

US Ethanol Future

"The Obama administration took on the powerful farming interests in America's heartland today, making clear it does not see corn-based ethanol as part of the long-term solution to climate change. The new proposals on the biofuel – in the face of intense pressure from agricultural companies and members of Congress from corn-growing states – were seen as the first test of Barack Obama's promise to put science above politics in deciding America's energy future. Ethanol had once appeared to provide a transport fuel which did not increase carbon dioxide. But studies have suggested that the fuel needed to process the corn meant the ethanol could be more polluting than the fossil fuel it was meant to replace. Furthermore, the use of food crops for biofuel was blamed for a substantial part of the large price rises seen in 2008. Administration officials set out a \$1.8bn plan to develop a new generation of environmentally-friendly biofuels that are not made from food crops and have a lower carbon footprint, while providing a bail-out of existing corn ethanol producers." **Ref: Suzanne Goldberg, Guardian Weekly, 15/5/09**

UK Electric Bus

"UK firm Optare has showcased its Solo EV – which it describes as the UK's first practical electric bus – before British Prime Minister, Gordon Brown. This follows recent announcement of US\$49 million (£30 million) from the Government to encourage the use of low carbon buses. 'This is precisely the shot in the arm the bus industry needs to switch to low carbon buses', says Jim Sumner, CEO at Optare. He told the prime minister that the Solo EV is the first practical, fully electric and thus emission-free bus available in Britain 'and it can be ordered today and be on the streets very soon'. Sumner said Optare is developing a range of advanced technology low carbon buses but none will beat the Solo EV for emissions performance."



Ref: Traffic Technology Today, 3/7/09

And Also ...

"A Manchester mum has failed her driving test after she accidentally splashed a man at a bus stop when she went through a puddle. Michelle Kelly, 31, was told by the examiner it was technically a crash and she should have exchanged details with the pedestrian."

Ref: The Age 11/9/08

Saving Tasmania's Rail

"The Federal Government has finalised details of its \$195 million investment in Tasmania's rail infrastructure following the decision by Asciano to cease its rail operations by 30 November 2009. Federal Infrastructure and Transport Minister, Anthony Albanese, and Tasmanian Infrastructure Minister, Graeme Sturges, said their governments have agreed to a program of capital works to support hundreds of local jobs and help restore the viability of the State's rail network. 'The purpose of our unprecedented investment is simple: to put the State's rail network back on a secure footing for the long term. This investment will support jobs today while building the rail infrastructure Tasmania needs for tomorrow.' [said Mr Albanese]."

Ref: Joint Federal/State Ministerial Media Release, 7/7/09

Saving Seats

"Irish no-frills carrier Ryanair said it was in talks with US planemaker Boeing about adapting its aircraft so that some passengers could be placed in 'vertical seating'. The low-cost carrier, which in recent months has suggested heavy passengers pay a 'fat tax' and travellers pay to use its on-board toilets, said it wants to get more people onto its aircraft by ripping out traditional seating. Ryanair is in discussions with Boeing 'in relation to adapt the aircraft to allow people to travel in vertical seating', Ryanair spokesman Stephen McNamara said on Monday. Passengers 'wouldn't be fully standing, they would have something like a stool to lean on or to sit on', he added."

Ref: AFP, The Age, 7/7/09

Hybrid Carshare

"Honda Australia announced it is providing two Civic Hybrids to Flexicar, as a contribution to sustainable driving. The initiative is an Australian first for the car industry and Honda believes it will assist with the growing demand for low emission vehicles on Australian roads. Interestingly, although Flexicar does already have a strong corporate tie-up with Honda as it uses the Jazz extensively in its fleet of 70 cars, the Toyota Prius was evaluated but rejected as 'too quirky and confronting' for Flexicar's 2000-strong clientele. Car sharing is a fast-growing international trend, which began in Europe in the 1980s and is now active in more than 900 cities across Europe, North America and Asia. Founded in 2005, Flexicar says it identified the need to introduce a hybrid to its fleet in response to growing consumer concern about the environment, coupled with increased petrol prices."

Ref: CarAdvice.Com.Au. 4/6/09

Naked Streets

"Stepping off the footpath in the centre of Sydney can be a perilous exercise. Even in a city usually choked with traffic, cars still manage to tear past. The alternative - waiting at a major intersection up to three minutes for traffic lights to change - is ignored by 70 per cent of pedestrians. Now, the City of Sydney wants to take control of several main arteries through the central business district, rip out the traffic lights, strip the streets of safety signs, impose a speed limit of 10 kph and give pedestrians the right of way.

"The proposal for 'naked streets' - the term used in European cities where streetscapes devoid of lights and signs are common - is designed to discourage driving in the CBD, without imposing financial disincentives, such as the congestion charge that is levied on motorists entering the centre of London during the day. 'We need to reclaim the city from the dominance of the car', said Councillor John McInerney, who chairs the council's traffic and transport committee. 'The roads are public spaces that should accommodate pedestrians, cyclists as well'. At the moment, the city has only one such road, Barrack Street. Despite its appearance, the street is open to traffic. But its paving, street furniture, speed limit and general ambience causes most motorists to avoid it. The council wants to expand the concept to Castlereagh and Pitt streets, which run almost the entire length of the CBD, and to O'Connell, Bent, Philip and Loftus streets at the northern end and to Hay, Harbour and Sussex streets and Eddy Avenue, at the southern end.

"Cr McInerney says the key to the success of 'naked streets' is the appearance. The paving for pedestrians needs to be the same as for vehicles. 'That in itself sends a message to the driver that this is very much a shared space', he said. The proposal has won the support of Ian Faulks, a former director of the NSW Parliament's StaySafe Committee. Mr Faulks, now a consultant to interstate and overseas governments, says even a 20-30 kmh speed limit would be acceptable, as it would allow cars to stop quickly without hitting any pedestrians. He also says the European and North American experience shows drivers unconsciously slow down - and do not seem to mind - because of the surroundings. 'The trick is to make the road look like the sort of place where you need to exercise extra caution', he told the [Sydney Morning Herald]." Ref: Andrew West, SMH, 14/5/09



Sydney Pedestrian

New Directions for Perth

"The Barnett government's new Directions 2031 strategy would usher in a city less dependent on cars. 'Directions 2031 has much more realistic aims and stronger detail to help deliver 47 per cent infill equating to 121,000 new dwellings', [WA Planning Minister John Day] said. 'By 2031, we want a Perth that has a vibrant mix of activity areas that bring amenities, employment and education to people's doorsteps, is less reliant on cars and is well serviced by public transport.

Directions 2031's main principles are ease of transport options close to dwellings, greater housing diversity and residential development close to employment sources'." Ref: Chris Thomson, WA Today, 24/6/09

"Directions 2031 encourages a change in travel behaviour to more sustainable options, and anticipates that improved integration of land use and transport through the development of the activity centres network will lead to a reduction in the length of individual trips and reliance on the private motor vehicle. ...

"In recognition of the important role that public transport must play in shaping the future growth of the city and reducing dependence on the private car, the State Government is preparing a public transport strategy to guide the next generation of investment in public transport infrastructure and identify opportunities to increase public transport's share of total travel. The existing public transport system is designed primarily around the efficient movement of people to and from the Perth central area as the commercial epicentre of the metropolitan region. Continued growth of the city will necessitate the extension of these services to ensure residents in new growth areas have access to high quality public transport infrastructure."

Ref: Directions 2031, WA Planning Commission, June 2009 See the draft plan at: <http://www.planning.wa.gov.au/Plans+and+policies/Publications/1924.aspx>.



Barrack Street, Sydney Photo: Steven Siewert

Making the Bay Connect (Part 5)

Under Vessel Assessment, the 2008 Report¹ states that its assessment *"is intended to rule out potential vessels that would not be viable to provide a ferry service on Port Phillip."* It then goes on to grade hovercraft as:

- **'Not Suitable'** under **'Travel Time'** presumably based on the erroneous 40 knots rather than the potential 55-65 knots.
- **'Not Suitable'** under **'Service Reliability'** even though it previously indicated that extreme weather would be rare.
- **'Not Suitable'** under **'Comfort'** presumably because it assumes a small hovercraft would be utilised?
- **'Not Rated'** under **'Service Frequency'** as it is erroneously assumed that a hovercraft could only make 'one trip per peak period' when in fact this is not necessarily the case.
- **'Average'** under **'Capacity in Peak Hour'**
- **'Not Suitable'** under **'Berthing Requirements'** which is strange considering that hovercraft have almost no berthing requirements apart from a stretch of sand.
- **'Not Suitable'** under **'Relative Capital and Operating Expenditure'** which does not equate to the figures available.

The summary stated *"a Hovercraft has been assessed as performing below average across the criteria, largely because they are designed to operate in flat water where other vessels are not suited. A hovercraft service has been trialled on Port Phillip in the past but did meet the requirements of the service. The hovercraft is not considered a suitable craft to provide a ferry service on Port Phillip."* Again the error has been made that hovercraft can only be operated in flat water and the basis for their conclusions is drawn from the performance of one small vessel with a capacity of only 20-30 passengers back in the mid-1980s.

Like the 2000 Report, the 2008 Report focuses on the landside infrastructure (including car parking) but appears to fail to appreciate the high cost of such infrastructure or acknowledge that most of it is not needed for the operation of a hovercraft service (eg piers and wharfs). This is particularly true where the operation is integrating with the existing public and active transit rather than assuming the need for expensive car parking spaces. The 2008 Report does point out however that: *"it is believed City of Greater Geelong does not support*

development that will bring extra cars into the town centre and therefore do not support extra car parking for a ferry."

Based on a series of miscalculations (eg assuming an average speed of 29 knots) this 2008 Report then tries to demonstrate that total operating and infrastructure costs will be well under half that of revenue and that appears to be without taking into account items like management overhead costs or the likely increase in fuel costs. A serious study needs to embrace all the factors.

On Environmental Sustainability the 2008 Report states: *"It is considered the development of a ferry berth at Station Pier or the adjacent Beacon Cove would not create environmental concerns in light of the existing development in the area."*

Under Development of Infrastructure the 2008 Report states: *"... development of ferry infrastructure may not have significant impacts due to the potential developments being housed within existing infrastructure and therefore the requirement to develop any significant infrastructure into the water will not exist."*

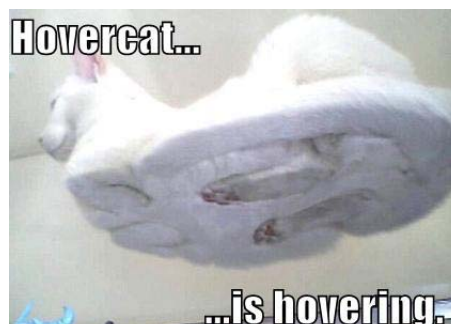
Under Sustainability the 2008 Report states: *"Developing a commuter ferry service has the ability to have a positive climate change impact in a similar way mass transit via train or tram travel. If a mode share from private vehicle to a ferry service can be achieved, this will result in a positive environmental outcome."*

Under Social Considerations the 2008 Report states: *"The provision of a commuter ferry service from Melbourne to Geelong would be considered a significant positive social benefit to the community of Geelong and especially other towns where pick up locations are provided ..."*

Clearly this 2008 Report, though presumably written with the best of intentions, is flawed in many of its assumptions and calculations. It is noted however that it does make some positive comments on the environmental and social aspects of operating a ferry service.

Extract from *Making the Bay Connect*, my yet-

to-be released study on ferries for Port Phillip.



Picture: Icanhas-cheezburger.com

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

Problems with Swedish Taxis (Part 2)

"The solution to these tourist rip-offs has been to keep these private taxis away from key tourists areas, like the main taxi queues at Central Station. Many key transport hubs bought the idea. Now the big companies have cornered the market on some of the best taxi spots where they get exclusive access (or nearly exclusive) to Swedish travellers as well as foreigners. If deregulation created this oligopoly, might regulation create competition? Yes.

"And, as far as the big taxi companies are concerned, that seems to be the problem. If the government starts regulating prices, they'd actually destroy this oligopoly. Think about it. If these private taxis were no longer ripping people off with crazy fares, there would be no reason to expel them from the airport, ferry terminals and train stations. No wonder the major taxi companies are such big supporters of deregulation.

"Now, you might argue that with regulated fares, there would be greater confidence in taxis and more tourists would probably take them. (Many tourists and visitors can't remember which are the 'safe' taxis, so they just skip the taxi ride completely). But, if you're one of the major taxi companies, what's more important: losing a few dozen taxi rides a day to tourist confidence or a few thousand at Central Station and other spots that keep the private taxis away? 'New Zealand deregulated taxi prices before Sweden', explains Rolf Arbin. 'And that system failed. But they fixed it. We're going to start by trying to fix the Taxa 1 switch scam, but if that doesn't do the trick, we're going to have to ask the politicians to make a max price. Or do what New Zealand has done and make the private companies join the big ones, which will force them to uphold certain standards and prices or the whole company risks losing their license'. 'The taxi pricing is a jungle', says Jonas Svedlund, a taxi driver for Taxi Varmdö. 'I need at least 10 rides to make the day profitable. Some of the inner-city drivers make closer to 20 short rides. But these rip-off drivers can get by on just one or two fares per day. It seem like a max price would offer more fair competition'.

"Seems like it's time for the government to make a distinction between regulating the number of taxis on the road and regulating the price. And because it will actually improve competition, it should be an idea even the Moderates can get behind."

Ref: Doug Lansky, The Local (Swedish News in English), 12/1/09

Rail vs Juggernaut Trucks in NZ

"Heavier, longer trucks will inevitably lead to more crashes and deaths on our roads and will undermine our rail freight network which is better suited for moving heavy freight, Green Party Associate Transport spokesperson Sue Kedgley said today. 'The last thing we need on our roads are 72 foot, 53 tonne juggernaut trucks. Trucks are already involved in 18% of all deaths on the roads, even though they comprise only 4% the vehicle fleet'. ... 'Longer, heavier trucks will have slower braking times, will cross the centre line on corners more often, and will be more dangerous to pass'.

"Ms Kedgley said the New Zealand Transport Authority acknowledges that New Zealand's roads are not currently suited to juggernaut trucks. 'Most of our roads are narrow and windy, with steep gradients and narrower widths than are found in other countries. Moving from 44 to 53 tonnes will double the damage caused to our roads - a maintenance cost that will disproportionately fall on local rate payers and taxpayers'. Heavier trucks will reduce per tonne freight costs, enabling trucks to take more freight from rail undermining efforts to shift heavy freight onto rail. Rail currently has great underutilised capacity, is safe, and five times more energy efficient for moving freight than trucks. 'Even a small shift of freight from rail to juggernaut trucks could undermine parts of our rail network and lead to line closures with the flow-on effect of even more freight moving back to roads'."

Ref: Green Party of NZ Media Release, 24/7/09

"In crashes involving trucks most of the deaths (about 83%) are not truck occupants, but rather the other road users involved. This reflects the fact that in a collision between a heavy vehicle and a light vehicle or vulnerable road user there is a much higher probability of death or serious injury than in a collision involving only light vehicles. This is not to say that the fault lies primarily with the heavy vehicles or their drivers."

Ref: NZ Ministry of Transport, 2008

www.transport.govt.nz/research/Documents/Truck-Crash-Factsheet.pdf

Comment: Just last week I travelled across the north island of New Zealand. It was disappointing to see the under-utilised rail lines while the narrow rural roads are dotted with little white crosses.

And Also ... (Aussies in Sweden)

"You know that you have been in Sweden too long when: Your idea of unforgivable behaviour now includes walking across the street when the light is red and there is no WALK symbol, even though there are no cars in sight."

Ref: <http://www.coolabah.com/sweden/youknow.html>