

Public Transport Authority in Victoria

"The most significant policy commitment of the incoming Baillieu Government is the creation of a Public Transport Development Authority (PTDA) for Victoria. Getting this one right will make all the difference between Victoria having some of the best public transport in the world, and a continuation of the current mediocre, politically poisonous setup."

"The good news is that Transport Minister Terry Mulder now has a wealth of interstate and overseas experience to draw on when constituting and recruiting the government's PTDA. Zurich, Vancouver, London, Perth and to some extent Brisbane all provide good examples of what to do. While they embody a number of different specific organisational structures and relationships, they share common features that make them successful."

"Full coordinating responsibility: A successful PTDA is a 'one stop shop' for system planning and operational coordination. Individual operators work under contract to the PTDA, with the PTDA being the single point of contact for the public and for other public authorities, including the Department of Transport. This contrasts with the current arrangement where over 100 entities share final responsibility for aspects of the system.

"Statutory authority: The PTDA should be constituted as a statutory authority under an amended Transport Integration Act, with equivalent standing to VicRoads, and an independent board like that of VicRoads.

"International expertise: Senior personnel must be recruited from the best network planning talent available internationally, not merely within Australia and not by redeploying local resources.

"Community engagement: The PTDA board should conduct its meetings in public, the way a municipal council does. Following the example of Vancouver Translink, meetings should allocate a session where submissions can be received from the public.

"Superseded bureaucracies: Planning functions currently vested in other entities such as the Transport Ticketing Authority, Metlink and the Director of Public Transport should be transferred to the PTDA, with the other entities reverting to service delivery and contract management agencies."

Ref: PTUA Newsletter, 15/12/10

More Information: www.ptua.org.au/campaigns/govern



"It's Christmas Eve and YOU'VE LOST THE POOPER SCOOPER???"

"The good governance of public transport systems means having the appropriate organisations with the necessary powers, skills and responsibilities to deliver services that compete effectively with the private car option. An international review has found that effective governance is the most critical requirement for ensuring 'best practice' in urban transport, more even than adequate funding, infrastructure or land-use planning. The lack of effective governance largely explains why public transport in Melbourne, and Victoria more generally, fails to be competitive with car travel despite its extensive train and tram infrastructure, generous recurrent funding, multimodal ticketing and a moderately public-transport-friendly urban form."

Ref: PTUA Website www.ptua.org.au/campaigns/govern

Taxpayer Subsidising Destruction

"Each year the world's taxpayers provide at least \$700 billion in subsidies for environmentally destructive activities, such as fossil fuel burning ..."

"A study by the U.K. Green Party, Aviation's Economic Downside, describes subsidies to the U.K. airline industry. The giveaway begins with \$18 billion in tax breaks, including a total exemption from the"

national tax. External or indirect costs that are not paid, such as treating illness from breathing the air polluted by planes, the costs of climate change, and so forth, add nearly \$7.5 billion to the tab. The subsidy in the United Kingdom totals \$426 per resident. This is also an inherently regressive tax policy simply because a part of the U.K. population cannot afford to fly, yet they help subsidise this high-cost travel for their more affluent compatriots. ...

"Doug Koplow, founder of Earth Track, calculated in a 2006 study that annual U.S. federal energy subsidies have a total value to the industry of \$74 billion. Of this, the oil and gas industry gets \$39 billion, coal \$8 billion, and nuclear \$9 billion. He notes that today these numbers 'would likely be a good deal higher'. At a time when there is a need to conserve oil resources, U.S. taxpayers are subsidising their depletion. ... Shifting subsidies from road construction to rail construction could increase mobility in many situations while reducing carbon emissions."

Ref: Lester Brown, Earth Policy Institute, 13/4/10

www.earthpolicy.org/index.php?/book_bytes/2010/pb4ch10_ss2a

More on the Cost of Parking

"Australians sure love their cars. So much so there's an average of more than one car for every two people in the country. About 12 million passenger vehicles ply Australian roads, and despite attempts to shift people on to public transport, this figure grew by 2.5% a year between 2005-09, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics. ...

"In Melbourne, a car park can add \$40,000 to \$100,000 to the value of a city apartment. ... In Sydney's local government areas of Randwick, Waverley, Woollahra and in the CBD, it costs as much as \$120,000 to \$150,000 to purchase a garage. In Bronte, Bondi, Woollahra and Darlinghurst it's estimated at in excess of \$200,000. ... In Brisbane, an inner city property without a car spot included can expect to sell at a 'discount' of \$30,000 to \$80,000 depending on local conditions. Clearly, parking brings a premium, especially when you consider the average spot is just 13 square metres in size. In fact, for many smaller properties – particularly apartments – metre-for-metre, a parking spot can be the most expensive part of a real estate purchase. It can also translate into an additional weekly rent of \$50 to \$100 or more for a property, depending on the area."

Ref: Domain, The Age, 9/12/10

"You don't need a car... you need to get from A to B. Owning a car is madness. Get a taxi, join a carshare, ride a bike, walk, use public transport... you can ride a helluva lot of taxis for a hundred grand or two!"

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

"One of the reasons councils are approving dwellings with no or insufficient parking allocations is the revenue raised from parking fines. See the annual budget income for the City of Port Phillip = \$10,000,000 for 2009."

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

More on Melbourne's Bikeshare

"Correspondent Nic has done the maths: he says Victoria spent \$5 million on 600 bicycles - that's a whopping \$8,333 per bike."

Ref: National Interest, ABC Radio National, 10/12/10



Tagged Decoy Cycles

Sign at a bike parking station at Imperial College in South Kensington, London

Photo: Cathy Fraser, 2010

Australians and Big Cars

"Australians will still want large cars for large families and a large country, according to Holden chairman and CEO Mike Devereux. But it will have to be more fuel efficient than ever, with Holden improving economy on the large car - the best seller for 15 straight years - to as little as 8.4 litres per 100km in the short term."

Ref: Toby Hagen, The Age, 11/12/10

"Yeah 8.4L per 100km is hardly that efficient! The Australian government and tax payers gave \$6.2 billion to the Australian car industry which includes money for a 'green car fund' and they can only get 8.4L/100km?"

Ref: Comment, The Age, 11/12/10

"Commodore cannot achieve 8.4L/100km's continuously under normal driving conditions."

Ref: Comment, The Age, 11/12/10

"It's like that Simpson's episode, 'O, Brother where are thou?'"

(Standing near several Powell Motors vehicles):

"Herb Powell (Homer's half-brother): *'Homer, tell the nice man what country you come from.'*

"Homer: *'America.'*

"Herb: *'You hear that you morons! This is why we're getting killed in the marketplace. Instead of listening to what people want, you're telling them what they want.'*

Ref: Reader's Comment, The Age, 11/12/10

Cash-for-Clunkers

"[The] cash-for-clunkers proposal would cost 15 times more than an emissions trading scheme to reduce carbon pollution. And no research has been conducted on the fallout on used car dealers from the vehicle buyback policy. ... Opposition innovation spokeswoman Sophie Mirabella said ... 'It makes imported cars more attractive. The used car market will be seriously distorted'. Australian National University climate change academic Frank Jotzo said if the federal government was going to spend \$430m of taxpayers' money, there were far more effective ways of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. 'This kind of scheme is a very high-cost operation if the motivation is reduce greenhouse gas emissions', he said. 'In the US and Europe, the aim of such a scheme was to essentially prop up the car industry after the global financial crisis'."

Ref: Samantha Maiden, Australian, 14/12/10

Investing in Public Transport

"The future prosperity of Melbourne depends on the capacity of the public transport system to deliver increasing numbers of workers and customers to the city. The system can be a source of lifeblood to the city and to its property values; or it can be allowed to become a garrotte. For 50 years, freeway advocates have argued that public transport is a social service for those too old, too young, or too incompetent to drive a car, paid for by taxing car-driving workers; and their arguments were heard. Public transport was starved of investment and maintenance was neglected. Melbourne's last great public transport project, the City Loop, was never quite completed. Ballarat, Geelong and Bendigo lost tram networks; much of regional Victoria lost its passenger trains. Twenty years ago, public transport acquired a green tinge: tram and train passengers use far less energy per kilometre than car drivers and so, environ-mentally aware politicians began cautiously investing in improved rolling stock and better maintenance. But there were no big-ticket items."

"The most compelling reason for investing in public transport isn't the environment; it is money. Property only has value because people want to use it; and they can't use it if they, their customers or their workers can't get to it. Once investors own urban land, they build on it to recover their costs and earn a profit. As they earn a profit, values rise and more investors move in; old buildings give way to new and the process continues. If workers and customers can't get to a city, values stop rising; old buildings are allowed to decay and soon values start falling."

"The geometry of city access is fairly simple: a four-metre reservation can carry about 1800 people an hour in one direction by bus or car; about 6000 people an hour by tram or light rail; and 20,000 or more people an hour by heavy rail. Once there, a worker or customer needs about 10 square metres of floor space while a car needs 36 metres of parking space. An all-car city with ground-level car parking would be limited to about 180,000 square metres of usable floor space; if all parking was in multilevel car parks, this would rise to about 1.5 million square metres; while if most peak-time travel was by fixed-rail public transport a city could support at least 8.5 million square metres. This can be increased almost without limit by raising average building heights.

"World cities such as London and New York rely on fixed-rail services for the majority of their commuters; so do aspiring world cities like Beijing, Shanghai and Delhi. Melbourne has already passed the practical limit for an all-car city. Even with all parking in multilevel car parks, more than 69% of the city area would be used for parking. Melbourne's public transport capacity is about 200,000 train passengers, plus 60,000 tram passengers and 10,000 bus passengers in a two-hour peak period. The Tarneit loop, the only project currently under way, will raise this by 12,000 by separating V/Line from suburban passenger trains from the north and west. That is two years of growth & sustained property values.

"[Victorian Premier] Ted Baillieu is promising to investigate rail extensions to Doncaster and Rowville, and so he should; but these won't do any good unless they actually deliver passengers to the city. Only metro extensions can do that. The East-West link, running from Footscray to Caulfield on new tracks, mainly underground, is not yet committed but offers the possibility of 40,000 extra seats and another six years of growth. But a 10-kilometre \$2 billion tunnel will take a few years to build: the time to start it is now.

"Keeping Melbourne prosperous requires ongoing investment in public transport construction: \$500 million a year sounds a lot but is trivial compared with the annual rental value of the city. The land tax CBD property owners pay already covers the entire operating and capital budgets of the metropolitan public transport system. This golden goose will continue to deliver golden eggs as long as we remember to feed it with an adequate supply of passengers; and that means a continuing, solid investment program."

Ref: John Legge, The Age, 10/12/10

And Also ...

"The newspaper Osservatore Romano reported that with the completion of the giant solar panels in the state, 'the Vatican has reached a small record in solar energy power production per capita: 200 watts at peak times ... per inhabitant, compared to 80 in Germany, the world leader in this field'. ...

"But solar power is not the only thing the Vatican is doing to make the state as green as possible. There are rumours that Vatican officials are researching a more environmentally friendly equivalent to the ... Pope-Mobile. It is hoped that an electric vehicle can be found to substitute the iconic motor vehicle that is used by the Pope when visiting foreign states or making outdoor public appearances."

Ref: Timon Singh, Inhabitat, 12/10/10

<http://inhabitat.com/the-vatican-city-is-the-greenest-state-in-the-world/>

Cycling in Copenhagen (Part 2)

"Andreas Rohl: *In Copenhagen it's mainstream to go on a bicycle. It's everybody. It's all incomes. It's all age groups. ...*

"Felicia Williams: *One of the main things is the separated bike lanes because it makes people feel safer, and the slow speeds of cars also make people feel safer with their kids.*

"Nicole Jensen: *The cargo bikes, you're child's in the front with you. You can put your groceries in there, just total utilitarian everyday kind of stuff. Why wouldn't you ride? ... It just seems so practical and so obvious.*

"Martha Roskowski: *You see these women wearing skirts, dresses, and high heels, and just pedalling around. They obviously feel comfortable taking their kids on bicycles.*

“Tim Blumenthal: One thing that I've noticed here are a lot of really little bikes. They're like four-year-old kids.

“Mikael Colville-Andersen: The kids have training at schools in the third grade and again in the ninth grade. They have to do proficiency tests on the bike lane signalling and all that stuff. My son who's eight was riding on the bike lanes to Kindergarten with me or to day-care when he was three and a half with his training wheels riding along. It's just the way it is. You have to. It's a practical solution. The kids have to start riding so you can get around the city.

“Peter Furth: The drivers get tamed. That's my expression, they get tamed. They look before crossing. Lots of intersections I've seen, a car wants to turn right and just sits there waiting while four, five, six bikes go by, and then, when the coast is clear, then they make their right turn. Drivers are so comfortable and familiar with what to do around cyclists that even when you remove all the infrastructure, in the sense that you're on a street without any bike infrastructure, you still feel very safe.

“Felicia Williams: There is sort of a driver education component, but the speeds are basically what do it. I think that's what brings people down, and people being accustomed to cyclists in general.

“Mikael Colville-Andersen: We trust them on such a fantastic level because that lady, or that guy in the car, they've got a bike at home. They were on the bike lanes when they were five years old, six years old, so we understand each other. We're all cyclists.

“Tim Blumenthal: The more people ride, the more the motorists expect to see cyclists out there, the safer it becomes. There is safety in numbers.

“Jackie Douglas: I've never once had to lift up my bicycle. There are ramps at every stairwell. There are places to put your bicycle. Lovely.

“Jeff Mapes: One of the things that... just is an incredible feeling of freedom here is to roll up to your apartment, or store, or restaurant. You slip your key into that simple little back tire lock, click it, pull the key out, and walk away. No wrapping a chain around a tree or a pole. It makes even shorter bicycle trips more possible.

“Andy Thornley: It's very impressive to see the special infrastructure, the special traffic treatments, the little tiny turn pockets, the traffic signalisation. We have the Green Wave here, the signal timing that supports a continuous and comfortable bicycle movement.

“Andreas Rohl: You have a Green Wave adjusted for the speed of the bicycle instead of to the speed of a car. So we have, for example, a stretch where you can pass. If you travel at 20 kilometres per hour, then you can pass. I think it's 14 traffic lights. They'll all be green for you.

“Ida Auken: This is the Danish Parliament, where I work. One of our big victories in recent years was we got about 10, 15 parking lots shoved down and turned into bike parking. Every morning you'll see Parliamentarians. You'll see all the people working in the Parliament coming with their bikes, placing them in front of the Parliament.

“Martha Roskowski: Copenhagen has hit some point of transformation where bicycling is cheaper, easier, quicker, perhaps safer than any other mode of transportation. And so, it's just what people do.

“Andy Clarke: We could do this fairly easily and fairly inexpensively in just about any US city. The only thing that we would need to do is have the will and the political power to squeeze the cars a bit. We like to say, just to put people at ease, that Copenhagen didn't do it overnight. It took 40 years to get where they are today. We don't have the luxury of waiting 40 years to get to that point in US cities. We have to do it a lot more quickly.

“Jan Gehl: To me, it is fantastic to be in a city where every morning when you wake up, you have the feeling that the city is a little bit better than it was yesterday. It's remarkable to have that feeling every morning for forty fifty years. That is the case in Copenhagen.”

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

See the full transcript and video at:

www.streetfilms.org/cycling-copenhagen-through-north-american-eyes/

US Rail Policy Hearings (Part 3)

"While we have made significant public investments in highway, aviation, transit and waterway infrastructure over the past 30 years, the same cannot be said for rail. The Administration believes that we need to take a new look at rail transportation – both freight and passenger. Indeed, freight rail has often been off our radar screens except when there was an accident. Yet 40% of U.S. freight, when measured on a ton-mile basis, moves by rail. Intercity passenger rail also plays a significant role in meeting mobility needs in several intercity corridors; and commuter rail service has experienced a sustained period of growth.

"Rail is safe. According to the Bureau of Transportation Statistics' National Transportation Statistics, 2010 the fatality rate related to movement of intermodal containers by rail is nine times better than moving similar containers by highway. Passenger rail is also safer than travel by auto. Rail is an efficient user of infrastructure and right-of-way thus having a positive effect on our efforts to maintain assets in a state of good repair and to offset the demand for investments in other forms of transportation. Some estimate that to compensate for shutting down Amtrak's Northeast Corridor would require the addition of seven new lanes to I-95. Given the cost of highway construction, particularly in urban areas, rail construction is a sound investment. On the freight side, a single intermodal train moves the equivalent of 300 truck movements. And, for the last 30 years, freight rail service has consistently attracted private capital into building and maintaining needed infrastructure. Rail contributes to our economic competitiveness. Rail's efficient access to ports facilitates the global trade for key areas of our economy such as agriculture. Rail investment also offers a significant opportunity to develop and expand domestic manufacturing in the atrophied rail supply industries. Rail is integral to the development and growth of our nation's regional economies.

"Rail transportation can be a key element of our strategies for enhancing the livability of our communities. Rail transportation played a key role in the development of the U.S. in the 19th and first half of the 20th Century. Many communities grew up around their rail connection. Now those urban rail corridors offer significant opportunities to increase public transportation and reduce dependence upon single passenger automobile travel. But this must be done without impacting critical freight mobility. "Approximately 57% of petroleum used in the U.S. is imported, and approximately 71% of U.S. consumption of petroleum is by the transportation sector (of which rail's share is 2.13%). Studies by the Federal Railroad Administration have concluded¹ that transporting freight by rail, when measured on a gallons per ton-mile basis, is 3 to 4 times more energy efficient than moving that same freight over a highway. Passenger rail is 21% more energy efficient when measured on a BTUs per passenger mile basis. Not only does rail offer the opportunity to reduce our dependence on petroleum products but also the greenhouse emissions that result.

"The President's High-Speed Intercity Passenger Rail Program is one of the Administration's most high-profile transportation initiatives. Through this program we seek to bring the benefits of high performing intercity passenger rail service to regions across the country. Our vision is of a multi-tiered passenger rail network, with services that are designed to meet the mobility demand of the regions they serve, and that are integrated in the local public and highway systems. Thus, at one end of the spectrum we envision services at sustained peak speeds of 150 to 220 mph, on dedicated infrastructure, serving large urban areas particularly those experiencing highway and airline congestion. As part of the network, we also envision a Regional network linking the Express service to mid-sized urban areas with convenient, frequent service at sustained peak speeds of 90 to 125 mph. We see emerging high-speed rail and Feeder routes that will connect regional urban areas to the intercity passenger rail network.

"We envision that Regional, Emerging and Feeder elements of the passenger rail network will be built upon a mixture of dedicated rail infrastructure and infrastructure and/or rights-of-way shared with freight operations. In closing, America's economy depends upon an efficient, safe and reliable transportation system. The Obama Administration believes that rail can play an increasingly important role in meeting our freight and passenger mobility needs. But this cannot be just a responsibility of the Administration and the Congress. It requires commitments from our States and local partners. They too need to put into place the appropriate policies, program structures and investments, both public and private to achieve this enhanced opportunity for rail."

Ref: John D. Porcari, Deputy Secretary of Transportation , US Senate Hearings, 15/9/09

¹ The FRA fuel use study can be found at

http://www.fra.dot.gov/Downloads/Comparative_Evaluation_Rail_Truck_Fuel_Efficiency.pdf.

Technophilia (Part 2)

"Techno-inflation is most likely in cultures on the cutting edge of technology (itself a telling term, as if the future can only be met with a manly sword). A good example of techno-inflation occurred when the first anti-lock brakes appeared, in Germany, in 1972. As part of a trial, half of Munich's taxi fleet was fitted with ABS brakes, while the other half was left standard as control. Six months of data later revealed that the ABS-equipped taxis had a much higher accident rate than the standard cars. How could this be? The ABS was supposed to be a safety device. Detailed investigation revealed two crucial facts. Because the ABS cars stopped more efficiently, they were often hit from behind by standard cars that couldn't stop as well. The second was the discovery of the phenomenon of 'safety consumption'. Drivers of ABS cars were found to have driven at higher average speeds and braked later than other drivers. Because they thought their cars were safer, techno-inflation made them take more risks. This consumed the supposed safety margin offered by the new technology. This doesn't mean ABS brakes are bad. It's natural for us to want things to be better. But we need to be careful not to think that everything can be improved, or that every supposed improvement will lead to a better outcome. Though most of today's cars have ABS brakes, it's hard not to think this apparent advance is there to balance the hazard of more powerful engines.

"Someone once said we're drawn to the decade preceding our birth, and thus seek our future in the past, as much as what we think is to come. It's comforting to keep what we know, instead of stressing to meet the new. We make that decision every day, when tantalised by the next best thing, or when having it forced down our throats. We compare the pixel count and the refresh rate on the latest plasma screen. It claims to offer the nearest thing to reality yet. But then, some of us still remember reality, and haven't found anything in the pixelated, digitised world that compares favourably to it.

"There is a saying among cyclists that 'steel is real'. This may seem trite. But after riding a \$12,000 carbon bike and then mounting my old restored steel throw-out, I know what it means. Some things just can't be improved, or if 'improved', are not as good as they were. Like the chopstick, the bicycle is a technology close to its ultimate form, thanks to its basic elements of triangulation and the wheel. You can hone the details and tweak the components for minute gains in efficiency and weight, but you're constrained, along with so much in our age, by the law of diminishing returns. Like it or not, it's a law that also enforces diminished expectations. But this is no tragedy. Many of us find more pleasure being satisfied with what we have, than by getting what we want. There's also the pleasure gained at seeing the look on the face of the chap with the latest carbon marvel, as you pass him uphill on your old crate. He is a man who believes in redundancy, but fails to recognise that his machine was obsolete the moment he wheeled it from the store. He didn't know that everything is retro, no longer cutting-edge, from the moment it's created.

"And yes, he and I share so much. We both cleave the same air as we ride, and hear the wheels sing under us. We each relish the highs and lows of testing our hunter-gatherer biology to its limit, as nature intended, on bicycles. Eventually the technophile may realise what we contrarians already know: that time doesn't have a direction. Or direction posts. That's why we don't peer ahead, pining for the next best thing. We already have it. We found our little piece of the future on a nearby nature strip, saved it from the crusher, and restored it, fit to ride another day."



Saltburn-by-the-sea, Redcar and Cleveland. This railway, clinging precariously to the cliff top, started its life in 1872.

Photo :Ian Hay/Royal Geographical Society, The Guardian, 23/9/10

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

www.abc.net.au/rn/ockhamsrazor/stories/2010/2935923.htm