

### Hybrid-Electric Bus Trial

"Australia's first hybrid-electric bus trial has been launched in Melbourne. The \$500,000 trial will be on two outer suburban routes and it is expected the buses will emit 20 per cent less greenhouse gases than diesel buses.

'Just as hybrid technology has come to passenger cars, no reason why it can't come to buses and heavy vehicles as well', Victorian Environment Minister Gavin Jennings said. 'We think huge savings could be made with a bus fleet if this trial proves successful, and there's every reason that it will be successful'. The Victorian Government says it will consider introducing more of the green buses if the trial is successful. The trial will be on the Stud Park to Caulfield route and the Garden City to La Trobe University route." **Ref: ABC News, 28/6/09**

### More on Transport Operators

"Melbourne's trains and trams will soon have new logos. Whether it help them run on time or make it any easier to squeeze on during peak hour remains to be seen. The Victorian government has announced that current operators, French-owned Yarra Trams and Connex, will be replaced by two new companies, both also with overseas connections. Hong Kong's MTR Corporation will lead a consortium to run the trains, while Melbourne's trams will kept on their tracks by KDR, a consortium that includes French company Keolis.

"Of course the city's public transport was privatised years ago, under Jeff Kennett, and the current Labor government in Victoria refused to contemplate taking in the system back under its wing - because, as we all know, the science of economics has long proven that private enterprise is far better at running things than bureaucrats. Interesting to note then that the foreign partners behind the two successful bidders are both substantially government owned - Hong Kong's MTR - or Mass Transit Railway - is 76 per cent owned by the Chinese Special Administrative Region of Hong Kong. Tram operator Keolis is 45 per cent owned by the French government via its national railway company." **Ref: Peter Mares, The National Interest, ABC Radio National, 28/6/09**  
[www.abc.net.au/rn/nationalinterest/stories/2009/2609867.htm#transcript](http://www.abc.net.au/rn/nationalinterest/stories/2009/2609867.htm#transcript)

### And Also ...

"Q: I want to walk from Perth to Sydney - can I follow the railroad tracks? (Question from Sweden) A: Sure, it's only three thousand miles, take lots of water." **Ref: Email**

### Raise Car Park Fees for High-Polluters

"A consultant with a United Kingdom council famous for its innovative environmental policies says the ACT Government could charge steeper parking fees to high-polluting cars. John Thorp from Woking Borough Council met with Environment Minister Simon Corbell today to discuss ways to develop sustainable policies. Mr Thorp says Woking Council charges parking fees based on how much carbon dioxide each car emits and that the ACT Government could do the same. 'I think they need to be careful of using price to modify people's behaviour, but the price signals are the strongest signals you can give to people', he said. 'It's resulted in people bringing in less large cars into the town and using the public transport more'."

**Ref: ABC News, 28/5/09**

### Airports Make Emissions Pledge

"More than 30 European airports pledged on Tuesday to become carbon neutral in the industry's biggest commitment yet to fighting climate change. Some 11 companies, which own airports representing a quarter of Europe's air traffic, were the first to sign an industry-wide plan to eliminate or offset greenhouse gases from ground activities, including passenger's journeys to and from airports. ... In March airports and airlines agreed to implement a new landing pattern that should save 500,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide and £100m in fuel costs by the end of 2013. It envisages more continuous descents, replacing the current pattern of descents made in stages, in 100 European airports."

**Ref: Andrew Bounds, Financial Times, 17/6/09**



King of Sweden

### And Also ...

"Sweden has taken over the presidency of the European Union and is expected to put climate change at the top of its agenda. ... Sweden's king famously switches off the lights at the royal palace at night. Forty-three per cent of his country's energy needs comes from renewables - the highest share of renewable energy use in Europe. Sweden also

tops the list of countries that have done the most to save the planet. It has exceeded its Kyoto protocol target by cutting emissions by 9 per cent."

**Ref: Emma Alberici, ABC News, 1/7/09**

## Fast Trains in the US

*“As of June 9, 2009, the largest public works project in the U.S. is a railroad tunnel. \$8 billion in federal stimulus funds are pouring into select high-speed rail projects like the Hudson River rail tunnel from New Jersey to New York City. ... The New Jersey Transit's rail and bus lines take passengers on over 223 million trips a year. Nationally, ridership has been increasing not only on high-frequency commuter lines like NJ-NYC, but also between cities like Raleigh and Charlotte.*

*“North Carolina's main Amtrak route runs you from point A to point B in about the same time it takes to drive. And when gasoline prices skyrocketed in 2008, the 170-mile Raleigh-Charlotte route saw a 28% jump over 2007 ticket sales. To commuters, rail made more and more sense with every cent unleaded ticked upward. But what if the same route took half the time by train as it did by car—and cost less? That's the scenario in the making across the country's 'mega-regions'. ...*

*“Nationwide, mega-regions like the ones stretching from Chicago to Kansas City and from L.A. up to Sacramento account for 3/4 of American economic activity. High-speed rail would lessen commute times between close-together cities like Washington and Baltimore, and it would let business travelers get from Boston's city centre to the nation's capital in under 3 hours. ...*

*“Some of the security hassles of air travel may be replicated as rail lines get more packed, but times to and from far-flung airports would be eliminated. What's more, you can book a train ticket for a reasonable price at any train station and often without an attendant. There's no comparison when it comes to the run-around.*



*“There's also a huge savings to be had at the state level, as California makes clear. California's state government says a statewide high-speed rail network would eliminate the need for 5 runways and 90 boarding gates to be built by 2020, and construction crews alone would employ 160,000 workers. By 2035, all jobs associated with expanding railway infrastructure in the Golden State could come to 450,000! That's in addition to saving on traffic congestion, pollution, and health care costs for citizens (3000 lane-miles of freeway would also be cut out by rail), and creating a billion dollars in revenue surplus for Sacramento...”*

**Ref: Sam Hopkins, Green Chip Review, 11/6/09**

*“President Obama proposes to help address the Nation's transportation challenges by investing in an efficient, high-speed passenger rail network of 100- to 600-mile intercity corridors that connect communities across America. ... A major reshaping of the Nation's transportation system is not without significant challenges. After decades of relatively modest investment in passenger rail, the United States has a dwindling pool of expertise in the field and a lack of manufacturing capacity.”*

**Ref: Vision for High Speed Rail in America, Strategic Plan, April 2009**

Full Report:

[www.fra.dot.gov/Downloads/RRdev/hsrstrategicplan.pdf](http://www.fra.dot.gov/Downloads/RRdev/hsrstrategicplan.pdf)

## Benefits of Passenger Rail

*“Rail is well positioned to address many of the Nation's strategic transportation goals:*

- *Safe and efficient transportation options. Rail is a cost-effective means for serving transportation needs in congested intercity corridors. ...*
- *Energy efficiency and environmental quality. Rail is already among the cleanest and most energy-efficient of the passenger transportation modes ...*
- *Interconnected livable communities. Rail*

*transport has generally been associated with 'smart growth' because it can foster higher-density development than has typically been associated with highways and airports. Rail is uniquely capable of providing both high-speed intercity transportation and its own efficient local access and egress system.”*

**Ref: Vision for High Speed Rail in America, Strategic Plan, April 2009**

## US & Australia Compared

*“President Barack Obama calculates the cost of US road and air congestion at \$US80 billion (\$A110 billion) a year. So he has announced 10 new fast-rail projects to connect the four corners of the continent, from Boston to San Diego and beyond. The initial budget for the new rail projects will be \$US13 billion, including \$US5 billion to renovate the existing inter-city routes.*

*“Australia, by contrast, is one of the few developed countries where the central government spends a fortune on roads and highways, but almost nothing on passenger transport. Our road congestion costs are forecast to reach \$25 billion a year by 2020, with 50,000 more large truck movements a day.*

*“Maybe we should look at Obama's reasoning, which is that a transfer of passengers and freight to rail would reduce pollution, emissions, congestion, and the foreign oil bill. He also announced that constructing an efficient national rail network would be ‘faster, cheaper, and easier’ than building more freeways.*

*“Contrast this with Premier John Brumby's and Roads Minister Tim Pallas' enthusiasm for the new Frankston Freeway, which will induce many more car and truck movements, and eventually distribute that traffic onto congested exit ramps, minor roads, parking lots, and suburban streets. Some observers of Spring Street believe the chief object of that \$750 million freeway is to bulk up the struggling finances of EastLink. It will certainly increase congestion costs from the Springvale area to the central business district.*

*“The US President explained he was concerned that rail services in the US had fallen way behind countries such as France, China, Japan, and Spain. He used the example of the fast rail from Madrid to Seville that now takes more passengers than the combined motor vehicle and air links. The US Administration is aware of the facts that passenger and freight rail use only a third of the fuel of motor traffic, and push out only a third of the pollution. This should be central to Canberra's considerations of the Garnaut report. But in Melbourne, rail options for the heavily populated Doncaster and Rowville corridors languish among the debris of our five recent transport plans.*

*“Instead of tackling congestion, pollution, overcrowding, and social isolation head-on, we plan for such community busters as the Hoddle Street concrete and steel flyovers, and noisy and threatening clearways slicing through our inner suburbs. State cabinet has never understood*

*that one loaded train takes eight kilometres of cars from our busiest roads, and thus becomes a highly efficient investment.*

*“Julia Gillard is the federal Minister for Social Inclusion, but we are yet to see her standing up for the outer and fringe suburbs that lack access to passenger transport. They may have cheaper housing blocks, but for most families, the cost of running two and three cars destroys that advantage. The US Administration estimates that commuting on rail can save outer-suburban families up to \$US8500 a year. If the land of Homer Simpson can finally see the economic and social benefits of rail, maybe there is hope for Kevin and John.”*

**Ref: Brian Buckley, The Age, 21/4/09**

## Melbourne Sprawl

*“Let me try to get this straight. Melbourne is sprawling out of control and that's why they brought in the 2030 plan. In the areas that they service, the railways cannot cope with passenger traffic and trains are grossly overcrowded. The peak period on the roads now lasts for much of the morning. There is a water crisis, with Melbourne's water supply being only a quarter of its capacity. The solution seems to be to cancel the short-lived 2030 and extend the built-up area, build houses over green areas and valuable market gardens and extend Melbourne's population to 5 million. It is a triumph of stupidity over common sense and could well be described as Maddening.”*

**Ref: John Ackerman, The Age, 23/6/09**

## What Victorians are Saying

*“Many individuals and organisations around Victoria contributed to the Government's community consultations on climate change, conducted during 2008.” Comments include:*

- *“The need to reduce our reliance on cars and to encourage people to drive ‘greener’ cars is a strong theme in consultations and submissions. Many people support increased investment in Melbourne's public transport network and greater support for walking and cycling.*

- *“Encouraging sustainable planning and building design is advocated by many organisations and individuals. There are calls for substantial planning reform in urban areas, including greater residential density, provision for solar power and on-site co-generation, and sustainable urban fringe developments. Containing urban sprawl is also supported by many people.”*

**Ref: Victorian Climate Change Green Paper, (Highlights) June 2009** See the full report at: <http://www.climatechange.vic.gov.au/index.html>

### Making the Bay Connect (Part 3)

The body of the 2008 report<sup>1</sup> takes us through the history of early ferries and states: *“There are many lessons to be learnt from the design of these [early] vessels and the reason for their demise: ... Technology was not updated and was overtaken by improvements in other modes.”*

The 2008 report actually mentions hovercraft but fails to acknowledge the technological advances that have occurred over the past thirty years (eg new designs and components). Hovercraft are pretty much dismissed because *“In the event of extreme weather, the only viable course of action for the vessel is to reduce speed ...”*

Needless to say, extreme weather events can affect any mode of transport - witness fog at airports or train lines buckling in extreme heat.

The questions are:

- How often do these extreme – service stopping – events occur?
- Are they likely to occur more in the future with climate change?
- How would modern hovercraft cope with the typical conditions on Port Phillip Bay?

As is noted in the 2008 Report, the Bureau of Meteorology publishes forecasts but *“does not have available an archive of these past forecasts upon which an estimate of occurrence of wave heights could be made”*. The lack of accumulated data may seem strange, but in this case the Bureau is interested in predictive information (based on wind patterns) rather than historical data.

The Port Phillip Bay weather conditions are crucial not just because they will determine service interruption and travel conditions, but because there is a perception that the Bay is ‘often’ rough and choppy. Almost daily observations reveal however that bay is often like a millpond or that the waves are quite minimal.

The 2008 Report publishes data on the ‘St Kilda Marina Wave Climate’ and notes *“that the for the majority of the time significant wave height will be below 1m, and wave mean period below 3.5 seconds. However, as noted previously, this is for a location just off St Kilda Marina, and further out into the bay the wave climate will be more severe.”*

Just how severe nobody knows, however there are buoys located near the heads and it is likely that the wave heights in this area may be more excessive and could effect service timetabling between the two peninsulas.

The points to be made here are:

- The Bureau of Meteorology issues predictive reports for the worst expected conditions on the whole Bay. Most often these are for wave heights less than 1.5 metres.
  - The proposed vessels (hovercraft) can cope quite satisfactorily with wave conditions up to 1.5 metres.
  - Whilst one side of the Bay may have quite choppy conditions (created by the wind) the other side may be calm. Hovercraft on Port Phillip Bay – because of their speed - would have the capability of skirting around unfavourable conditions, without unduly effecting timetabled services. It is recognised that this extra speed and travel time would be in the interests of passenger comfort even though it would be at the expense of greater fuel consumption.
  - In really severe conditions the hovercraft service timetable would be affected. In dangerous conditions, the hovercraft would beach themselves as soon as possible as ultimately passenger and crew safety is paramount.
  - The Bureau of Meteorology reports will normally give accurate wave conditions at least twenty-four hours in advance, and along with transit websites, text messages, etc, customers will be able to make considered decisions as to whether they should use the ferry service or make alternative arrangements (ideally with other, complimentary modes of public transport). It would be preferable to have ferries operating 98% of the time than not at all. {to be continued in #114}
- Extract from *Making the Bay Connect*, my yet-to-be released study on ferries for Port Phillip.**

### Feedback on Ferries

*“These are useful ideas. An important question to be answered is: at what speed do these ferries run? {Answer: Cruise 35 knots; Max 65 knots} Secondly, it is highly important that such ferry services are properly and closely co-ordinated with the land public transport services, particularly the suburban rail and other trunk routes. Brighton Beach and Altona East are two existing or proposed stations where such co-ordination could readily occur.”* Ref: Louis Fouvy, Public Transport Engineer, 29/6/09

### And Also ... (Strange Laws)

*“In West Virginia, only babies can ride in a baby carriage.”* Ref: [www.strangefacts.com/laws.html](http://www.strangefacts.com/laws.html)

<sup>1</sup> Review and Analysis of Proposed Commuter Ferry Services on Port Phillip, DoT, September 2008