

## Urban Sprawl and Biodiversity

*"Rapid urban growth and poor city planning driven chiefly by the financial interests of developers are creating Australia's 'slums of tomorrow', a leading scientist says. Unchecked urban sprawl is also decimating Australia's native plant biodiversity, with more than 500 species around 44% of those remaining predicted to become extinct throughout Melbourne as the city spreads, University of Melbourne urban ecologist Mark McDonnell told a conference in Canberra yesterday. 'Human settlements are one of the biggest threats to biodiversity on the planet', Dr McDonnell told the Ecological Society of Australia's 50th anniversary conference at the Australian National University."*

**Ref: Rosslyn Beeby, Canberra Times, 7/12/10**

## Feedback on Bus Rapid Transit {discussed in #179}

*"A bus carries 50 to 70 people and for safety reasons there should be no standing passengers at speeds over 60 Km/h. At thirty buses per hour you can move 2100 people; at an implausible bus a minute, 4200. Compare a high occupancy vehicle lane with a minimum of a driver and two passengers: 1800 vehicles/hour becomes 5400 people per hour: buses actually reduce road capacity. A 250 passenger light rail vehicle running thirty in an hour can move 7500 people per hour and a 1000 passenger train at twenty per hour moves 20,000. The proposed 'bus rapid transit system' [for Sydney] would rapidly become a joke if it were ever implemented."*

*"Buses suit any route with under 1000 pax/peak hr; say 5000 pax/week day where max speeds under 80 Km/h are acceptable. Higher speeds require all-seated passengers and a lower vehicle capacity. Trams/light rail goes to 6000 pax/peak hr or 30,000 pax/week day; heavy rail above that. Melbourne currently has about 15,000 pax/day on the average Km of the tram network and about 37,000 pax/day on the average Km of the suburban train network."*

*"Note that fixed rail has a halo effect on property values {see below}; if this is taken into account even quite low density routes justify a tram or light rail service as long as the government or the operating authority can get a share of the capital gain (for example, by a graduated stamp duty on sale or a modest rate surcharge based on proximity to a fixed rail service)."*

**Ref: John Legge, 7/12/10**

## Property Prices & Public Transport

*"The draw of good, reliable public transport creates demand for an area and significantly increases property values. ... 'Being close to a station turns a home from a \$710,000 property into an \$800,000 property. If you run a train through Doncaster, the pricing will change by \$100,000' [says Ian MacKinnon of Buyers Advocate]."*

*"Access to buses doesn't have the same appeal. The recent decision ruling out a rail extension to*

*Mernda in favour of buses was bad news for commuters in a growth area where roads are often badly congested. 'A train line will outdo buses every day of the week', Mr MacKinnon says."*

*"According to Mr MacKinnon, other amenities such as shopping centres and even schools are less important to buyers than being handy to a railway station."*

**Ref: Mary Costello, Domain, The Age, 4/12/10**



## Clearing the Clearways

*"[Victorian] Premier Ted Baillieu is expected today to begin winding back controversial clearway times introduced across inner Melbourne over the last two years by the former Brumby government."*

**Ref: Clay Lucas, The Age, 9/12/10**

*"The wisdom of encouraging more motorists to commute on our already saturated inner city roads by installing the clearways was questionable. The clearways may have improved potential traffic flow capacity on that particular stretch of road, but sooner or later traffic would hit another stretch of road that was at capacity. Alleviating traffic congestion would require a more wholistic approach that any reasonable analysis would easily show is far more expensive than alternative solutions, e.g. upgrading public transport and encouraging cycling."*

**Ref: Reader's Comment, The Age, 9/12/10**

*"The heavy lifting is to improve public transport. And this must involve spending serious public money. Is there any other way to get cars off the road and reduce peak-hour congestion than through decent public transport? Changing clearway times isn't addressing the bigger problem. The traders who campaigned for a change can chalk this one up as a win. But it is not the main game."*

**Ref: Reader's Comment, The Age, 9/12/10**

## More on the French Metro

*"The warmth generated by human bodies in the Parisian metro will help heat a public housing project in the city centre, according to the French capital's largest owner of social housing. The building, located in the famous rue Beaubourg close to the Pompidou museum, is being renovated in an environmentally friendly way. 'Luckily, the building is connected to the metro through a staircase', said Francois Wachnick from Paris Habitat. The calories emitted by passengers, around 100 watts per person, combined with the heat from trains moving along tracks and the underground location of the metro mean that corridor temperatures are 14-20 degrees Celsius all year around. The project, which is based on geothermal technology, aims to draw heat from subterranean passages and move it to heat exchangers before supplying heating pipes. The system will complement district heating. The project should slash carbon dioxide emissions by a third compared to using a boiler room connected to district heating, Mr Wachnick said. A tender for the experimental project, which is expected to heat 17 flats, will be launched before the end of the year, and work is expected to start in 2011."*

**Ref: ABC News, 4/9/10**

## WikiLeaks: Shell's Grip on Nigeria

*"The oil giant Shell claimed it had inserted staff into all the main ministries of the Nigerian government, giving it access to politicians' every move in the oil-rich Niger Delta, according to a leaked US diplomatic cable. The company's top executive in Nigeria told US diplomats that Shell had seconded employees to every relevant department and so knew 'everything that was being done in those ministries'. She boasted that the Nigerian government had 'forgotten' about the extent of Shell's infiltration and was unaware of how much the company knew about its deliberations."*

**Ref: David Smith, The Guardian, 9/12/10**

## Promenade Plantée



**The Promenade Plantée is a former elevated railway line in the Bastille area of Paris, which has been converted to an elevated walkway and garden. Much used by local residents, it has also opened up workshops for artists in the arches underneath. Makes things a bit harder to restore a light rail in its place, but it's a good use for otherwise derelict inner city 'land'.**

Photo: Andrew Dye, 2010



## Fast Trains in China

*"China's expanding high-speed railway network does not pose a major threat to its airlines, the country's top aviation regulator said on Tuesday. While acknowledging cost pressures on the carriers from some routes, Civil Aviation Administration of China head Li Jiaxiang said railways could also help boost air travel in remote landlocked regions. 'Railways and airlines are competitors, but they can also compliment each other. ... Since the Beijing-Tibet railway started operations, air passengers in and out of the capital Lhasa have risen 38%', Li said, citing official statistics. China plans to build 13,000 km of high-speed railway by 2012, more than the rest of the world combined."*

**Ref: Reuters, The Age, 8/12/10**

## PT Complaints Increase

*"Complaints about public transport [in Victoria] rose by 50% in the past financial year, according to the industry body funded by operators to resolve passenger grievances. ... The Public Transport Ombudsman is an industry body established to resolve complaints from tram, train or bus travellers."*

**Ref: Clay Lucas, The Age, 10/12/10**

A Newsletter reader asks: *"Why do some buses arrive at bus stops 2-5 minutes before their scheduled time only to pause before their last stop so that they appear to be running on time? An example is the Frankston to Dandenong bus route. This is very frustrating. A minute before might be acceptable, but who wants to arrive five minutes early or wait another half hour for the next bus? I lived in Germany for a while and we used count down the seconds as their buses arrived exactly at the scheduled time."*

## And Also ... "Different continent, same cop"

*"A man living in New Zealand has been caught speeding by the same policeman who booked him when he was living in England. The speeding driver was nabbed in London two years ago, then moved to New Zealand.... Constable Flitton told the reporter that he was surprised at booking the same man for the same thing on the other side of the world. ... 'He only ever broke the law twice and both times I was the one to give him a ticket... it just shows what a small world it really is'."*

*"You can imagine what would be going thru the poor bastard's mind who got caught, can't you? 'Bugger!'"*

**Ref: Reader's Comment, The Age, 9/12/10**

*"New Zealand is not a continent. Nor is the UK. Apart from that, excellent headline."*

**Ref: Reader's Comment, The Age, 9/12/10**

## Cycling in Copenhagen (Part 1)

**"Yvonne Bambrick:** *Copenhagen is best-case scenario for bicycles. They have properly integrated bicycles into the transportation fabric.*

**"Felicia Williams:** *I think one of the main things is the separated bike lanes because it makes people feel safer.*

**"Andy Thornle:** *And everywhere you go you have a sense of a very humane and human city.*

**"Nicole Jensen:** *And the people here, it's just part of their daily lives to cycle and I just find that so amazing.*

**"Andy Clarke:** *I think one of the things we've lacked in the U.S. is the real belief that this stuff actually works, that we've been making it up and saying Copenhagen's like this. But until you really see it, touch it, and feel it for yourself and you ride the streets of Copenhagen during rush hour, it's really hard to believe.*

**"Martha Roskowski:** *They have created a system where every single road works for bicycling. Some of them are quiet streets where you just ride right on the street. Some of them they have painted bike lanes. But more often they have cycle tracks, which are these elevated bike paths. It's only two or three inches of elevation with a little bit of curb and some asphalt filled in, but the difference that it makes is really profound.*



Cycling in Stockholm

**“Leah Shahum:** *They’ve really made safe facilities, comfortable facilities, facilities that are welcoming for people of all skill levels. What you do have is a lot of cargo bikes that are often moving slower. You’ve got a mom or dad pedalling one, two, sometimes three. I’ve seen children in the cargo bikes. That slow speed is not only accommodated, but it’s almost celebrated.*

**“Peter Furth:** *A lot of times in the U. S. when you’re riding your bike, you feel almost like an outlaw. You feel like, ‘Oh, can I just find a little tiny bit of space for myself?’ Here, you feel like they’re just laying out the red carpet for you.*

**“Jeff Mapes:** *In American cities when you come to a really busy street, that’s when you really tense up and you wonder, ‘Can I get across this street?’ When you come to a busy street in Copenhagen, you say, ‘Oh, good! I know I’m going to find a cycle track here, and it’s going to be a quick route. I’m going to be where I need to be in five minutes.’ I mean what a difference from ... any place else that I’ve been!’*

**“Jackie Douglas:** *I love the [bike traffic] counters on the side of the road. It makes you feel like you should be on the road, that it’s OK to be here. You don’t feel like anyone’s going to tell you to get out of the way.*

**“Klaus Grimar:** *Last year we put this machine up. There’s now 36,000 cyclists per day in this street.*

**“Andy Clarke:** *To stand and see a couple hundred cyclists go through an intersection, and then realize that just a block away there’s another hundred coming, it’s a phenomenal experience.” {Cont. in #181}*

**Ref: Streetfilms; Cycling Copenhagen, 15/7/10**

See full transcript and video: [www.streetfilms.org/cycling-copenhagen-through-north-american-eyes/](http://www.streetfilms.org/cycling-copenhagen-through-north-american-eyes/)

## Australian National Cycling Strategy

*“Australia’s Transport Ministers have ... outlined a new National Cycling Strategy, which aims to double the number of cyclists by 2016. ... We are serious about tackling climate change and traffic congestion as well as encouraging healthier lifestyles in our cities and regional communities. ... The National Cycling Strategy is ambitious and a sign of the commitment that federal, state and territory governments bring to tackling climate change and urban congestion. Given up to 20% of car trips in Australia are less than five kilometres, cycling provides greater opportunities to address congestion and carbon emissions. Transport currently comprises nearly 15% of Australia’s carbon emissions – an increase of 5% since 2000. As a zero-emission mode of transport, replacing even 5% of car trips to bicycle has the potential to reduce emissions impacts by up to 8%. The six key actions in the National Cycling Strategy include:*

- *promoting the benefits of cycling for both recreation and commuting;*
- *working with employers to create cycle-friendly workplaces;*
- *extending networks of safe cycle routes and end-of-trip facilities;*
- *considering and addressing cycling needs in transport and land use planning;*
- *continuing programs to target cyclist safety and road user perceptions;*
- *developing national decision-making processes for investment in cycling; and*
- *sharing best practice across the country.*

*“The strategy was developed in consultation with the Australian Bicycle Council, bicycle industry associations, user groups, & local governments.”*

**Ref: Federal Govt Media Release, 24/9/10**

## Can Bikes Replace Stockholm Cars?

*“Even if half of all shorter car trips were done using a bike it would not have a particularly great impact on car traffic in central Stockholm con-cludes a new study by KTH (Kungliga Tekniska Hogskolan = Royal Institute of Technology). On the other hand bike commuting is increasingly considered a form of transport in its own right alongside buses, trains, cars, flights and ferries. That cars can be replaced by more citizens on bikes has for decades been an argument from the environmental movement and the Greens. But in a report from the Centre for transport studies at KTH it is revealed that an increase in bike commuters will only marginally affect the number of cars in the inner city. The primary reason for this is that too few car trips in the inner city are short enough to potentially be done using a bike. In central Stockholm 84% of traffic is by vehicles travelling over 15km & the longer the journey the less likely it is that the trip will be transferable to using a bike. ‘We have counted shorter car trips of 5, 10 or*

15 km at the most to see what would happen if half of those trips were done using a bike instead', says Jonas Eliasson, Professor in Transport System Analysis at KTH.

*"The KTH study has two reasons for wanting to reduce car traffic. One is congestion, especially at the city's entry and exit points. The other is the impact on the environment, to reduce the number of vehicle driven kilometres. According to the study – that forms part of a larger study about travelling habits, surveying 55,000 Stock-holm residents – the congestion is decreased by 0.3 percent if half of all car trips, shorter than 5km, were done using a bike. The corresponding percentage for car trips less than 10 km is 3% and for trips under 15km it is 8%. ... From an environmental perspective, where the study has counted the reduction of total driven kilometres, the gain is slightly better than the congestion figures, but only slightly.*

*"In addition, to expect that half of all drivers currently sitting behind the wheel would ride up to 15km to and from their destination, is of course a challenge. Most of those who ride do so during the warmer months of the year preferably when there is no precipitation and preferably only on trips that are less than 10km. On the other hand many will now argue that bike commuting should not be compared with car traffic from a congestion and environmental perspective which is also an assessment the KTH study is considering. An investment in bike commuting is cost effective in itself; it increases quality of life and could play a larger role in the transport system. It is even a prerequisite for a well functioning employment market argues the centre for transport studies. The bike is cheap, simple and quick. 'Yes, the bike is a way to commute in its own right. We don't compare flying in an aeroplane with driving a car in the same way, but riding a bike is useful on its own for the whole city's population as it increases the potential for commuting. It is healthy for the rider, it is a quick way to transport yourself that increases city connectivity, so an investment in bike traffic is also cost effective', says Jonas Eliasson."*

**Ref: Anders Forsstrom, Dagens Nyheter, 10/6/10** (translation by Sofia Josefsson)

## And Also ...

*"A Swedish motorist is facing the world's biggest speeding fine [\$1.1million] ... after being caught driving at almost 300km/h on a Swiss motorway. The 37-year-old man was driving at two-and-a-half times the speed limit in his \$500,000 Mercedes-Benz Gullwing and police said he was travelling so fast it took him some distance to stop. In Switzerland speeding fines are worked out using a formula based on the income of the motorist and the speed. ... He escaped being caught by numerous radar traps en-route simply because he was going too fast and they were incapable of clocking speeds beyond 200km/h. A new generation of radar machines finally caught him travelling at close to 300km/h."*

**Ref: Allan Hall, The Age, 12/8/10**

## Cycling Savings in Sydney

*"Sydney's cycleways will save the city millions of dollars in travel time, pollution and fatalities over the next 30 years, a new report suggests. Economists put a dollar value on factors surrounding the cycleways: Human life (\$165,659 per year), health (\$487 per year), and sitting in gridlock (\$12.20 per hour). By crunching the numbers, top global economists AECOM found that over 30 years the paths would save Sydney \$507 million - or 84c per kilometre. As Sydney Lord Mayor Clover Moore and Premier Kristina Kennally nut out the final details of their car-free vision of the future, turning the fragmented bike network into 284km of separated cycleways, the report predicted the new empty bike lanes would be busy once the network was finished with demand skyrocketing 263% in the next six years. Less congested streets would save \$97 million, speedier journeys \$143 million, fewer road deaths \$40 million, slashed absenteeism \$107 million, and 'journey ambience' - less stress for cyclists - would save \$129.8 million. For each kilometre travelled on a separated bike path, 27c would be saved in road congestion, 32c in car operating costs and 11.66c in reduced stress, frustration, route uncertainty and fear of accidents. 'Significant benefits will be accrued by individuals, government and the general economy through the full development of the network', the Economic Appraisal of the Inner Sydney Regional Bicycle Network said. 'Travellers stand to benefit through travel time savings, avoided car costs, journey ambience and health benefits at the cost of a relatively small increase in accident costs'. A City of Sydney spokeswoman said addressing congestion improved access for people who had to drive, such as emergency services, people with disabilities, tradespeople and couriers. 'Cycleways are part of the transport solution', she said. 'For every \$1 spent on cycleways, the benefit to our economy is approximately \$4 - that's compared with an average of \$2 for motorways'."*

**Ref: Vikki Campion, Daily Telegraph, 16/9/10**



## US Rail Policy Hearings (Part 2)

*"Thank you, Chairman Rockefeller, for holding today's hearing on the federal role in national rail policy. ... We all share your goal of updating and modernizing our nation's rail policy so that this vital means of transportation truly serves the interests of passengers, rail shippers and consumers all across the nation. I am testifying today in my capacity as Chairman of the Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on Antitrust, Competition Policy and Consumer Rights. As we consider the federal role in national rail policy, I believe it is crucial that antitrust law enforcement be a part of our nation's rail policy. On the Antitrust Sub-committee, we have seen that in industry after industry, vigorous application of our nation's antitrust laws is the best way to eliminate barriers to competition, to end monopolistic behaviour, to keep prices low and quality of service high.*

*"I raise the importance of antitrust and competition principles because our current federal rail policy does not include enforcement of the antitrust laws in most respects. For decades freight railroads have been insulated from the normal rules of competition followed by almost all other parts of our economy by an outmoded and unwarranted antitrust exemption. Consolidation in the railroad industry in recent years has resulted in only four Class I railroads providing nearly 90% of the nation's freight rail transportation, as measured by revenue. Three decades ago there were 42. The railroads' obsolete antitrust exemptions mean higher prices for consumer and manufactured goods, for food and electricity. ...*

*"The ill-effects of railroad consolidation and immunity from the antitrust laws are exemplified in the case of 'captive shippers' – industries served by only one railroad. Over the past several years, these captive shippers have faced spiking rail rates. They are often the victims of monopolistic practices and price gouging by the single railroad that serves them, price increases which they are forced to pass along into the price of their products, and ultimately, to consumers. And in most cases, the ordinary protections of antitrust law are unavailable to these captive shippers. A recent study by Consumer Federation of America found that rail shipping rates for captive shippers are \$3 billion dollars higher than they would be if the market was competitive. These unjustified cost increases cause consumers to suffer higher electricity bills because a utility must pay for the high cost of transporting coal, result in higher prices for goods produced by manufacturers who rely on railroads to transport raw materials, reduce earnings for American farmers who ship their products by rail and raise food prices paid by consumers. This special exemption is unique to the rail industry – virtually all other regulated industries, including telecom, energy, and air transportation, are fully subject to antitrust law. Our railroad antitrust legislation is supported by the Attorneys General of 20 states, a wide range of consumer organisations and leading industry trade organisations. ... That is why I am so pleased, Mr. Chairman, that in May 2009 you and I reached an agreement that a repeal of the railroad industry's undeserved antitrust exemption would be incorporated in your comprehensive rail reform bill. ..."*

**Ref: Senator Herb Kohl, US Senate Hearings, 15/9/09**

## And Also ...

From the 'let's be inspired department' comes this little electronic Christmas card from the Linking Melbourne Authority. As Julianne Bell points out: *"the freeway lights look like stars! ...*

*"Linking Melbourne Authority is responsible for [the motorway] EastLink, is currently building Peninsula Link and is planning WestLink."*



## Technophilia (Part 1)

*"I'm not claiming that technological improvement isn't necessarily a good thing. If our roads must be crammed with vehicles, I'd prefer they were small, safe, efficient things from Japan or France, and not gross and greedy American-style four-wheel-drive-o-saurs, with 1960s-quality exhaust emissions. .... But believing our problems can be solved by technology becomes moot when so many of those problems are caused by it. The other rub in seeking techno-paradise, but not quite finding it, is that you're bound never to be satisfied with what you have, and by implication, even by what you are about to get. And sorry, I am increasingly satisfied. Indeed, I recently went a step further. That is, I took a step backwards: I bought a car that's slower than its predecessor.*

*"To understand this betrayal of technophilic culture, consider the absurdity of producing ever more powerful cars. You can walk into a showroom today, borrow about a year's average salary (with a generous tax break), and drive away in a locally made vehicle with an engine boasting 317 kilowatts of power. (I say 'boasting' because that very pertinent, or impertinent, number is displayed on the car's rump). Putting your foot down on the way to work in this thing releases the heat equivalent of 317 one-bar electric radiators. Quite a lot, considering you can do the same trip in a small efficient diesel, or even on a bicycle using a handful of rolled oats, the caloric equivalent of a thousand miles a gallon.*

*"Efficiency, pollution and health are not the only reasons I chose to go the slower route. I bought a slow car because, strange as it may seem, I got sick of the pressure to go fast. Believe me, this is not something easy to cure. Every technology, from the first hand-held club, changes the person who wields it. When we climb into a very fast car we change into a person who expects to go very fast. Our roads are crammed with people in such vehicles. Owning one offers only two choices: you either drive as the law and sensibility demand, using a fraction of the capability of your vehicle (and exasperate yourself) or drive it to its potential and become a hoon – a menace to yourself and to others. Perhaps you think your Maserati is worth the money just for the envious looks it attracts at the yacht club. Then again, you may have valid medical reasons for your choice of a red sports car. Regardless, let me regale you with some insights from the slow lane.*

***"Then again, you may have valid medical reasons for your choice of a red sports car."***

*"I may just be getting old, but driving a slow car is actually less exasperating than driving a fast one. This is because in a slow car I am less constrained, because my vehicle can't easily exceed either the speed limit, or my expectations. To be sure, my relatively slow car may increase the exasperation of other drivers, but sorry, there's nothing I can do about that. Expecting ever-increasing rates of acceleration from cars is one of the symptoms of our current epidemic of advanced technophilia. Anyone who thinks increased acceleration reduces travel time is suffering one of the major unrecognised mental disorders of our age: techno-inflation.*

*"The effect of techno-inflation is so incremental that we don't realise we're afflicted until it's too late. By then our life-support systems have become so complex and interdependent, and we so blasé about their presence, that we hardly appreciate their ubiquity or importance. Then one day, something goes wrong. One tiny glitch provokes intense frustration. We whine when our flight is late, complain that the microwave won't heat our food faster (and then that it has no flavour); we grind our teeth when the new phone misses a stock market update, we stew when our computer takes a few seconds longer to load. It's the technological equivalent of supermarket syndrome: that odd shift in the space/time continuum that makes seconds spent waiting in the express queue feel like minutes. You'll happily wait longer at the regular checkout, but waiting in express feels longer, because you expect it to be express, dammit! Even the term 'supermarket' inflates our expectations, and thus routinely dashes them with its garish, deliberately frustrating parody of hunter-gatherer utopia."*

**Ref: Andrew Herrick, ABC Radio National: Ockham's Razor, 27/6/10**

[www.abc.net.au/rn/ockhamsrazor/stories/2010/2935923.htm](http://www.abc.net.au/rn/ockhamsrazor/stories/2010/2935923.htm)