

More on Broadway



Photo: John Marshall Mantel for the NY Times

"In New York City, the unthinkable happened: Broadway was officially closed... to cars that is. As part of Mayor Bloomberg's plan to reduce traffic in the city, two sections of Broadway, from 47th to 42nd and from 35th to 33rd Streets, were closed to all vehicular traffic. For the first time ever, happy New Yorkers were able to traverse Times Square without feeling the need to compete with cars. ... But the real change may happen soon after. If the city judges the closure of these sections a success, it is prepared to go even further and close the entire boulevard to vehicular access. The city plans on creating a truly pedestrian friendly walkway in the heart of the Manhattan theatre district. It will effectively become the biggest change to the makeup of the city, an urban companion to New York's Central Park. Lest you think that this is a crazy idea, it is worth noting that New York City is not the only city in the world planning the closure of streets. Sydney itself is also considering turning large chunks of its downtown into pedestrian only areas. Whether Broadway returns to its former car-jammed self, one thing is for sure. At least for the time being New York pedestrians can bask in the knowledge that a little bit of the city has been returned to them."

Ref: Jorge Chapa, Inhabitat, 26/5/09

See also the photo essay by Gordon Price:
<http://www.pricetags.ca/pricetags/pricetags107.pdf>

Car-addicted Territorians

"Car-addicted [Northern] Territory politicians failed to take up a climate change challenge to walk to work last week. The CLP's Peter Chandler was the only politician to pound the pavement on Environment Day on Friday. COOLmob project manager Robin Knox invited 13 politicians who lived in Darwin and Palmerston, and were within walking distance to work. She said the challenge highlighted how difficult it was for Territorians to live without their cars."

Ref: Nick Calacouras, NT News, 11/6/09

Higher Density along Tram Lines

"[Victorian councils] Darebin and Moreland are at the front line of a State Government proposal to put higher-density housing along tram lines. Since mid-2008, the two northern suburbs councils have been in talks with the Department of Planning and Community Development about the strategy and have joined a departmental steering committee. A department spokesman said research by the committee included looking at opportunities and constraints in developing along tram lines, including 'urban design, infrastructure servicing and development economics'. It is separate to the report prepared for the Department of Transport by planner Rob Adams, which found 34,000 sites available for high-density living along tram and bus routes and advocated blanket planning rules to clear the way for housing up to eight storeys tall. This way, Melbourne could accommodate the extra million people it is expecting by 2030, using just 10 per cent of the existing metropolitan area, the report says."

Ref: FR Perry & Associates Newsletter, May 09

Retrograde Newcastle (NSW)

"A recent report into the future of the [Newcastle] CBD has recommended that the rail line that serves the centre of the city be closed, with passengers to be dumped on the outskirts and told to walk or catch a bus for the last few kilometres into town. Such a move will add to the parking and traffic problems in the Newcastle CBD, and will eventually limit the city's ability to cope with any revitalisation plans. Business interests are lining up to get their hands on the rail corridor, and it seems the council is only too happy to help them."

Ref: Craig Fitzsimmons, SMH, 9/6/09

Fringe Benefits Tax

"The more kilometres Australian motorists clock up in their company car, the more they are rewarded by the fringe benefits tax system. Less generous tax concessions apply to public transport use. ... 'Fringe benefit tax currently treats motor vehicle use and public transport differently', [Victorian Department of Transport head of policy, Michael]

Hopkins said. 'We would be seeking more equitable treatment of public transport'."

Ref: Clay Lucas, The Age, 31/3/09



**NT MP:
Not easy being green.**

Ferries on Port Phillip Bay

"Excellent Idea!!...in fact it seems to me that Melbourne and Geelong have for far too long ignored the fact that Port Phillip offers the most direct route for commuters to get to and from the city of Melbourne. Linking them by water plus adding in routes to Sorrento Portsea, Dromana, Mornington Frankston, Mordialloc, Black Rock, Sandringham Brighton, Queenscliff, St Leonards, Portarlington all of which offer connectivity directly to each other and to the City of Melbourne, will reduce reliance on the motor car and huge expenditure on building freeways. ...

"Any city on this earth worth its salt as visionary and in touch with its assets and attributes with a waterway such as this makes the best of it for its people, the environment and the widening of opportunity for its residents. ... In cities I have lived in across the world where the waterway is a feature of the city, they have ferries to enhance the liveability of the place and simple necessity of getting around in a direct and less costly manner than reliance on massive infrastructure for dinosaur freeways and traditional slow rail on complicated cluttered under-resourced networks. ...

"Cities like Seattle and the Washington State Network, Sydney's huge ferry system, Hong Kong links all populated Islands and New Territories and mainland China with fast ferries, Vancouver Island to Vancouver is part of the Huge British Columbia Ferry system, linking communities, river and Zee ferries are widely used across the Netherlands, as in Denmark, Sweden, New York City, San Francisco.

"Metrolink Queensland operates 21 passenger ferries on behalf of Brisbane City Council, 12 being single-hulled ferries and 9 CityCats (catamarans), along the Brisbane River from the University of Queensland through the city to Brett's Wharf.

"Port Phillip to my mind is not embraced enough as a waterway and left to the shipping interests... I may have a bias as I grew up in Sydney and took every opportunity I could to catch a ferry to places, to the Zoo, to Manly, Rose Bay, Hunters Hill, Balmain, Roselle, Drummoyne... why... because I could, and it was much more peaceful, very beautiful and superbly interesting, the folk on board interacted and yes they took their bicycles along... bicycles would enhance patronage and widen the catchment area for ferry services just as they do for trains and buses ... Ferries are great... bring it on..."

Ref: RobE, Melbourne Cyclist Forum, 24/5/08

Icelandic Train Virgins

"Twelve MPs from all parties, except the Liberal Party, submitted a parliamentary resolution at Althingi yesterday, proposing that Minister of Transport Kristján Möller investigates the feasibility of establishing a train system in the capital region. The group proposes, on the one hand, train transport between Keflavík International Airport and Reykjavík, and on the other, a light rail transit within the capital region, DV reports. 'Iceland is a virgin in train transport', said Stefán Hand, pilot and the chairman of the Iceland Train Association, a group of people campaigning for a train system in Iceland [and they have] contacted experts in train transport, like Norwegian engineers who designed the train connection between Oslo and Gardemoen International Airport. Apparently, Iceland is attractive to foreign professionals in this field, because the latest technology can be applied to the train system. It doesn't have to be integrated with an older system because there have never been trains in Iceland. The parliamentary resolution was submitted following a competition for the best idea on urban development in the Vatnsmýrin neighborhood in Reykjavík. The winning proposal includes a train to the airport and, in fact, only two of the 136 entries did not."

Ref: Icelandic Review Online, 20/2/08

On Your Bike



Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and first lady Ani Yudhoyono

Picture: AFP, The Age 9/6/09

And Also ...

"Train passengers have slammed Britain's 'most stupid' rail division that has turned an 80-minute trip into an 18-hour trek involving seven changes, five buses and an overnight stay at a bus stop. The direct East Midlands Trains service from Kettering to London has been suspended because of engineering works. Now customers looking to travel 129km to the capital must take a 283km detour instead." **Ref: MX, 12/5/09**

Sir Robert Risson (Part 2)

"Many, including those who support the development of electric public transport would suggest the conversion of the Bourke Street bus routes to electric traction in June 1955 (East Preston via High Street route) and June 1956 (East Brunswick route) was [Sir Robert Risson's] greatest achievement. Both projects were completed during an era when tramway abandonment was considered fashionable, especially in the English speaking world. Only Europe, it seemed, remained loyal to the tramcar like Sir Robert.

"Addressing the institute of Transport in 1955, Sir Robert spoke of cold hard facts. The M&MTB's preference for tramcars in Bourke Street, some may well suggest, was driven by the union insistence that a 41 seat bus be operated by a two man (person) crew, as opposed to a tramcar of 48 seats also requiring a two man crew. In economic terms this comparison was decidedly unfavourable to the bus, particularly as the tramcar had a greater overall capacity when allowing for standing passengers.

"The wisdom of Sir Robert's preference for recording all interviews was demonstrated in August 1957 when, following the announcement by the M&MTB that it was intended to construct a new bus workshop at Dudley Flats, the Melbourne press informed their readers that the trams were going and buses were taking over.

"Sir Robert, who firmly believed that he was completely misquoted in the newspaper article, duly appeared on Meet the Press and offered to play back the entire recording of the initial interview to set the record straight.

"But from the middle 1950s, substantial operating economies were necessary to keep the organisation afloat. Buses operating on reduced headways from February 1957 replaced all-night tram services. Several Sunday tram services were also replaced by buses from 1959, and tram services with low patronages serving Point Ormond and the Footscray local line were withdrawn in October 1960 and March 1962 respectively.

"The last new tram for seventeen years entered service in 1956 (the order for 70 W7 type tramcars being cut back to 40), and the only new vehicles acquired by the M&MTB throughout the entire 1960s were 100 AEC buses with short 31 seater bodies. There were no new tram routes developed until the East Burwood extension in 1978. Other economies were undertaken, including the elimination of compulsory stops, the closure of the Hawthorn and Coburg tram depots and Port Melbourne bus depot, together with reduction in headways and scrapping of surplus tramcars.

"Yet throughout this environment Sir Robert consistently defended the tramcar. He believed that trams were the most efficient vehicles for moving vast numbers of passengers in inner metropolitan areas, where journey times did not exceed 40-45 minutes. This is still a very important factor to reconsider in today's environment. Sir Robert stressed the need to compare the cost of a new bus system against the cost of retaining the existing asset." {To be continued}

Ref: Graeme Turnbull, RMIT Sir Robert Risson Memorial Lecture 2001, 20/4/01

For the full article (including footnotes) see:
www.hawthorntramdepot.org.au/papers/risson.htm#note6



"Tram 33 is seen at the Brighton Beach terminus of the 5' 3" gauge VR ELECTRIC Street Railway that ran from St Kilda station and was opened in 1906. On Jan. 1 1957 the line was cut back to Middle Brighton crossover. The last section of this street railway, Middle Brighton to Elwood depot, closed June 1957. The brick parapet seen to the right of the tram locates the end of a short tunnel section of rail line that ran from Brighton Beach 'luggage room' (goods shed) along the pier seen on the right. Photo circa 1930's" Ref: Ref: Mark Bau's VR Website www.victorianrailways.net/index.html

Hovercraft Trial on the Firth of Forth

"A hovercraft trial across the Firth of Forth [in Scotland] helping commuters beat congestion on the Forth road bridge has proved that a permanent service would be viable, its operator said yesterday. Transport giant Stagecoach said the two-week test between Kirkcaldy and Portobello in Edinburgh established a 'clear business case' for the launch of a full-time route. The firm has predicted that a regular service could attract nearly 900,000 passengers within four years after the success of the July pilot, which resulted in more than 32,000 passengers trying the 20-minute route. On average 85% of each of the two 130-seat hovercrafts was occupied.

"Stagecoach also believes there is scope for a network of similar ferry services between Fife and Edinburgh - offering commuters yet more alternatives while a decision is made on a future crossing to replace the existing, overused bridge. The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SEStran), which invested more than £90,000 of public funding into the £300,000 pilot, was delighted by the success of the trial run.

"Stagecoach is now calling on SEStran, the Scottish Government and other authorities to help fund a permanent hovercraft link between Kirkcaldy and Edinburgh. Its preferred departure point is Leith, just west of Portobello, which has better transport links and a shorter journey time of 18 minutes. Fares would be expected to be charged at a 'small premium to rail prices', which are currently £10.30 peak and £7.10 off-peak between Kirkcaldy and Edinburgh.

"Stagecoach would invest around £8.3m into two craft for the service, plus £2m in maintenance facilities, a park-and-sail terminal at Kirkcaldy and landing works. In return the Perth-based firm, which said it had discussed the service with Forth Ports, is urging the authorities to stump up around £3.3m to 'kick-start' the service until it is established commercially.

"Brian Souter, Stagecoach Group chief executive, said: 'We now have compelling evidence of a clear business case for a permanent hovercraft service. The trial this summer proved there is huge support for this project from communities on both sides of the Forth and it is crucial we maintain the momentum behind this initiative'. If support is found for the Kirkcaldy to Leith hovercraft, Stagecoach said a full service could be operational from summer 2009, travelling from a former bus depot in Kirkcaldy to a landing strip at

Leith's Ocean Terminal. As an interim measure, Stagecoach has also proposed starting a one-hovercraft operation from Kirkcaldy to Portobello - similar to the route of the original trial from late 08.

"According to Stagecoach, retailers on both sides of the Forth reported more shoppers going through their doors and increased sales during the trial. Russell Imrie, SEStran chairman, said: 'We are very pleased at its success. We are committed to building an inclusive & sustainable transportation system for South-east Scotland, and to supporting innovative and imaginative solutions to meeting the region's transportation needs'.."

Ref: Julia Horton, The (UK) Herald, 26/10/07

See also: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lm6PDDj-k_k

"I wanted to post to this blog to offer my wholehearted support to this venture. The hovercraft is an excellent idea and I've always felt it sad we make so little of the water to help reduce pressure on bottlenecks such as the forth crossing. I travel into Edinburgh from further into Fife but am happy making the trip into Kirkcaldy if I can be confident the connections and return crossing can be made comfortably and efficiently."

Ref: Tim, 17/7/07

*"Rapid and smooth run over to Edinburgh taking just over 15 mins with the buses ready to pick people up to take them to Leith or Princes Street. Boarding the hovercraft was problem free. Surprising amount of space onboard the hovercraft cabin with decent legroom and noise levels much lower than I had thought they'd be. The ride was surprisingly smooth with the minimum of rolling and pitching (most unlike similar sized boats I've been on...)." **Ref: Rick, 21/7/07***

*"The crossing was quick and very comfortable not at all like being on a boat even though the water was quite rough." **Ref: Paul, 21/7/07***

*"If a service is to be introduced that suits all commuters it must consider the many shift workers that cannot use public transport because of shift patterns. ... An integrated bus service is a must for this to work ..." **Ref: Anonymous, 22/7/07***

"I hope that a permanent crossing is implemented soon. If this was the case then I really think that two hovercraft would be needed to accommodate both commuters and day trippers/tourists."

Ref: Mac99, 27/7/07

These comments on the hovercraft trial are from the Forthfast Hovercraft Blog. See the full comments at: <http://www.forth-hovercraft.s-and-w.org/blog/>