

## State of the Union

*"Barack Obama in his state of the union address 2011, has proposed to win the future through investments in building high speed rail & internet infrastructure, at the same time proposing cuts on the annual domestic spending ... The American president said it was not worth saving on infrastructure development, science and education. ... He also added that for attracting new business to American shores, it needs the fastest and most reliable ways to move people, goods and information, ranging from high-speed Internet to high-speed rail. Speaking of transport, Obama has called for improving the transport infrastructure of the country. 'Within 25 years, our goal is to give 80% of Americans access to high-speed rail, which could allow you go places in half the time it takes to travel by car ... For some trips, it will be faster than flying – without the pat-down. As we speak, routes in California and the Midwest are already underway'."*

**Ref: Naveen Kar, Seer Press News, 26/1/11**

*"We applaud President Obama's State of the Union call for smart, targeted transportation investments that connect all Americans to opportunity. The infrastructure Americans build, operate, and repair today will create jobs now and lay the foundation for a competitive and prosperous tomorrow. But our inadequate, outdated, and underfunded transportation systems are keeping too many struggling Americans – young and old, rural and urban – from fully connecting and contributing to the national economy. Millions of Americans rely exclusively on public transit, walking, or biking to get to work, to the doctor's office, to school, and to the grocery store. Nearly 20% of African American households, 14% of Latino households, and 13% of Asian households live without a car [and] 15% of Native Americans must travel more than 100 miles to access basic services.*

*"Smarter transportation investments can unleash the under-realized economic power of communities across America. We look forward to working with President Obama and Congress to move forward a surface transportation authorization in 2011 with investments that:*

- *Create affordable and flexible transportation options for everyone, regardless of income, race, age, disability, or background;*
- *Create, protect, and ensure fair access to quality jobs, training, and contracting opportunities in the transportation industry;*
- *Promote healthy, safe, and inclusive communities with housing opportunities for families of all incomes; and*
- *Encourage fair and transparent investment of public dollars invested in transportation.*

*"The American people want these changes, too. A recent Transportation for America poll revealed that more than two-thirds say they 'would like more transportation options'. By investing in transportation projects, America can get people back to work now, lay a strong foundation for future economic growth, and expand opportunity for millions of people. But we must target our investments equitably to the people and places that need them the most."*

**Ref: Dan Lovoie, Equity Blog, 25/1/11**

<http://equityblog.org/2011/01/25/we-do-big-things-transportation-and-the-state-of-the-union/>

## Island and Ferry Plan for Port Phillip

*"Two islands would be built in Port Phillip Bay to boost Victoria's tourism arsenal if a Mornington Peninsula group's proposal is successful. As part of an inquiry into the state's tourism, the tourism group has submitted preliminary costings for two islands at Spoil Ground, about 15 kilometres from Williamstown, Werribee and Sandringham. One of the islands, of roughly six hectares, would be modelled on Perth's car-free Rottnest Island. It would have restaurants, a harbour, five-star and backpacker accommodation. The other island would be a marine park, similar to the naturally occurring Mud Islands in the bay's south, with visitors allowed but not encouraged to view resident bird and fish life. .... The islands, potentially a 20-minute fast-ferry ride from Port Melbourne, would be clear of shipping channels. Other benefits could include making the round-the-bay ferry service more viable and providing more habitat for wildlife."*

**Ref: Bridie Smith, The Age, 28/1/11**



**"My grandfather could remember when there was water here."**

## Paris Plans for Big 4WDs (SUVs)

*"Paris government officials are well down the track towards passing regulations that would completely ban large four-wheel-drives and smoky older diesel vehicles from entering the city heart - or else tax them until their owners' wallets bleed. But Australia's largest cities seem no closer to imposing congestion charges to discourage motorists from bringing vehicles - especially less environmentally friendly ones - into the CBD areas. Paris's city fathers haven't quite yet determined the finer details such as the extent of the fees, the hours which the ban would apply, or which vehicles will be specifically targeted. But there is a strong mood to encourage Paris motorists to drive vehicles appropriate for the tight and congested laneways within the French capital."*

*"The officials must deal with the conundrum that not all large 4WDs are great polluters, and not all small cars are fuel efficient and clean. But some polities are outspoken on the need to reduce congestion and improve the quality of the Parisian air. 'I'm sorry, but having a sport utility vehicle in a city makes no sense', declared deputy mayor Denis Baupin on RTL radio. 'Sell it and buy a vehicle that's compatible with city life', he insisted."*

*"Unlike countries such as Australia and the United States, 4WDs don't make up a large part of the French motoring landscape. The 4WD lobby is not a strong one. Even so, targeting older, dirtier diesel vehicles big or small could be politically fraught as it tends to hit citizens who can't afford newer, more expensive personal transport. Manufacturers of electric vehicles have greeted the proposals with enthusiasm. No surprise there. Equally, there is unlikely to be any opposition to the ban from local car makers Renault, Citroen and Peugeot, all of which offer a strong line-up of small fuel efficient (diesel and petrol) mini cars. Citroen and Peugeot are also preparing to launch a new-diesel-hybrid range."*

### SMH/Age Poll (20/1/11): 'Should large 4WDs be banned from some Australian cities?'

- Yes: 68%
- No: 32%
- Total Votes: 4656



Photo: Sydney Morning Herald

*"Congestion charges that don't necessarily target 4WDs have been in place in a number of other major cities notably including London, Berlin, and Singapore. New York City investigated a similar plan but didn't have the courage to legislate. Congestion charges have been proposed for Sydney, but NSW Labor's only move in this direction was to crank up the peak-time charge on the Harbour Bridge to \$4 ..."*

*"Many suggest congestion charges work only when there is a viable alternative to driving your own car into the city, which it could be argued doesn't exist in the public transport-starved north."*

*Public transport experts from major universities last year agreed that a congestion charge for Sydney and Melbourne should replace Australia's current hidden fuel excise and vehicle registration fees and that revenue from congestion charging should be channelled back into transport sustainability."*

**Ref: Peter McKay, Sydney Morning Herald, 20/11/10**

*"I earn, I drive, I pay for my fuel I will drive the vehicle of my choice not the vehicle someone else would have me drive. ... That is my right as a tax paying member of society. When I start telling you what your mode of conveyance is then you are within your right to tell me. Until then bugger off."*

*"There, folks, is your typical 4WD owner: 'bugger off' and bugger everyone else indeed."*

*"Drivers in Italy and France don't need these super-sized ego-inflating vehicles."*

*"I hate seeing bull bars on them. You want to reduce road deaths. Get rid of bull bars on 4x4. Our government is so out of date it isn't funny. Whoever is responsible for our traffic should go to Europe and see how it is done."*

*"I watched a lady trying to park her Porsche Cayenne at the local supermarket last week; it took her 8 minutes to get it into the parking space!"*

*"I don't want to drive a small car as it won't fit my family. I don't want to use public transport because it's unreliable, overcrowded and frequented by undesirable people."*

*"Why do most Europeans drive small cars and/or diesels? Major reason is still that fuel is about twice as expensive as in Oz/USA."*

**Ref: Readers' Comments, Sydney Morning Herald, 20/11/10**

## UK Suspends M4 Bus Lane (Part 2)

*"Buses, coaches and bikes make rather more efficient use of [road space] than cars, especially those [cars] carrying only one person, so bus priority makes sense. But it is also about making buses a real choice – only with priority measures (not just bus lanes) can buses be a reliable and attractive alternative to cars. Of course, other things are needed. Buses need to be clean, affordable and with well-trained drivers, but the evidence from many cities is that, once buses get priority and other improvements are made, people do use them rather than cars."*

*"I'm sure this will be debated, especially by the die-hard motorists who would rather sit in traffic jams than have anything to do with buses. ... But in fact, abolishing the bus lane will make things worse, not better, for motorists on that stretch of the M4. The bus lane was actually a very clever solution to the intractable problem of the Brentford flyover. Here the M4 narrows from three lanes to two, causing major tailbacks as traffic jostles for position. The highways engineers came up with a neat solution: moving the point where general traffic had to merge back to junction three, where lots of traffic leaves the M4 anyway. Using the extra space as a bus lane was merely an addition to what is really a traffic management scheme. Instead of supporting this clever piece of engineering, motoring lobbyists clamoured for its removal, demanding, one presumes, to be allowed to sit in bigger and longer traffic jams once more. This is a triumph for 'common sense' over science, and a failure to think about transport strategically."*

**Ref: Stephen Joseph, The Independent, 16/11/10**

*"There have been many acts of petty spite perpetrated against motorists by the public authorities in recent years. The mania for pedestrianisation; vicious parking fines; clamping and towing; hidden speed cameras that do nothing to cut speeds and everything to generate revenues; taxes and duties on owning and fuelling a vehicle. And – how can one forget? – bus lanes. By far the most egregious and pointless assault in the long war of attrition against the motorist has been the M4 bus lane."*

*"When I first heard about it – a bus lane on a motorway – it sounded like a bad joke. It was, and still is. This 'innovation' generated (from nowhere) vast amounts of congestion on an already crowded artery into London, and for minimal benefit to the few buses and cabs that plied it. Like many others, I have spent hours sitting there, long enough indeed to spot a bus come by – a rare event. Even if you costed the wasted man-hours at, say, the minimum wage, the losses suffered by the economy must have run into billions over the past decade or so. The main beneficiaries are tourists taking a black cab at inordinate cost into town. It just does not add up."*

*Nor, I suspect, do most bus lanes. .... I can remember the outrage I felt in the 1980s when bus lanes first appeared, creating traffic jams where previously cars ran freely. The more the congestion, the stronger the case for more bus lanes and so it went on. It was a con."*

**Ref: Sean O'Grady, The Independent, 16/11/10**

*"Why is it that some people whose main mode of transport is the car feel that the whole world must be constructed to serve their needs? On a small island, in a crowded city, with peak oil either approaching or recently passed, with global warming a genuine concern, the idea that cars should not have their road use constrained by bus or bike lanes is amazing."*

**Ref: Richard Leeming, The Independent, 16/11/10**

*"Not only was the 'bus lane' an afterthought, but the only study into it found that it cut journey times for all road users. Morning rush hour trips for drivers fell by up to 6 minutes, according to the Transport Research Laboratory. Whilst there may be issues with the taxis (and a good case for keeping them out of the lane), moving the merge location back to junction 3 made merging much easier and thereby cut*



congestion. Sorry Sean, taking the bus lane out was perfect example of gesture politics. But don't worry: now you'll have a longer traffic jam in which to consider it."

**Ref: Richard George, The Independent, 16/11/10**

*"Perhaps the most misunderstood piece of traffic engineering ever created in this country, the M4 Bus Lane is something whose mere mention causes a thousand motorists' blood to boil. Once John Prescott's flagship scheme and now the subject of frequent rants from the likes of Jeremy Clarkson and Terry Wogan, it remains the only bus lane on a motorway in [the UK]. But all the complaints that have been fired at it have missed the point. The bus lane is actually, dare I say, a display of sheer genius by some lateral-thinking planner at the Highways Agency."*

**Ref: Chris Marshall, CBRD In Depth, 2011** See: [www.cbrd.co.uk/indepth/m4buslane/](http://www.cbrd.co.uk/indepth/m4buslane/)

## And Also ...

*"Ticket Inspector 1, after chatting to his colleague for 10 minutes: 'Best check some tickets'.*

*"Ticket Inspector 2: 'Yeah, it'll give us something to do'."*

**Ref: MxNews, 19/1/11**

## Thailand Report (Part 5)

The Bangkok Declaration (see below) is an excellent blueprint for more sustainable cities in Asia. Here continues comment on some of the transport modes in Thailand.

The other issue with local buses in Bangkok, apart from being noisy, dirty, and often crowded, is that they are not very attractive to those that can afford alternatives (like private cars). This is of course is not just confined to Thailand, but I suspect problematic across the region. In Sri Lanka I was told recently that catching crowded buses in a hot climate was unthinkable – particularly for those attending business meetings – if there was a choice. In other cities, great strides have been made {see *Sustainable Transport Award* in #185} with Rapid Bus Transit systems, and done properly these can be an excellent and cost-effective solution, especially where the vehicles run on clean fuels.

What was strange in Thailand was the absence of trams. An on-street, at-grade, air-conditioned, rail-based system, not impeded by other modes of transport and ideally running from renewable sources of energy, would make an indispensable contribution to the cities of Thailand and the Asian region. There are a number of advantages to such a system, such as attracting those that won't travel in buses, but it must integrate with all the other modes of active and public transport (including buses).

Bangkok has a precedent, and colourful history of trams, which like many other systems around the world, was strangled through lack of investment and pressure from vested interest groups. Today however, many cities around the world are rediscovering the value of tram systems and perhaps it is time for Bangkok and similar cities to do likewise. Those living in, or visitors to, central Bangkok would, I suspect, appreciate the extensive tram network that operated C1950 as shown in the map below.

**Tuk-Tuks/Taxis** and the related songthaews or shared taxies {photo in #176} provide an important part of the transit mix, but just as we discussed in a previous article (in relationship to Sri Lanka) there needs to be a fairly rapid program to make tuk-tuks cleaner and quieter. They should of course be an adjunct to – but not replace – rapid bus and tram/light rail systems.

**Ferries** in Bangkok provide some welcome relief to the nightmare traffic jams. They have relatively low cost fares and appear popular with both locals and tourists but access is not exactly perfect, particularly in times of flood or for those with mobility issues, and there is room for improvement in service scheduling. This includes frequency of services, extended hours of operation, and areas of operation.



**Ferries in Bangkok – Good for both locals and tourists.** Photo: Nov 2010

**Bikeshare** we covered briefly in #179, and while the Bangkok Bikeshare, starting with just 140 bikes (and aimed primarily at the tourists) is to be encouraged, there are issues with road safety and to some extent climate.

**Walking**, like cycling, in spite of the climate, could be encouraged for health reasons, to make the city more liveable and sociable, and as a replacement for some of the traffic. For this to happen, foot paths need to become pedestrian friendly {see the photos in #184}, & traffic needs to be calmed & made cleaner (for health reasons). This means, thinking about better planned cities.

**Stephen Ingrouille, 2011**



## Bangkok

**Above:** Covered walkway, ideal in hot climates.

**Left:** Note where the pedestrian crossing ends in the hedge and the position of the drop curb in the foreground.

**Photos:** November 2010

## History of Trams in Bangkok

*"Trams started putting about the capital late in the reign of King Rama V and kept on going until 1968. They first went into operation in 1887 as part of a transportation business set up by a British man, Captain Alfred John Loftus, and a Dane, Andre du Plessis de Richelieu. ... The two entrepreneurs sold their company to a group of Danish investors in 1892, and within two years the trams were running on the new electricity grid hooked up across the country in 1890. ... [A] US firm kept running the trams until its concession expired on December 31, 1949 and the operation was handed over to the Interior Ministry. Trams still received widespread popularity until 1957, when Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat unveiled his grand plan to reform Thailand ... and develop it as a country of high standing in the eyes of the world. Among his many schemes, Sarit suggested that the tram was unsuited to modern Bangkok & encouraged the city's residents to use cars, taxi cabs and buses instead."*

**Ref:** Tramways in Bangkok [www.thai360.com/fbb/showtopic.php?tid/372928/tp/0/all/1/](http://www.thai360.com/fbb/showtopic.php?tid/372928/tp/0/all/1/)

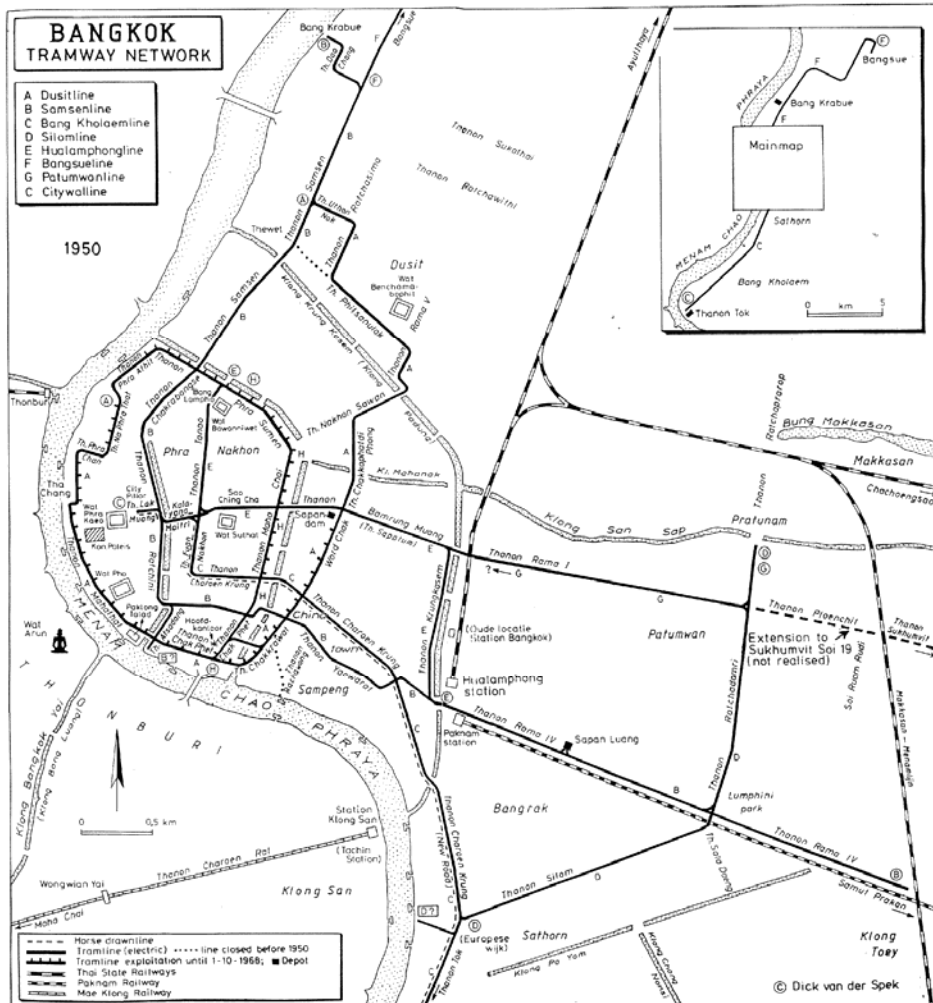
## The End of the Line

*"I was present on the last day of operation of the Bangkok trams on Sunday, October 1, 1968. ...I had visited and photographed both remaining sections of the City Circle line shortly after my arrival in Thailand in July. I was utterly captivated by the tiny yellow and red trams which I believe were pronounced Lhot Lhang or Rhot Rhang in Thai. The single track operation along the curbs of the street past some of Bangkok's major tourist attractions and the somewhat bemused friendliness of the two man crews were fascinating and thoroughly enjoyable. At the end of the line, while the motorman moved the trolley pole around the car, the conductor would move two long cushions from one end of the car to the other. The cushions, which were always moved to the front of the car, constituted first class. The fare was 50 stang (2.5 cents). The rear half of the little tram, with its now bare wooden longitudinal seats, was second class with a 25 stang (1.25 cents) fare."*

**Ref:** Paul Gawkowski, 2Bangkok.com, 20/4/03 <http://angkor.com/2bangkok/2bangkok/Tram/accounts.shtml>



## Bangkok Tramway Network C1950



Above:  
Preserved  
Bangkok Trams

Dick van der Spek created this map (left) of tram routes in existence C1950, but it is more than that – it is a look at Bangkok's surprisingly comprehensive fixed mass transit routes of the time

Ref: 2Bangkok.com, 10/9/04

## Bangkok Declaration (Part 5)

### – Sustainable Transport Goals for 2010-2020

“‘Current transport financing practices are unfit to meet 21st century needs’, remarked Michael Replogle, Global Policy Director and Founder of the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy (ITDP) ... ‘Over 1 trillion dollars is spent annually by governments subsidising motor fuels and spurring more use of cars’, he said. ‘This comes at the expense of investments in more pressing human needs for modern bus rapid transit, streets safe for walking and cycling, quality public space, as well as health, housing, and education. New incentives are needed to spur smart investments’ ...

“The Asian Environmentally Sustainable Transport (EST) Initiative, which is a joint initiative of the United Nations Centre for Regional Development (UNCRD) and the Ministry of the Environment, Japan, aims to build a common understanding across Asia on the essential elements of EST and the need for an integrated approach at the local and national levels to deal with multi-sectoral environment and transport issues, including GHG emission reduction. Currently, participating countries include, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei, Darussalam, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Viet Nam.”

Ref: Press Release, Bangkok Declaration, 24/8/10

## Comparing Bangkok & Singapore

*"Like Los Angeles (L.A.), Bangkok, Thailand, is also known as the city of angels, and during its recent history it has been pursuing the car about as keenly. Traffic levels regularly exceed road capacity so that total gridlock seems a whisker away. However, there are different models in Asia as well. Singapore decided it would not follow the American dream and has for 20 years created a wealthy city-state based around its electric rail system and well-designed centres. The city has one sixth of the car use of L.A. and eight times as much use of public transport. But more importantly Singapore has 40% less car use than Bangkok, 20% more transit use and is nearly 4 times as wealthy. Singapore went against World Bank advice when it built its electric rail system. The American transportation establishment that has dominated Bank policy for 50 years still regards electric rail as an inferior choice to upgrading bus services. Singapore has proven them to be wrong and our data show why.*

*"Only cities with good electric rail systems show average speeds of transit faster than traffic, thus offering a competitive advantage to transit. In Singapore the traffic speed averages 33 kilometres per hour and the MRT train averages 40 kph. In Bangkok, the traffic crawls along at 13 kph but the bus system averages a mere 9 kph. That these gridlocked cities are all a victim of their dreams rather than some inevitable process of the market is seen when the economics of these alternative approaches is examined. Bangkok spends 17.3% of its city wealth on its car-dominated transport system while Singapore spends a mere 7.2% on its transit-dominated transport system.*

*"L.A. with its freeways spends 12% of its wealth on transport, while most European cities, with extensive transit systems, spend only 8%. Overall, among the 37 cities we studied, those cities with good transit systems have much lower total transport costs than those cities that have freeways and poor bus-based transit. This is the opposite of the current investment ideology, which suggests that freeways are good for a city's economy and transit is a drain on city wealth. In L.A., despite the last freeway costing \$200 million per kilometre to build, and despite only 18% of the population actually believing that freeways help ease congestion, the city is planning another freeway through 1,000 homes in Pasadena. Lois Arkin who founded L.A.'s Eco-Village, has a different vision for her city; with the residents of Pasadena and other transit advocates she is hopeful that a different dream for her city can win the day.*

*"There are cities all around the world where the dreams of common people have been successful in stopping the dreams of the traffic engineers. The vibrancy of Greenwich Village in New York would have been lost had it not been for the citizens, led by Jane Jacobs, who stood up against the freeway plan of Robert Moses. Then when Ms. Jacobs moved to Toronto, she helped stop the Spadina Expressway, which would have cut a swath through the inner city; instead the city went for transit and became one of the least auto-dependent cities in North America. Similar stories can be told in Boulder, Portland, Vancouver, and in most European cities, all of which had large motorway plans dreamed up for them by inter-national traffic consultants. ... Common to all these stories of citizen-based action to stop freeways has been key individuals who have helped to create a different dream for their cities – a dream of how light rail, traffic calming, and urban villages can provide a softer, more human kind of city."*

**Ref: Peter Newman, Yes Magazine, 30/6/99**

## And Also ...

*"A rail pass may be obtained at any station with an automatic ticketing machine. When purchasing tickets make sure you have the right change and remember it is considered polite to tip the machine."*

**Ref: Phaic Tăn, Jetlag Travel Guide, Hardie Grant Books, 2004**