

False Thinking = Poor Planning

"Residents in the outer suburbs should not have to wait for higher housing densities before getting better public transport, according to research that could defuse one of the most bitter controversies in urban planning. In a paper for the journal Australian Planner, Dr John Stone, of the University of Melbourne, and Dr Paul Mees, of RMIT University, argue that many city dwellers have been presented with a false choice - live in apartments and enjoy good public transport or retain the house and land and rely on cars. 'Many planners, and other commentators on urban issues, appear to believe that getting significantly more people on public transport will not be possible until massive changes in suburban densities are achieved', they write. 'The evidence challenges this view'.

"Their study - which is part of a collection being prepared for the Council of Australian Governments on the dangers of relying on diminishing supplies of oil - finds that cities with densities comparable with Melbourne and Sydney, such as Toronto, Ottawa and greater New York, have better public transport than Australia's two biggest cities. While greater New York, not just the skyscraper-dominated Manhattan, has 20.5 people to the hectare, Sydney has 20.4 people. Melbourne, with 15.7 people to the hectare, has only slightly lower density than Ottawa, with 17.2 people. Their research compares public transport in similar North American cities, and some European cities ...

"Dr Mees said higher densities did not always mean better mass transit, citing the relatively low rail and bus use in Los Angeles, even though it is the most densely populated city in the United States. 'There is no doubt that a compact and connected urban form enhances the potential for oil-free mobility through walking, cycling, and greater public transport use', the authors write. 'However, we ... argue that it is not necessary to intensify land-use across the whole city before significant improvement in both patronage and economic efficiency of public transport becomes possible'. The keys to increasing public transport use in outer suburbs are more frequent buses, running at least every 10-15 minutes, and not just in peak hour; better co-ordination with rail services; more convenient transfers; and fares that allow free transfers between modes."

Ref: Andrew West, The Age, 5/1/11

And Also ...

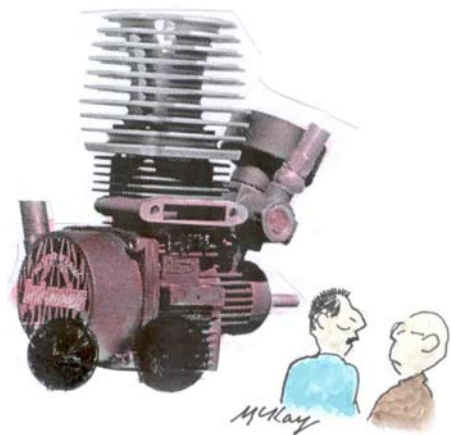
"Around 85% of our cars [in Australia] are imported."

Ref: Richard Webb, The Age, 19/11/10

Fuel Cell Light Rail Locomotive

"China's first new energy fuel cell light rail locomotive adopts hydrogen as the energy for the fuel cells as well as the world advanced permanent-magnet synchronous motor and frequency converter independently developed by the China North Vehicle Yongji Electric Motor Corporation as its main source of power. ... This new energy fuel cell light rail locomotive has many potential applications as well as huge economic and environmental benefits in fields such as railways, subways, urban-suburban light rail railways and mining. The permanent-magnet synchronous motor ... has advantages, such as high power, high efficiency, remarkable energy conservation and low vibration and noise. It can achieve the high performance that traditional motors cannot achieve and also can be developed into a special motor and highly-efficient energy-conservation motor to meet specific operational requirements. It can conserve 10% to 20% of integrated energy on average and has been successfully applied in many fields. It is also an important development direction for China's motor industry to adjust its industrial structure [and provide] a solution for the electrification of China's urban public transportation and the traffic congestion panic."

Ref: People's Daily Online, 26/11/10



'Does it come with mag wheels?'

And Also ...

"No one is shedding a tear for the demise of the cash-for-clunkers program."

Ref: John Conner, SMH, 28/1/11

Car Restrictions for Dhaka?

"Bangladesh's finance minister, AMA Muhith, has revealed the government is thinking about restricting private cars in order to make Dhaka's public transport system more efficient, although he did not say when this decision would come into force. 'Private cars with less than four or five passengers will not be allowed to ply the city streets', he told The Daily Star at his Secretariat office. He did, however, admit the government's failure in controlling the traffic situation in the capital city.

"Former director of UN ESCAP and transport expert Dr Rahamatullah welcomed the government move but not without reservations. 'It [restriction] is very much in system. But you cannot do it unless you develop your public transport system', he said. 'You can impose penalties instead of stopping cars', he continued. Such a restriction should be imposed on certain areas, not on all roads, he added. He cited examples of Bangkok, Singapore and the USA. In Singapore, a car with four passengers does not have to pay congestion charge while in the USA a car with more than two passengers is allowed to use the car-pool lane. Bangkok encourages car-pooling too. He suggested that the government introduces luxury air-conditioned bus services, similar to Bangkok, to get the wealthy more interested in using public transport.



Photo: Traffic Technology Today

"Not letting cars on Dhaka streets, unless it is packed with passengers, could be a first, reports The Daily Star. Many cities impose hefty fees on vehicles jamming up city centres but they are never prevented from plying. In London, a stiff congestion charge is levied on private vehicles for using roads in certain parts of the capital. Almost all major cities in Europe, the USA and Asia apply some kind of similar restrictions.

Dhaka has got numerous problems, the most irritating of which is the ever-increasing travel-time due to the clogging up of roads by vehicles. Quite often, vehicles need to wait for 30 minutes or more at a single set of lights. Even though the government assumed power promising to ease traffic congestions, the city's residents have not seen any significant progress in two years."

Ref: Traffic Technology Today, 23/12/10

Car Restrictions for Beijing

"Beijing is a city in crisis. It is, more or less, a microcosm of the world at large: smog and traffic congestion are choking China's capital. This year, 4.7 million cars were sold in Beijing alone; nearly twice the number sold just five years ago. Despite a new subway system, the roads remain grid-locked, and the Beijing municipal government has had enough. From 2011, radical changes will be introduced to the city's traffic and vehicle registration laws to make it the city that bit more liveable. This year, roughly 720,000 new vehicle registrations were issued for micro-vans and cars. In 2011, this number will be slashed to a third. Only registered Beijing residents will be able to purchase a license, and only Beijing registered vehicles will be allowed in the city during rush hour. Parking fees are also set to increase."

Ref: Tristan Hankins, Carscoop, 28/12/10

The Cycling Kings of Bhutan

"Bhutan has pioneered the use of Gross National Happiness (GNH) as a measure of progress, instead of the more commonly used GNP. GNH measures not only economic activity, but also cultural, ecological, and spiritual well-being.

"Madhu Suri Prakash: People [are] walking and talking less and driving more due to foreign influences. How is Bhutan reducing harmful outside influences, without walling off the world?

"Prime Minister Thinley: This has to be done not only through speech but through action. I'm very happy to tell you that our two kings – the fourth king who is now in retirement and the present king who sits on the throne – have very recently started bicycling. I have spoken on this subject and I'm trying to

raise ways and means to make it easy to buy bicycles. ... And one business that is doing very well, especially in the last four or five months is bicycle vendors. The idea is to make Bhutan a bicycle culture, supported by a public transportation system. We are in the process of making it more expensive to drive private vehicles."

Ref: Madhu Suri Prakash, Yes Magazine, 14/1/11

www.yesmagazine.org/issues/what-happy-families-know/why-the-kings-of-bhutan-ride-bicycles

The Challenge for Developing Cities "Researchers examined data from 100 cities in 33 nations for clues about which were the biggest polluters and why, according to the report in the peer-reviewed journal *Environment and Urbanisation*. ... Most cities in Africa, Asia and Latin America have low emissions per person. The challenge for them is to keep these emissions low even as their wealth grows."

Ref: Sky News, 26/1/11

Thailand Report (Part 3)

This report by necessity is highlighting some of the major issues of transport in Thailand, in particular traffic gridlock and pollution in Bangkok. This is not to say that there are not excellent transit initiatives in Thailand but while there has been investment in quality mass transit systems there has also been a program of building massive elevated motorways which seems to exacerbate the problems of congestion. Following is a brief summary of some of passenger transport modes in Thailand:

Automobiles Those travelling across Bangkok can not help but notice the massive expenditure on motorways and the number of times these are clogged to a standstill. The inference is that building more motorways simply attracts more traffic. Conversely, not building these motorways should lead to less traffic congestion as long as the motorway funds are redirected to mass transit and active modes (walking and cycling).

Elevated & Underground Railways Visitors arriving in Bangkok via the international airport now have the choice of two impressive rail services that travel about 20 kilometres from the airport into the city: a commuter train for 15 bart (about 50 cents) and the slightly faster and more comfortable express train for 100 bart (about \$3.45). These connect to two excellent north-south rail services: the underground MRT line (and in turn to the main intercity railway station); and the elevated BTS Skytrain.

All of these systems are modern, convenient, well maintained, inexpensive to use and relatively easy to navigate. They are also popular (although the express airport train was at the time of writing was just being established). The only criticism is that connections between some of the lines is not always convenient (perhaps because they are operated privately by different companies?); tickets are not interchangeable and the elevated railways can be seen as a blight on neighbourhoods through which they pass. There does not seem to be a functioning at-grade metropolitan rail system.
{Continued in #186}

Feedback on the Thailand Report

"My attention was drawn to one of the comments relating to traffic in Bangkok: 'Manage tuk-tuks and taxis so that they are not excessively roaming without passengers' (#184). This one comes up repeatedly in discussions of traffic but I would be fascinated to know if there is any quality research on this. My ten year of experience of taxi



**Elevated Railways, Bangkok
November 2010**



driving in Melbourne indicated repeatedly that roaming, rather than waiting on a rank for radio calls or walk-ups, led to more paying trips per day and, importantly, the same ratio of non-paying kilometres. This last seemed quite counter-intuitive but was confirmed repeatedly. This meant that the fuel usage was the same per passenger kilometre in each mode but the labour and embodied costs were lower with roaming than with waiting. To be a little clearer: you would amble back towards where you reckoned there were more potential fares and you were likely to pick up a fare on the way, if you weren't driving too fast to see them. My experience was many years ago and it may be different now but I wonder if anyone has really researched the question or if everyone is going on intuition alone."

Ref: John Harland, 25/1/11

> Yet another paradox of transport! (I know I certainly appreciate roaming taxis if I'm waiting on a street corner). My comment in the Thailand article was about taxis and tuk-tuks in crowded cities like Bangkok, and not so much that they were roaming, but that they were stuck in (and part of the cause of) traffic jams. What surprised me was how few were carrying passengers, and because of the congestion they were not getting fares in any case.

Stephen Ingrouille

Feedback on the photos in #184 on footpaths in Bangkok: *"Who'd be in a wheelchair or blind?"*

Ref: Tony Bailey, Transit Australia, 25/1/11

And Also ...

"A woman who boarded the wrong bus on an attempted shopping trip from Thailand to Malaysia has returned home after 25 years. Jaeyana Beuraheng told her eight children she accidentally boarded a bus bound for Bangkok instead of Malaysia, and once there she boarded a second incorrect bus because she could not read or speak Thai or English."

Ref: Breitbart, 7/2/07

Bangkok Declaration (Part 3)

– Sustainable Transport Goals for 2010-2020

IV. Cross-cutting strategies

"Goal 13: Adopt a zero-fatality policy with respect to road, rail, and waterway safety and implement appropriate speed control, traffic calming strategies, strict driver licensing, motor vehicle registration, insurance requirements, and better post-accident care oriented to significant reductions in accidents and injuries;

"Goal 14: Promote monitoring of the health impacts from transport emissions and noise, especially with regard to incidences of asthma, other pulmonary diseases, and heart disease in major cities, assess the economic impacts of air pollution and noise, and devise mitigation strategies, especially aiding sensitive populations near high traffic concentrations;

"Goal 15: Establish country-specific, progressive, health-based, cost-effective, and enforceable air quality and noise standards, also taking into account the WHO guidelines, and mandate monitoring and reporting in order to reduce the occurrence of days in which pollutant levels of particulate matter, nitrogen oxides, sulphur oxides, carbon monoxide, and ground-level ozone exceed the national standards or zones where noise levels exceed the national standards, especially with regard to environments near high traffic concentrations;

"Goal 16: Implement sustainable low-carbon transport initiatives to mitigate the causes of global climate change and to fortify national energy security, and to report the inventory of all greenhouse gases emitted from the transport sector in the National Communication to the UNFCCC;

"Goal 17: Adopt social equity as a planning and design criteria in the development and implementation of transport initiatives, leading to improved quality, safety and security for all and especially for women, universal accessibility of streets and public transport systems for persons with disabilities and elderly, affordability of transport systems for low-income groups, and up-gradation, modernization and integration of intermediate public transport;

"Goal 18: Encourage innovative financing mechanisms for sustainable transport infrastructure and operations through measures, such as parking levies, fuel pricing, time-of-day automated road user

charging, and public-private partnerships such as land value capture, including consideration of carbon markets, wherever feasible;

“Goal 19: Encourage widespread distribution of information and awareness on sustainable transport to all levels of government and to the public through outreach, promotional campaigns, timely reporting of monitored indicators, and participatory processes;

“Goal 20: Develop dedicated and funded institutions that address sustainable transport-land use policies and implementation, including research and development on environmentally sustainable transport, and promote good governance through implementation of environmental impact assessments for major transport projects.”

The “annex {see link} outlines the type of performance indicators that countries may consider in achieving a successful EST strategy. The Bangkok Declaration for 2020 is a voluntary document, and thus countries may opt for developing a number of additional / alternative indicators and measures to monitor progress domestically. The objective of such comprehensive list of indicators is to provide guidelines for objective measurement of the efficiency and effectiveness of the transport system to achieve the desired goals.”

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

Transforming Seoul

“Democratization has helped transform Seoul into a more liveable city in an extraordinarily short time. Before democracy, the authorities pursued economic growth at virtually any cost: real estate operated with little constraint, the number of private cars swiftly exceeded street capacity, public transportation was shoddy, and public spaces were basically nonexistent. But Seoul’s mayor during the 2000s, Lee Myung Bak, understood that Seoulites wanted a city centre, plazas, gardens, and spaces to shop and stroll, and he led a dramatic reshaping of the city, preserving what was left of the past but making huge improvements in urban amenities. He won the nickname ‘Bulldozer’ for good reason. Among the projects undertaken while he was mayor: the Han’s banks, formerly devoted to parking garages and freeways, became accessible to pedestrians; an ancient stream, the Cheonggyecheon, which once flowed through Seoul until buried by a freeway, was restored, helping vivify the central city; and rapid-transit buses joined the city’s transportation system.”

Ref: Guy Sorman, *Asian Megacities, Free and Unfree, How politics has shaped the growth of Shanghai, Beijing, and Seoul*, City Journal, Vol 20, No 4, 17/12/10

Retrofitting Suburbia (Part 4)

“So I’ve shown you some of the first generation of retrofits. What’s next? I think we have three challenges for the future. The first is to plan retrofitting much more systemically at the metropolitan scale. We need to be able to target which areas really should be re-greened. Where should we be redeveloping? And where should we be encouraging re-inhabitation? These slides just show two images from a larger project that looked at trying to do that for Atlanta. I led a team that was asked to imagine Atlanta 100 years from now. And we chose to try to reverse sprawl through three simple moves – expensive, but simple. One, in a hundred years, transit on all major rail and road corridors. Two, in a hundred years, thousand foot buffers on all stream corridors. It’s a little extreme, but we’ve got a little water problem. In a hundred years, subdivisions that simply end up too close to water or too far from transit, won’t be viable. And so we’ve created the eco-acre transfer to transfer development rights to the transit corridors and allow the re-greening of those former subdivisions for food and energy production.

“So the second challenge is to improve the architectural design quality of the retrofits. And I close with this image of democracy in action. This is a protest that’s happening on a retrofit in Silver Spring, Maryland on an Astroturf town green. Now, retrofits are often accused of being examples of faux downtowns and instant urbanism. And not without reason; you don’t get much more phony than an Astroturf town green. I have to say, these are very hybrid places. They are new, but trying to look old. They have urban streetscapes, but suburban parking ratios. Their populations are more diverse than typical suburbia, but they’re less diverse than cities. And they are public places, but that are managed by private companies. And just the surface appearance is – like the Astroturf here – they make me wince. So, you know, I mean I’m glad that the urbanism is doing its job. The fact that a protest is

happening really does mean that the layout of the blocks, the streets and blocks, the putting in of public space, compromised as it may be, is still a really great thing. But we've got to get the architecture better.

"The final challenge is for all of you. I want you to join the protest and start demanding more sustainable suburban places – more sustainable places, period. But culturally, we tend to think that downtowns [city centres] should be dynamic, and we expect that. But we seem to have an expectation that the suburbs should forever remain frozen in what ever adolescent form they were first given birth to. It's time to let them grow up. So I want you to all support the zoning changes, the road diets, the infrastructure improvements and the retrofits that are coming soon to a neighbourhood near you."

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

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

Evolution of a Park (Part 4)



Looking across the main road from the edge of the expanded pocket park to the traffic calming measures at the intersection. November 2010



Looking back at the pocket park from across the main road. The overall effect is to calm the traffic, improve amenity and give the impression of a much larger park without unduly affecting the flow of trams or traffic. November 2010

2011 Sustainable Transport Award

"The Sustainable Transport Award is given each year to a city that has made significant inroads in reducing greenhouse gas emissions & creating a more sustainable, liveable urban environment by embracing innovative transportation strategies."

"The nominated cities are distinguished by their impact, innovation, and leadership in the transport sector. For 2011, all nominees are exemplars in implementing integrated sustainable transport solutions. They are (in alphabetical order):"

- Guangzhou, China for implementing high quality and integrated sustainable transport projects that include bus rapid transit, metro expansion, bicycle sharing and public space development.
- León, Guanajuato, México for the expansion of its integrated public transport system to cover 65 percent of all trips made on transit.
- Lima, Perú for the inauguration of its bus rapid transit system after ... years of planning.
- Nantes, France for its integrated approach to ... sustainable transport on a city-wide level.
- Tehran, Iran for its rapid expansion of mass transit, including metro and bus rapid transit.

"The nominees are chosen by a Steering Committee that includes the most respected experts and organizations working internationally on sustainable transportation. The Committee awards progress during the past year in:

- Creating safer streets, resulting in fewer road accidents and injuries,
- Improving the air quality by reducing traffic-related air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, as well as decreased car use,

- Increasing healthier choices for its citizens for getting around the city, such as walking and cycling, and
- Achieving greater public transport ridership and satisfaction with service with improvements to and expansion of transit options.”

And, the winner for 2011: Guangzhou, China

Ref: ITDP Website, 31/1/11

www.itdp.org/index.php/sustainable_transport_award/

Obama calls for Realignment

“US President Barack Obama has vowed to eliminate billions of dollars of oil subsidies in order to invest in a drive towards a clean energy future.

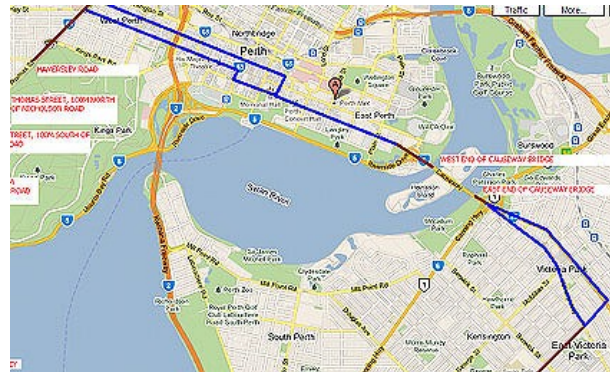
'I'm asking Congress to eliminate the billions in taxpayer dollars we currently give to oil companies. I don't know if you've noticed, but they're doing just fine on their own,' he said in his State of the Union address on Tuesday. 'Instead of subsidising yesterday's energy, let's invest in tomorrow's,' he added in the annual speech outlining his main policy goals.”

Ref: Sky News, 26/1/11

Light Rail Network Plan for Perth

“The first steps in a light-rail system for Perth are about to be taken, with a potential route to be mapped out. As part of the [WA] Department of Transport's strategic plan to improve public transport in the city, it is working on mapping a proposal for a light-rail network between Curtin University in Bentley and the University of Western Australia, travelling through the CBD. ... The network - dubbed the “Knowledge Arc” to connect Perth's universities - was first proposed by public transport expert Peter Newman last year. The Greens took a more comprehensive plan - also proposed by Professor Newman, covering the Knowledge Arc and other proposals in the inner north suburbs, Alexander Drive, and Fremantle – to the last federal election. In his report last year, Professor Newman said the Knowledge Arc network could be funded through a public-private partnership. ‘Not only does the corridor get a new (light rail) but it also gets the land development that enables the (light rail) to work better’, he said.”

Ref: Chalpat Sonti, WA Today, 24/1/11



Possible routes for a light rail network running through the Perth CBD Ref: WA Today, 24/1/11

What they want in Canberra

“A survey of Canberrans has found most want better public transport and a more affordable mix of housing. The ACT Government's Time To Talk consultation involved more than 20,000 people who were asked what they think of the city and how they want it to develop by 2030. Chief Minister Jon Stanhope says ... residents want an environmentally friendly city, and increasing housing density is the key. ‘That is a green city, a sustainable city, a city that doesn't expand for ever into green fields that we become dense but we do it in a strategic way, we do it in a way that enhances the quality of the city and doesn't detract from it’, he said.”

Ref: ABC News, 25/1/11

www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2011/01/25/3120805.htm?site=canberra

And Also ...

“New Tasmanian Premier Lara Giddings, [was] steeped in Labor tradition from the age of three [and as] a toddler ... she had to be reassured that Liberal prime minister Malcolm Fraser would not harm little children. ‘My mother very quickly said, No, no, Lara, he doesn't kill little children, he just wouldn't hold your hand if you crossed the road’.”

Ref: Andrew Darby, The Age, 25/1/11