

Problems with Green Cars

"The Rudd government's \$1.3billion green car innovation fund will not deliver a more environmentally friendly automotive industry and is little more than shuffling deck chairs on the Titanic, industry veterans say. Calling for funding to be tied to major reform of the industry, as in the US, former car company executives say money dished out by the government under the green car fund is industry assistance under a new name. Their criticism comes after Industry Minister Kim Carr announced the federal government would provide \$42 million from the green car fund to help Ford develop a new four-cylinder engine for the Falcon and Territory. The funding came as Ford said it would dump plans to build the four-cylinder Ford Focus at its Broadmeadows plant in Melbourne.

"Former Mitsubishi Australia managing director Graham Spurling said the green car fund, intended to help companies develop low-emission, fuel-efficient cars, was simply an industry handout with a new banner. 'It's the same old ship with the same old deck chairs', Mr Spurling said. 'The industry has undergone huge changes overseas and I think Australia needs to understand that there is a need for a substantial paradigm shift. The current automotive regime is becoming outdated'. Former Mitsubishi executive Bob Manning said US President Barack Obama had demanded radical restructuring from car giants General Motors and Chrysler in exchange for industry assistance. 'We don't seem to have any idea of the shape of the industry we want, or (one) that can be viably maintained in Australia, and then how we might spend public funds to achieve it', Mr Manning said."

Ref: Nicola Berkovic, The Australian, 30/7/09

"Nissan unveiled ... its first all electric car, the Leaf, vowing to open a new chapter for the troubled auto industry and take a lead over its bigger rivals in zero emission vehicles. The mid-sized hatchback, which will go on sale in late 2010 in Japan ... represents a bold bet by Nissan that hybrids are merely a passing fad on the road to pure electric vehicles."

Ref: Roland de Courson, The Age, 2/8/09



Guerrilla Bike Lanes

"Many cities worldwide have been subject to painters of unofficial cycle markings on urban streets and roadways, in attempt to 'carve' themselves out a safer space among all the motorized traffic. Until recently it appears these activists were unknown to each other, though now a number of websites and forums have started to appear to collectively archive instances from different locations and share information.

URBAN REPAIR SQUAD

Do-it-yourself infrastructure: a practical manual



www.urbanrepairs.blogspot.com

"The Urban Repair Squad, are one of the more organized groups - they operate in Toronto, Canada and represent a group of unnamed

activists, keen to see the city's cycle lane infrastructure deployed sooner rather than later, given the authorities recently already delayed two years after promising new cycle routes, without implementing them. Their dissemination includes a downloadable 'DIY infrastructure' manual to share their method and objectives. While these activities can't be condoned, the fact that many have emerged from independent initiatives driven by similar concerns; perhaps goes some way to testify to an international desire for improved cyclist road safety. Also the need for cyclists to be taken seriously, and to be acknowledged as city road users." **Ref: Bikeoff**

http://www.bikeoff.org/design_resource/DR_schemes_advocacy_community_GuerillaBikeLanes.shtml

Dangers of Cycling in the UK

"The number of cyclists killed and seriously injured on Britain's roads rose by 11% between 2004 and 2007 despite no significant increase in cycling, a report by the National Audit Office found. It said that Britain has more cyclists and pedestrians who are injured and killed on the roads than other advanced nations."

Ref: Guardian Weekly, 15/5/09

And Also ...

"A Berlin brothel has come up with a novel way to negate the impact of the global economic crisis and target a new group of customers at the same time - offering a discount to patrons who arrive on bicycles." **Ref: SBS News, 4/7/09**

The Value of PT in Texas

"The value of public transportation has been validated by the newly released Texas Transportation Institute (TTI)'s annual congestion report, the 2009 Urban Mobility Report, which concludes that the cost of congestion increased in 2007 in the 439 urban areas studied. According to the 2009 Urban Mobility Report, public transportation saved 646 million hours in travel time and 398 million gallons of fuel. Without public transportation, the report states that congestion costs would have risen 16% to an additional US\$13.7 billion since 2005. The report finds that in the largest urban areas, where transit is most available and used, the savings are the greatest, demonstrating the value of public transportation investment. 'This highly respected congestion report, which shows that traffic congestion is still a major problem on our nation's roads, also drives home the value of public transit in helping to reduce congestion', says American Public Transportation Association President William Millar. 'Traffic congestion affects everyone. It not only wastes peoples' time and money, but it also hurts our country's economic productivity, makes us consume more gasoline, and damages our environment'. Public transportation promotes economic growth and helps the USA meet its national goals of reducing greenhouse gases and moving to greater energy independence. Every year, 37 million metric tons of carbon emissions and 4.2 billion gallons of gasoline are saved due to public transportation use."

Ref: Traffic Technology Today, 9/7/09

Good Urban Design & Reduced Crime

"The criminal justice literature examines the importance of environmental characteristics in deterring or enhancing opportunities for committing crimes against people of property. Oscar Newman's research defines several key environmental characteristics, such as defensible space, territoriality, and natural surveillance - with the potential for deterring criminal behaviours. Loukaitou-Siders examines environmental characteristics of crime hot spots at bus transit stops and finds that lack of visibility from surrounding stores, vacant lots, dilapidated buildings, easy escape routes, and low levels of pedestrian activity near these bus stops are associated with higher rates of criminal behaviour."

Ref: Sherry Ryan & Frank Lawrence, Pedestrian Environments & Transit Ridership, Journal of Public Transportation (Vol 12, No.1, 2009) See full report at: <http://www.nctr.usf.edu/jpt/pdf/JPT12-1.pdf>

Creeping

"A recent net and TV campaign [was] produced by the South Australian Government and the motor Accident Commission to make drivers 'Stop Creeping Over the Speed Limit' after low-level speeding was estimated to be a factor in 50% of crashes." **Ref: Ross Phillips & Renata Torquato, A Review of 45 Anti-Speeding Campaigns, Institute of Transport Economics (1003/2009) Norwegian Centre for Transport Research**

<http://www.toi.no/getfile.php/Publikasjoner/T%D8I%20rapporter/2009/1003-2009/1003-2009-nett.pdf> **Jan 2009**

"Creepers think it's ok to go a little bit over the speed limit, but they're wrong! Speeding is South Australia's number one road safety priority. People who drive well above the speed limit are at a greater risk of having a crash. However, many people believe it is OK to creep just a few kilometres over the limit. Because there are a large number of these people, they are the ones who cause the most crashes on our roads. Stop Creeping! Creepers..."

- Think it's ok to go a bit over the speed limit. They're Wrong.
- Waste thousands of emergency service hours.
- Waste hundreds of hospital beds.
- Are killing people.
- Cause the most injuries on the road.
- Cause hundreds of ambulance call-outs.
- Cost million of dollars in road injury claims.
- Increase the cost of motor registration.
- Increase the cost of compulsory third party injury insurance.
- Are fined more than anyone else on the road.
- Cause the most road accidents."

Ref: Sth Aust Motor Accident Commission 2008 http://www.mac.sa.gov.au/creeping_speeding/home

And Also

"The world's first jumbo jet hostel is an actual jet-plane at Sweden's main airport outside Stockholm which has been converted into a 25-room guesthouse that sleeps as many as 72 people. One thing the hostel has going for it is price -- a room starts at 350 Swedish krona (about A\$63), which is a lot less than hotel rooms outside of

major airports."
Ref: The Age 4/8/09



Photo: Reuters

Why Walking Matters

“Quite simply, walking-friendly neighbourhoods are important because they encourage people to walk. Before we became so dependent on our cars, our streets were for socialising, doing business and just strolling around.

Walking is great for our health, our hip-pocket and protecting our environment, and there are also some less obvious benefits. For example walking:

- encourages people to get to know their neighbours;
- improves local safety and security;
- reduces traffic and boosts road safety; and
- benefits local businesses.

(a) Health and wellbeing

“As a society, we don’t walk as often, or as far, as generations before us did. In fact, around 40 per cent of the trips Melbourne people make in cars are less than 2km long. Nearly 80 per cent of children who live within 2km of school are driven both ways, every day. That’s a pity, because regular walking:

- helps you feel fitter, healthier and more energetic, as well as helping you to lose weight; and
- can help you live longer, by reducing the risk of heart disease, diabetes, osteoporosis and some cancers.

“Of all groups in the community, our reliance on cars for transport has perhaps had the greatest impact on our children – which is reflected in the rising rates of childhood obesity and respiratory illness. Did you know that you are exposed to more toxins sitting in a car than when walking in the street – even in peak hour?

Some of the greatest benefits from walking flow to children, because it keeps them active and reduces the pollution they breathe, and also because it helps them feel connected with and aware of the community they live in.

(b) Cost

“Walking is free. Enough said.

(c) Environment

“Walking is absolutely non-polluting - it’s the most environmentally sustainable form of transport that exists.

(d) Social connections

“Neighbourhoods that people walk around often have a strong sense of ‘community’: they’re more welcoming and inclusive. People who live in walkable neighbourhoods are more likely to know their neighbours, participate politically, trust others, and be socially engaged .

This is because walking makes it easy to make and maintain local social connections. It’s much easier to say hello to a neighbour or stop for a chat if you’re walking, than it is if you’re driving.

(e) Safety and security

“When lots of people walk, it also creates a stronger sense of safety and security in an area. More people walking means more ‘eyes’ on the street, which deters crimes against people and property. And it’s a positive cycle: as people see others walking, they feel safer about walking themselves, and over time, more and more people take to the streets on foot.

(f) Traffic

“Walking can also reduce traffic, because it gets people out of their cars and onto the footpaths. One obvious place this can make an immediate impact is outside schools at pick-up and drop-off times. As well as the incredible benefits walking can have on children’s health, walking greatly reduces traffic congestion around schools at peak times, which helps protect children’s safety.

“But opportunities to change traffic go well beyond the school run: there is evidence to suggest that cars actually slow down when they see people walking or chatting near a road, which can significantly reduce accidents and improve the sense of wellbeing of walkers.

(g) Local businesses

“Local businesses benefit enormously when people walk around their neighbourhoods – and successful local businesses contribute to the vibrancy of communities. That’s because people who walk:

- have more time to take in what’s on offer in a local business;
- often stop for a drink or a snack along the way; and
- shop locally, so they don’t have to carry their goods too far.

“In fact, some research in England in the 1990’s clearly revealed that the vacancy rates of commercial premises rise as the amount of traffic increases. Many other studies have found that customers who walk spend more than those who drive to local shops.”

Ref: Victoria Walks, VicHealth, June 2009

<http://www.victoriawalks.org.au/Why>

And Also ...

“Sydney’s what you get when the developers run the place. Badly designed, cheaply finished buildings. ... My personal favourites are the overhead footways criss-crossing the city, like vast vacuum tubes sucking consumers from one shopping extravaganza to another. If ever there was a determined piece of civic uglification it is the overhead pedestrian tunnel - the brute force of commerce crushing charm.”

Ref: Richard Ackland, The Age, 12/6/09

Disappearing Traffic

“As car ownership and use have increased over the past 30 years the reaction to the pressure created by additional traffic demand has often been to increase the level of supply, in other words provide additional road space. This traditional approach of providing supply to meet demand is no longer always appropriate. There is a growing body of evidence indicating that the benefits of creating additional road capacity are not as significant as was previously believed. In extreme cases the provision of new road links may in fact increase congestion problems. This occurs through a process that is known as traffic ‘induction’.

“In 1994, the UK Government-commissioned Sactra report¹ provided evidence on the impact of new road building on traffic levels in the area of the scheme. The report revealed that when new road capacity is provided, overall traffic levels in the vicinity of the scheme may actually increase. The evidence does not offer a reliable means of predicting the extent of this traffic increase but case studies suggest that it is typically around 10 % in the short term, and 20% in the longer term. In our cities there is an additional reason as to why the provision of additional road capacity is problematic for city planners — there is simply a lack of available space in which to expand.

“On 17 November 1962, Copenhagen’s main street, Strøget was pedestrianised. This conversion was hotly debated at the time. People argued that a pedestrian street in Denmark would never work. However although scepticism was high, the new car free environment proved extremely popular with local residents from the first day. This marked the beginning of a gradual transformation that has continued ever since. Today Copenhagen has a vibrant city centre that attracts visitors throughout the year. Today the city of Copenhagen has over 96 000 m² (of which 33% is street and 67% city squares) of car-free space.

“While pedestrian traffic levels have remained largely unchanged over past decades, activities connected with stopping and staying are almost four times greater than in

1968. During the summer months many of the pedestrian streets are full to capacity with people enjoying the many outdoor social and cultural activities. In the winter months attractions include festivals, and outdoor ice skating.

“As the streets and squares in the city centre have been pedestrianised and improved, the area has become more attractive yet also less accessible for the motorist. The city authority has adopted an integrated traffic management strategy for the city centre:

- *limiting the number of parking spaces (charges for on-street parking are relatively high);*
- *reducing the number of lanes on several main routes into the city and using the space for bus and cycle lanes instead;*
- *restricting through traffic;*
- *while developing the suburban train, bus and bicycle networks.*

“In the city centre, 80% of all journeys are made on foot and 14% by bicycle. Car traffic in the city core has been reduced and congestion is not a problem. The key to the success of these inner city transformations was undoubtedly the gradual way these rather drastic changes were made. This incremental approach has given residents time to adapt, to change from driving and parking their cars to walking, using bicycles and public transport.



“There is a growing body of evidence that where well-planned measures to reduce road space for private cars are implemented in congested areas and where no alternative network capacity is available, over the long term the predicted traffic chaos does not occur. ... Support for the concept of traffic evaporation can be found indirectly in the similar, but opposite phenomenon known as traffic induction (where traffic generation occurs in response to new road provision). Whilst not proof itself that traffic evaporation will always result from road capacity reduction, this concept equally relies upon the complexity and adaptability of driver response to changes in road conditions.”

Ref: Reclaiming City Streets for People: Chaos or Quality of Life?

European Commission Directorate-General for the Environment (2009) See full report:

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/pubs/pdf/streets_people.pdf

Picture: Strøget before and after pedestrianisation in 1962

¹ Sactra (1994) Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment. ‘Trunk roads and the generation of traffic’, <http://www.t-e.nu/links.htm>