

Oil Prices & Economic Recovery

"Tony Eastley: *There are worrying signs that the basic needs of the world's population are reaching a critical point.... And there are also warnings that oil prices are in a danger zone which could derail global economic recovery. ...*

"Simon Lauder: *The International Energy Agency says oil prices could threaten economic recovery. The agency's chief economist Fatih Birol has told the Financial Times newspaper 'Oil prices are entering a dangerous zone for the global economy and oil import bills are becoming a threat to economic recovery'. There have already been calls for OPEC to increase oil production to bring costs down.*

"Graeme Bethune: *OPEC has got a huge amount of spare capacity shut in and that's one reason also why oil prices have moved up. OPEC doesn't want the world economy to stall ... so I'm sure they'll be keeping a close eye too and we could actually see OPEC increase production if prices get too high.*

"Simon Lauder: *As stocks decline and demand increases most analysts predict oil prices will continue to rise this year. The impact could be felt much more widely than the local petrol station."*

Ref: AM, ABC Radio, 6/1/11

www.abc.net.au/am/content/2010/s3107278.htm

Cycling Ahead

"Over 11.5 million bikes were sold in [Australia in the past decade with] over 1.3 million bikes [sold] in 2010. ... The Australian Government is facing critical decisions on key transport issues. In 2005 the cost in lost productivity through transport congestion was \$9 billion per year, forecast to grow to \$20 billion per year by 2020. We are facing an obesity crisis, the average Australian would get their daily requirements of physical activity if they walked, rode a bicycle or caught public transport to work. The use of bicycles for transport, recreation and fitness continues to have increasing benefits to the Australian economy and these will continue to increase as bicycle sales continue to grow."

Ref: Media Release, Cycling Promotion Fund, 5/1/11

Walk Friendly Communities in the US

"The Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Centre (PBIC) has introduced a new program, Walk Friendly Communities (WFC). The recognition program is a livability initiative in conjunction with the Federal Highway Administration and FedEx to encourage communities to adopt or recommit to a higher standard of safe walking. The program involves assessing communities' conditions related to walking (including safety, mobility, access and comfort), providing feedback and technical support, and recognizing those that set the bar in fostering and accommodating walking."

Ref: PBIC Messenger, Autumn 2010

<http://www.pedbikeinfo.org/newsletter/fall2010.html>

Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Centre sites:

- [How to Develop a Pedestrian Safety Action Plan](#)
- [A Resident's Guide for Creating Safe and Walkable Communities](#)
- [PBIC Case Study Compendium](#)
- [Safety Effects of Marked vs Unmarked Crosswalks at Uncontrolled](#)
- [The National Bicycling and Walking Study: 15-Year Status Report](#)
- [Pedestrian and Bicyclist Safety and Mobility in Europe](#)
- [Walkability Checklist](#)
- [Bikeability Checklist](#)
- [PBIC University Course](#) (Bike & Pedestrian Planning Course)
- [FHWA University Course](#) (Bike & Pedestrian Transport Course)

Ref: PBIC Messenger, Autumn 2010 <http://www.pedbikeinfo.org/newsletter/fall2010.html>

Ferries in the US

"According to the 190 ferry operators responding to the 2008 National Census of Ferry Operators, more than 82 million passengers and over 25 million vehicles were carried on their vessels in the United States. As reported in 2008, the ferry systems that carried the most passengers and vehicles in 2008 were the New York City Department of Transportation Ferry Division (Staten Island Ferry) which carried 19 million passengers, but no vehicles, and the Washington State Ferries that carried over 13 million passengers and almost 11 million vehicles. In addition, California, Louisiana, Massachusetts, New Jersey, North Carolina, Ohio, Texas, and Virginia all had ferry systems that carried over 1 million passengers. ... In addition to the ferries that operate solely inside the United States, [they] identified 28 ferries that sailed in 2009 to the United States from a port in Canada, Mexico, the British Virgin Islands, or the Dominican Republic."

Ref: Review of Ferry Security Measures, US Govt Accountability Office, December 2010

<http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d11207.pdf>



*"We're **so** lucky!
We've got ferries at the bottom
of our garden."*

More on Car Fuels in Canada

"Gwyn Morgan's article [in #182] contained errors and misinterpretations about the potential for electric cars in Canada. Due to the relative low cost of electricity in Canada, operating a battery electric car will cost 1 to 2 cents per kilometre, compared to 6 cents per kilometre for a similar car on gasoline. Even a doubling of electricity costs will still leave a huge cost saving for electric over gasoline mode. And, gasoline prices are also predicted to rise significantly in the coming years as world demand exceeds supply."

"On a national scale, 500,000 electric vehicles would only add an electrical supply increase of 2% on the grid. And, if these vehicles are charged in off peak periods, which technology will encourage, the extra supply needed is zero. It is agreed that a concentration of electric vehicle owners on a street may require upgrades to local transformers but this is a small, affordable and manageable task."

"Electric vehicles are green – particularly in provinces where the electricity is mostly generated from hydro – i.e. British Columbia, Manitoba, Quebec and Newfoundland/Labrador. Because of the super efficiency of electric motors compared to gasoline engines, even in provinces where coal and natural gas is used for generating electricity, there is still the potential for up to 30% reduction in greenhouse gases from electric vehicles."

"True, battery electric cars will have limited range. But consider that most Canadians travel less than 20 km on the way to and from work, and that the range of electric vehicles will start at about 60 km, electric vehicles are ideal for urban commuting trips. True Canada has cold winters and hot summers. Both conditions will place further strain on the batteries and limit the range travelled as power is used to cool or heat the vehicle. However, the remaining power will be sufficient to meet most urban travel. The alternative to electric cars – continued dependence on a depleting source of fossil fuels – is keeping our head in the sand. Electric vehicles, both battery only or plug-in hybrid technologies, present the only viable short term alternative to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels."

Ref: Al Cormier, The Globe & Mail, 14/12/10

"With a wealth of natural gas resources (and proven reserves), technology in place, and the electric car looking increasingly difficult and less environmentally friendly, why is it that the natural gas-powered vehicle is seeing no love? While an infrastructure distribution grid would need to be built, it could (at least theoretically) tie in with the existing pipelines and home heating gas services. When oil prices get high enough, natural gas will seem a great bargain; never mind the currently depressed prices... One great advantage is that you can convert the millions of existing vehicles from gasoline to natural gas. Yes there's a cost; but its way cheaper than replacing present vehicles with new electric cars. And this process will buy us time to develop better solutions to the problem than electric."

Ref: Reader's Comment, The Globe & Mail, 13/12/10

And Also ...

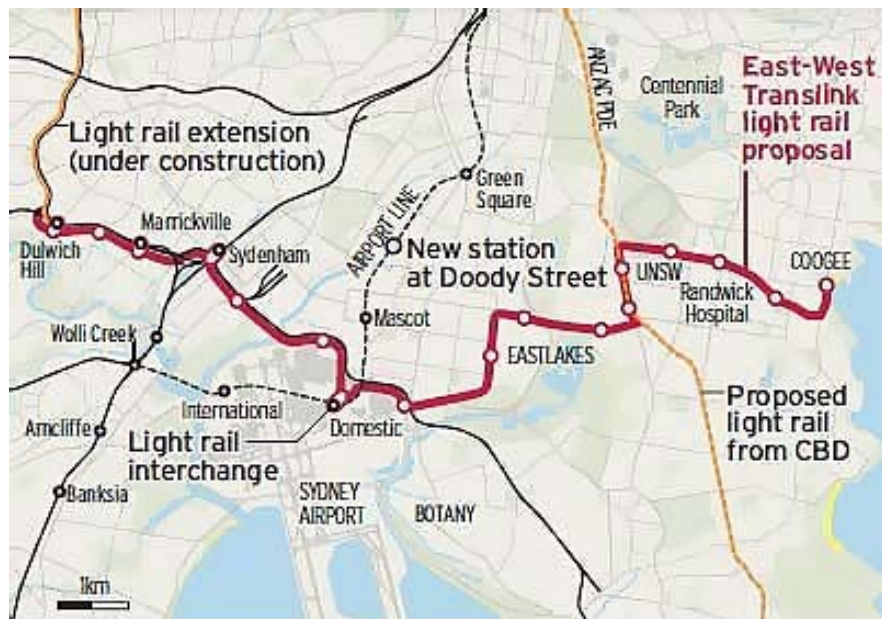
"From the outside the Chevrolet Volt - which will be sold as a Holden from 2012 - looks like a regular, stylish five-door hatchback. But there are some telltale signs it's different to the regular compact car crop. The anticipated \$50,000-plus price tag is the first one."

Ref: Toby Hagon, The Age, 12/1/11

Sydney's East-West Light Rail Plan

"A plan to buy out the privately run stations on the airport rail line, and link inner western and south-eastern Sydney with light rail via Sydney Airport and the job-rich Mascot area, has gained support from local government, transport, education and sporting bodies. The City of Sydney, the Sydney Airports Corporation, the University of NSW, the Sydney Cricket Ground and Randwick Racecourse all have backed the plan by EcoTransit and the Australian Conservation Foundation. ...

"A spokesman for the Lord Mayor, Clover Moore, said: 'The City has repeatedly called for elimination of the additional station fee that makes train fares high on the Airport Rail Link, to ensure adequate, affordable transport for people who will live and work in the Green Square area. We also support extending light rail and cycleways that support redevelopment opportunities, expanding rail services and shifting container trucks to rail'. ... A Sydney Airport spokesman told the Herald the airport had 'called on the NSW government to reform fares on the existing rail service to the airport, as this would quickly increase the number of people travelling by train'. Last year 33 million passengers went through the airport, and up to 16,000 staff work in or around the terminals. 'Fare reform would benefit both passengers and airport employees and reduce congestion on the regional road network' the spokesman said. ...



the NSW government to reform fares on the existing rail service to the airport, as this would quickly increase the number of people travelling by train'. Last year 33 million passengers went through the airport, and up to 16,000 staff work in or around the terminals.

'Fare reform would benefit both passengers and airport employees and reduce congestion on the regional road network' the spokesman said. ...

"Darren Pearce, the chief executive at Randwick Racecourse ... said: 'A light rail mass transit system that could move people quickly, efficiently and safely to the major venues in the area would make a significant difference to our ability to attract and present major events in NSW'. The Herald understands that in negotiations this year between the Centennial Park and Moore Park Trust and NSW government, the trust made a submission in which the building of a light rail link was a top priority."

Ref: Andrew West & Tom Reilly, SMH, 15/12/10

The Cost of Road Crashes

"Road safety is critically important ... Every year, lives are lost and people are permanently injured as a result of road crashes. The cost to Australia alone is estimated at about \$27 billion each year."

Ref: Anthony Albanese, Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, 15/12/10

And Also ...

"The sultry voice of an Amtrak Southwest Chief conductor lulled me into believing the food might be edible."

Ref: Julie Perrin, The Age, 9/1/11

Thailand Report (Part 1)

In preparing to visit Thailand in October last year I came across a document called: *"Bangkok Declaration – Sustainable Transport Goals for 2010-2020"*. This impressive paper is effectively a blueprint for sustainable Asian cities for which the authors are to be congratulated. I believe the measures outlined are exactly those needed to create more liveable and equitable cities. It's also good to see the various participating countries acting in unison.

The declaration was signed in Bangkok (hence the title) in August 2010. It is not a binding document but rather a statement of intention of implementation over the next ten years. The problem – at least for Thailand – as it was explained to me in Bangkok in November 2010, is that while they have the declared intentions, there is no action plan as such to implement the measures.

This is not to say that there are not good things happening in Thailand with regards to sustainable design and transport – there most certainly are, and we will come to those initiatives in future editions. The problem for cities like Bangkok is that the present situation is dire, and with rising oil prices around the corner, matters are likely to get much worse. Many readers will have heard of (or experienced) Bangkok's notorious traffic jams.

I had, while in Bangkok, an appointment with one of the directors of the Pollution Control Department. His office being too far to walk in the heat, and unsure of the local buses or in fact the exact location of the office, I opted for a taxi. Soon after I climbed aboard, we were in a traffic jam. In twenty-five minutes we moved less than 100 metres. But this was no local jam or isolated incident, this was cross-city gridlock. Bangkok is a city in crisis and the situation will be compounded by a rising middle class, anxious to demonstrate wealth, status and independence with private car ownership.

Not only were the taxis and cars blocking each other, they were also trapping the (typically full) public buses which in turn were belching out fumes, adding to the pollution problem and the heat island effect in an already climatically hot city. By the time I arrived (very late) for my appointment at the Pollution Control Department the problems of the city were pretty obvious.

After the meeting, rather than endure a return trip under the same circumstances, I endeavoured to head across the northern part of the city to the river where I had hoped to catch a ferry back to my hotel. Again the city was in grid lock. Eventually, after weaving through back streets, I thought we were near the river only to be thwarted by a local traffic jam. In exasperation my taxi driver summoned a motor bike and I was taken as a pillion passenger, at high speed, down the wrong side of the road, to a ferry wharf.

And the cause of this local traffic jam? There was a school, and the access road to the wharf was completely blocked for at least a kilometre by private vehicles waiting to pick up the children. One or two buses would have freed the road. These are just symptomatic examples.



Bangkok Traffic

Photo taken from a public bus. November 2010



Petrochemical Smog over Bangkok

Photo taken from a Pollution Control Department window.
November 2010

The real question is how to implement the proposals of the Bangkok Declaration [see below]. I believe that first we need to identify the champions within the respective governments and the external champions that can help guide the process.

There is an economic advantage to the sustainability measures outlined in the Declaration, and it will be the smart cities that first come to that realisation. Sooner or later, all cities will be driven towards the sustainable goals, through the effects, of pollution, the cost of congestion, the cost of fuel, and/or Climate Change itself. {Continued in #184}

Stephen Ingrouille, January 2011

☞ We are seeking feedback on this subject

Bangkok Declaration (Part 1)

– Sustainable Transport Goals for 2010-2020

"We, the participants, who are representatives of Asian countries (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, People's Republic of China, Indonesia, India, Japan, Republic of Korea, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, the Philippines, Pakistan, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Viet Nam), international organizations, bilateral and multilateral agencies, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), research organizations, and expert sustainable transport professionals, having met at the Fifth Regional Environmentally Sustainable Transport (EST) Forum in Asia, held in Bangkok, Kingdom of Thailand, from 23 to 25 August 2010, to draft and adopt a declaration, the Bangkok 2020 Declaration, in order to demonstrate our renewed interest in, and commitment to, realizing a promising decade (2010-2020) of sustainable actions and measures for achieving safe, secure, quick, reliable, affordable, efficient and people-centric and environment friendly transport in rapidly urbanizing Asia,

"Noting the identification of transport as a theme under Agenda 21 on sustainable development and the outcome of the high-level meeting of the 9th session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-9) in 2001 which reached important decisions on transport sector issues concluding that improving transport systems to promote sustainable development, including improving accessibility, can foster economic and social development, help integrate developing countries into the world economy, and contribute to the eradication of poverty,

"Reaffirming and building upon the Aichi Statement agreed upon by the participants at the First Regional EST Forum, held in Nagoya, Aichi Prefecture, Japan, on 1-2 August 2005, and its integrated approach to promoting environmentally sustainable transport will result not only in the improvement of human health through the reduction of urban air pollution, but also the reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, deaths and injuries from road accidents, harmful noise levels, and traffic congestion,

"Reaffirming and building upon the Seoul Statement, agreed upon by the participants at the Fourth Regional EST Forum, held in Seoul, Republic of Korea, from 24 to 26 February 2009, that urged the need to address transport issues within the context of the broader environmental aims of Green Growth to encompass the transport-energy-carbon emission nexus, to develop strategies for low carbon transport that include a shift to energy-efficient and low carbon modes to enhance energy security, and mitigate the effects of transport on climate as well as of climate change on transport services and other socioeconomic sectors,

"Noting the findings of the 18th Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD - 18) held in May 2010, that basic transport infrastructure and services are still lacking or inadequate in many developing countries (both in urban and rural areas), making it difficult for the poor, including women, youth, and children, to access basic services, including those related to health and education, and for workers to have access to jobs, and that in the case of rural areas lack of adequate rural transport infrastructure perpetuates poverty, poses constraints on the marketing of agricultural produce and other income-generating opportunities, and thus hampers efforts to achieve the internationally agreed Millennium Development Goals (MDGs),

"Noting that transport-related carbon dioxide emissions are projected by international bodies to increase approximately 57 per cent worldwide in the period 2005-2030, whereby the largest part of this increase would come from the increase in private motorized vehicles in Asia,

"Noting the UN General Assembly Resolution (64/255) of 2 March 2010 on improving global road safety, proclaimed 2011 - 2020 as a decade of action for road safety, and deeply concerned that about half of all road traffic fatalities and injuries occur in the Asian and Pacific region, most of which are related to vulnerable road users such as pedestrians, children, and cyclists, due to streets that lack the necessary safety infrastructure such as exclusive pedestrian and bicycle lanes, safe street crossings, kerb ramps for the disabled, and lack of post-accident care,

"Recognizing the specific mobility needs of low-income groups, as well as women, children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities which must be addressed to achieve socially-equitable communities and a better quality of life for all,

"Acknowledging the importance of an EST strategy based upon the concept of Avoiding unnecessary motorised transport - Shifting to more sustainable transport modes and - Improving transport practices and technologies."

{Continued in #184}

For the full declaration and the annex see:

Ref: www.itdp.org/documents/Final_Bangkok-Declaration_25ug2010_rev.pdf

Evolution of a Park (Part 2)



Car parking spaces are appropriated to expand a small triangular park at Albert Park, Melbourne, Victoria, May 2008



Traffic calming measures are employed to narrow an adjoining road (as shown above). On the other side of the intersection with the main road, similar measures are used to calm the traffic and improve the amenity. May 2008

Retrofitting Suburbia (Part 2)

"The other big dynamic of change is the sheer performance of underperforming asphalt. Now I keep thinking this would be a great name for an indie rock band. But developers generally use it to refer to underused parking lots. And suburbia is full of them. When the post-war suburbs were first built out on the cheap land away from downtown, it made sense to just build surface parking lots. But those sites have now been leapfrogged and leapfrogged again, as we've just continued to sprawl. And they now have a relatively central location. It no longer make sense. That land is more valuable than just surface parking lots. ... So what do you do with a dead mall, dead office park? It turns out, all sorts of things. ...

"A dead mall in St. Louis [has] been re-inhabited as art-space. It's now home to artist studios, theatre groups, dance troupes. It's not pulling in as much tax revenue as it once was. But it's serving its community. It's keeping the lights on. It's becoming, I think, a really great institution. Other malls have been re-inhabited as nursing homes, as universities, and as all variety of office space. We also found a lot of examples of dead big box stores that have been converted into all sorts of community-serving uses as well – lots of schools, lots of churches and lots of libraries like this one.

"A Food Lion grocery store ... is now a public library. In addition to, I think, doing a beautiful adaptive reuse, they tore up some of the parking spaces, put in bio-swales to collect and clean the runoff, put in a lot more footpaths to connect to the neighbourhoods. And they've made what was just a store along a commercial strip, into a community gathering space. This one is a little L-shaped strip shopping centre in Phoenix, Arizona. Really all they did was they gave it a fresh coat of bright paint, a gourmet grocery, and they put up a restaurant in the old post office. Never underestimate the power of food to turn a place around and make it a destination.

"It's been so successful; they've now taken over the strip across the street. And the real estate ads in the neighbourhood all very proudly proclaim, 'Walking distance to Le Grande Orange', because it provided its neighbourhood with what sociologists like to call 'a third place'. If home is the first place and work is the second place, the third place is where you go to hang out and build community. And especially as suburbia is becoming less centred on the family, the family households, there's a real hunger for more third places. So the most dramatic retrofits are those in the next category, the next strategy, redevelopment. Now, during the boom, there were several, really dramatic redevelopment projects where the original building was scraped to the ground and the whole site was rebuilt at significantly greater density, a sort of compact, walkable urban neighbourhoods.

"But some of them have been much more incremental. This is Mashpee Commons, the oldest retrofit that we found. And it's just incrementally, over the last 20 years, built urbanism on top of its parking lots. So the black and white photo shows the simple 60's strip shopping centre. And then the maps above that show its gradual transformation into a compact, mixed use New England village, and it has plans now that have been approved for it to connect to new residential neighbourhoods across the arterials and over to the other side. So, you know, sometimes it's incremental. ...

"This is another infill project on the parking lots, this one of an office park outside of Washington D.C. When Metrorail expanded transit into the suburbs and opened a station nearby to this site, the owners decided to build a new parking deck and then insert on top of their surface lots a new Main Street, several apartments and condo buildings, while keeping the existing office buildings. Here is the site in 1940. It was just a little farm in the village of Hyattsville. By 1980 it had been subdivided into a big mall on one side and the office park on the other. And then some buffer sites for a library and a church to the far right.

"Today, the transit, the Main Street and the new housing have all been built. Eventually, I expect that the streets will probably extend through a redevelopment of the mall. Plans have already been announced for a lot of those garden apartments above the mall to be redeveloped. Transit is a big driver of retrofits. So here's what it looks like. You can sort of see the funky new condo buildings in-between the office buildings and the public space and the new Main Street. This one is one of my favourites, Belmar. I think they really built an attractive place here and have just employed all green construction. There's massive PV arrays on the roofs as well as wind turbines." {Continued in #184}

Ref: Ellen Dunham-Jones, Ted Talks, Jan 2010

www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/ellen_dunham_jones_retrofitting_suburbia.html

Carpooling in Florida

"With traffic congestion a growing concern and consumer budgetary and environmental consciousness at an all-time high, South Florida Commuter Services is promoting carpooling, vanpooling, and taking transit to work. As issues of time, costs, and carbon footprints continue to concern commuters, South Florida Commuter Services reminds area residents of the quick, economical, and greener alternatives to driving alone. A recent study by the US Census Bureau found that the average South Floridian spends 56 minutes daily commuting, this is among the longest in the nation. However, in this statistic South Florida Commuter Services sees an opportunity for local commuters. With timely transit options, as well as carpool matching and vanpool programs, commuters have alternatives that can help alleviate congestion as frustration over traffic grows. As an added incentive registered carpools of three or more people, hybrid vehicles, and South Florida vanpools enjoy free use of the I-95 express lanes.

"Currently, 79% of South Floridians drive to work alone, absorbing the nearly US\$7,000 worth of annual driving costs (accounting for petrol, maintenance, tolls, etc.). Carpools allow commuters to cut this number in half by sharing the ride with just one person, and even further by carpooling with two or more people. In addition, vanpools vastly decrease the mileage put on personally owned vehicles, greatly reducing maintenance costs from the daily commute. Consumers are also more environmentally conscious than ever, and as the American Public Transportation Association found in a recent study, cars account for 55% of the average household's carbon footprint. South Florida Commuter Services' programs strive to reduce the number of cars on the road, which in turn helps to reduce smog and greenhouse gasses in the Miami-Dade area. New initiatives, such as hybrid and bio-diesel powered buses, as well as solar powered bus shelters, offer consumers numerous ways to commute in a more environmentally friendly manner."

Ref: Traffic Technology Today, 20/9/10

