy is an expression of where people feel that if the work is not done good enough by parliament. ... Then you have initiatives which are brought forward by the people themselves. ...

"Paul Mees: I note that Zurich, the richest city in the world, has among the highest rates of public transport use. If you look at the figures for the whole state of Zurich, which covers all the suburbs and rural towns and so on, travel is now split three ways. It's about a third walking, a third public transport, a third car. And the third that's in the car is declining. So if the oil ran out tomorrow, they wouldn't have to make much of an adjustment.

"Annabelle Quince: Switzerland in general, and Zurich in particular, has one of the best public transport systems in the world. This wasn't led by politicians or parliamentarians, but rather by citizen initiatives.

"Wolf Linder: In the first period in the '70s, they planned to have expressways through the centre of Zurich. And there was a lot of opposition to them, not only referenda, there were also demonstrations for months, and finally they cut down these projects and instead tried to get to the public transport system. They did a lot of consulting of the local people. They had dialogues and debates before the decisions. And finally, it was the people of Zurich and of the canton who decided together this mass transport system. This shows exactly how direct democracy can work perfectly, and as you see people are also capable of deciding on such complicated issues, Sometimes people say, 'People are not capable and

there will be vested interests which are much better in getting kind of a pluralist decision-making.' I would say no, because vested interests have just one objective, to defend their interest. But voters are much cleverer. For instance, if you ask, why did they accept public transport? They say, well, we are car drivers, but not only, we are also pedestrians. We see that two-thirds of the city would be needed for cars to circulate, and we don't want that. We see the advantages of public transport. So voters are rational, they are not only car drivers, they are pedestrians, they have children, they are commuters, and they make a rational decision and then they prefer public transport. So you see that direct democracy goes with the people, looks at the intelligent people, people are much more intelligent than you would think, and this is really for me, one of the main advantages of direct democracy. ...

"Bruno Kaufmann: *In the parliament you have a lot of lobbies. You have for instance the transportation lobby, you have a very strong influence of international business, which says we want to have freeways, we want to have big motor races in Switzerland, and in fact this wasn't accepted by the people in many of these votes and initiatives. And one of the key initiatives in fact was in the early 90s, the people of the alpine region, they said, 'It's enough, we need to put all these lorries, all these mega-liners on to the railway, because they are just passing here, and they are disturbing us, but they're also destroying the environment of this region. And in the end, everything will be destroyed and there will be no chance to use it any more. So there was an initiative which was fought by the parliament, which was fought by the government, but the people said 'yes' and this was a very strong signal which then created from Switzerland and for the Swiss government, a foundation to on one side change the whole direction of transportation policy into a more environmentally friendly one ... You have to change a lot of systems for instance, payments for the street traffic from transportation, but they have to pay a fee which is an incentive to change, and also to pay for instance like the Gotthard Tunnel which will be opened in 2017, which will be the longest railway tunnel in the world, and there is a lot of money [invested] into that, and the people in Switzerland, when they have to do such a project, they say, 'That's our money, that's our tax money, so we want to decide how we use that.' And that's maybe one of the key features in Swiss direct democracies that all the big issues related to money, is always put to the people, because the people have to decide how their own money is used."*

Ref: Rear Vision, ABC Radio National, 17/11/10

www.abc.net.au/rn/rearvision/stories/2010/3047700.htm



'I like the look of that'

How Do We Move Forward? (Part 1)

"The need to make changes to our travel behaviour has been near the top of the political agenda for the past couple of decades. Some nations will advocate improvements in technology alone (e.g. hydrogen fuel cell cars) as the complete solution to Climate Change. However, most agree that a mixture of measures is required to solve the wider sustainability problems associated with transport. I believe that, as well as new technological advances, behavioural change towards travel decisions is also a necessity.

"Climate Change is often used as the main reason for persuading people to make changes to their personal travel 'habits'. However, when the technology being developed is finally implemented – which I'm sure will happen in the decades to come – and private vehicles release no greenhouse gas emissions, I wonder whether attitudes to private car use will remain the same?

"It could be argued that those who currently drive around with a 'feeling of guilt' due to environmental concerns would in the future with this technology in place drive around free of any concern of the other impacts they are causing (i.e. social, economic and noise impacts, etc). This, assuming that the running

and buying of a private vehicle continues to be relatively affordable, could result in a further increase in car usage perhaps at a faster rate even than at present & a consequent increase in congestion.

"I believe that the aim should be to encourage behavioural change in travel decisions. This should be in parallel with the technology that will inevitably – and crucially – be developed and implemented in the decades to come. Few doubt that private vehicles will still be used in 100 years time, albeit with non-polluting engines, but the questions that remain to be answered are:

- *What is the maximum number of private vehicles that can be sustained for a given level of service (given safety, congestion, noise issues etc)?*
- *How will the private vehicle users be restricted – assuming population and wealth growth at the current rate?*
- *How will those that have to use alternative modes of travel be persuaded to do so without the feeling of inequality?*

How many vehicles can be sustained?

"The answer to the first question will depend on the size of the road network in the future (i.e. will it be cut down to a manageable level, like Dr Beecham did to the railways?) Cost constraints mean that new large scale road schemes are unlikely to be permitted in the future. What will the capacity be of various sections and zones of the network (assuming Intelligent Transport Systems are implemented where feasible), given agreed safety, congestion levels etc. Localised measures such as: staggered working hours, tele-working and car-sharing should become more widespread, in order to reduce the likelihood of congestion and its resulting social and economic impacts.

Who should have the right to drive?

"This second question is the most contentious. However, I believe that, assuming population and wealth continue to grow at about the current rate, it will need to be addressed. The economists' answer would be to impose a varying charge on the driver depending on the social, economic and environmental impact of their journey(s). I agree with market principles being applied to most things, but not issues of environmental importance. Such issues should, in my opinion, be dealt with through regulatory measures.



"Regulation would ensure that ambitious targets are definitely met. Economic measures, however, are based on assumptions about predicted human behaviour, which is notoriously unreliable and all but certain to change. Road pricing strategies may be an effective 'quick-fix' solution to congestion and its by-products, but its long term effectiveness is questionable. It also has the potential side effect of diverting traffic onto less suitable roads, to avoid payment. The economic approach also appears to discriminate for the more prosperous sector of society, selecting those who are allowed to drive based on their wealth, as opposed to their driving skill." {Continued in #179}

Ref: James Bailey, Sustainable Transport - How Do We Move Forward? 7/1/10

Full article:

<http://stilwellpartnership.wordpress.com/2010/01/07/sustainable-transport/>

SUV's Lead Auto Buying Intentions

For the first time in five years, consumer intentions for Sports Utility Vehicles (SUVs) have eclipsed those for small cars according to the August 2010 Roy Morgan Research New Buyer Intention report.

New Vehicle Buying Intentions – Next 4 Years					
SUV	Total Small	Total Large	Total Medium	Total Light	Light Commercial
24%	23%	13%	11%	7%	6%

Ref: Roy Morgan Press Release, 25/11/10

www.roymorgan.com/news/press-releases/2010/1219/

More on the Auckland Tram

"The new Auckland Council is ... pressing ahead with the establishment of a short tram line on the waterfront, in the Wynyard precinct. This was promoted by Cr Mike Lee in his former role of chair of the superseded Auckland Regional Council, and by the Campaign for Better Transport. The tram circuit is intended as the first stage of a future streetcar system for Auckland, extending to Britomart [the rail and bus transport hub] and then further into the CBD – presumably up Queen St. The deadline for the completion of the first stage is before the Rugby World Cup – the Council agency responsible isn't wasting any time! Auckland is following the lead of Christchurch, San Francisco, Portland, Seattle, Melbourne and other cities which are exploiting downtown and waterfront tram systems as an agent of inner-urban regeneration."

Ref: Trans-action: WELL-track #1, Nov 2010

Greek 'Green Wave' Trams

"[Greek] Deputy Infrastructure, Transport and Networks Minister Spyros Vougiatis ... presented the 'Green Wave' system designed to speed up journey times for the Athens tram system by ensuring that trams were given a green light at some 80 traffic lights along their route. Vougiatis said that trams would be given priority at all junctions with traffic lights as of October 30, 2010 ... The plan is to make the tram system, now considered by many passengers as very slow, a more attractive and competitive means of transport. The system is expected to shear some 10 to 12 minutes off current journey times from one terminus to the other."

Ref: Trans-action: WELL-track #1, Nov 2010

While some effort has been made in Melbourne to give trams priority at lights, the slow progress and lost opportunities points to institutionalised inertia and a lack of political will to make a substantial difference to the speed of Melbourne trams. Tram drivers and passengers are all too familiar with how a single turning car, peak hour traffic or a couple of parked cars can impede the progress of packed tram. Likewise trams can be delayed at traffic lights in the daytime while single occupant cars are given priority and in the evening sometimes when there are no crossing cars or pedestrians.

Giving trams almost complete priority would reduce stress on tram drivers, wear on vehicles, improve customer service, and potentially allow more services using the same number of vehicles. This in turn would reduce congestion, Greenhouse Gases ... You get the picture?

Stephen Ingrouille

Peter Newman on Roads and Rail

"Peter Newman is a prolific academic researcher and writer, sustainable cities expert and rail transit promoter who started his career as an activist in 1979 with a campaign to save Perth's crumbling suburban rail system. The world-leading electric rail system that the city now enjoys owes its existence to Peter's advocacy in multiple roles inside and outside the political system. Now a complementary light rail system is being planned."

These comments were recorded last month when he was visiting New Zealand:

"They don't tend to win elections on highways any more. That's the difference I've seen. In America it's the same – they're just not building urban roads any more, and in Australia I'm on the board of Infrastructure Australia. We give out money for infrastructure – 10 billion dollars – and we look at the benefit cost ratios on road, rail, bus projects and rail comes out best every time. Urban road projects don't stack up. They might be of national significance to someone who said up the top 'I like the look of that' ... but economically? Nonsense!"

"I started [the Perth railway campaign] in 1979 when they closed our railway down and I started the Friends of the Railways and we lobbied and we won the 1983 state elections on the basis of this decision and we threw out the conservative government. Labor came in on the basis that they would bring the train back. It was a pretty rotten old system but it was popular. So they brought it back and then we started the process. I went in to the system to try to help upgrade that. So the electrification study came in and I was in the minister's office when it came in and we were able to channel that

through into getting the money for that. I went back into the university and we did all the work to lobby for the next round which was to take the rail out to the northern suburbs and the southern suburbs and that was another 15 year kind of project and I went back into the system at significant points. Not by desire; I just happened to be asked to come back in and that was the time when they were making decisions about the northern line and the southern line and we were able to get it through. Now that system is largely complete, the heavy rail system, and we've gone from 7 million passengers a year to 60 million passengers a year over a 15 year period – that's pretty dramatic growth. The Southern Line in particular, that's been an absolute stand-out success. The busway down the freeway and the buses in that corridor were carrying 14,000 a day. The railway, within a couple of months, was carrying 55,000 a day and it was reaching capacity within 6 months, so it was dramatic."

Ref: Trans-action: WELL-track #1, Nov 2010

And Also ... (Urban Design)

"1. Site Analysis – Take postcard photos of things that you can find on the site, the more domestic the better – flowers, water, old buildings. Place photos in a grid and label this page: 'Character'. This eases people into the report and proves that you have been to the site. Oh, you haven't? Don't worry – that's what the internet is for!

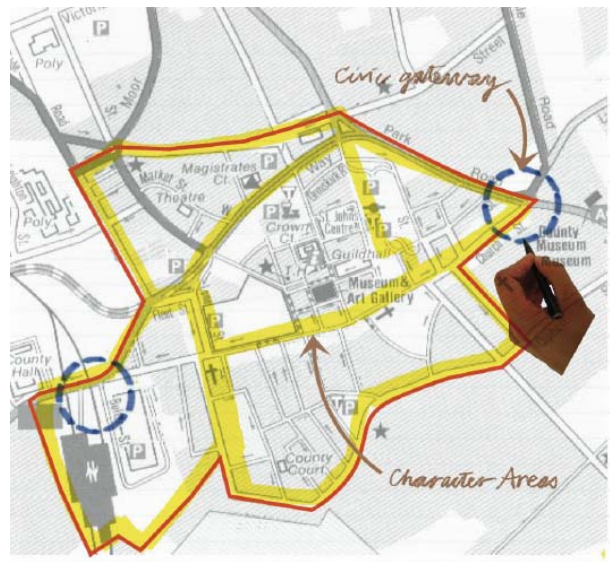
"2. Then take a few photos of things that are not normally on postcards – graffiti, children not smiling, an empty dark street ... this demonstrates why you are here – to regenerate the place. Make sure the pictures are really bad or you might find yourself out of a job.

"3. State your objectives. Copy, or cut and paste the following:

- a) Maintain the special character of the place.*
- b) Introduce legibility through clearly defined streets and squares.*
- c) Increase permeability and connectivity.*
- d) Introduce high quality public ...*

"4. Draw the first plan. The first plan means nothing so don't spend very much time on it. Centre your site on the page at a regional scale (say a road map or regional view) and draw a line with an arrow to any airport, station or district centre that appears on your map. Phew! That's the context out of the way.

"5. Draw the second plan. The second plan is potentially controversial so make sure it is not too detailed and use bright coloured pens. Divide the area up into about five chunks. Call these 'Local Character' areas. At the meeting of the site boundary and the local street, mark with a dotted circle and designate: 'Civic Gateway'. You don't have to say what that actually means, but if anyone asks, say something like: 'an urban design gesture that marks the threshold into the new area' or some such nonsense.



"6. Line every street with a continuous border between 10 and 20 metres wide. Make sure you leave a part blank for a square, preferably around the centre. You will end up with lots of squares and streets, but remember that's what you said you were going to do in the objectives! Colour the buildings darker near the centre and lighter as they become further away. Put these colours in a key called: 'Building Heights' ...

“7. Along the side of the widest roads, draw a row of green circles evenly spaced apart. Psycho-logical tests from the 1950s show that soft shapes are less threatening. Name parts of your plan with the names of existing historical buildings. ... This is a special touch that can be understood by even the dumbest residents.

“8. What will it look like? You might have to google this one. There are plenty of good images out there that say nothing. Make sure you select one picture of a park with families flying kites or looking non-threatening, a street scene with people sitting outside a café, and a modern looking block of flats with young people on a balcony.



“9. More googling. The next page of your report will be filled with pictures arranged in a grid. Choose pictures of buildings and parks that you like and label this ‘Precedents’ (as though you were actually suggesting to built it like that – haha!)

“10. “On the last page list the names of local arts organisations, community contacts and professional consultants you never contacted through the course of preparing your report. ... Sum up your findings with a snappy statement line like: ‘The Masterplan offers an incremental strategy to deliver positive change for ...’.”

Ref: Darryl Chen, Urban Design journal, 2010