

Transport Options for Sydney

"The NSW Government could do Sydney's public transport-starved residents a favour by postponing the controversial \$5.3 billion underground Metro through the CBD and investing in some quick fixes, an international transport expert says. The director of the International Union of Public Transport Australia-New Zealand, Peter Moore, said the Government should extend the heavy rail system, establish rapid transit-ways for buses in the outer suburbs and build light rail within a 10-kilometre radius of the city. 'It's all very well to say, "Let's go with a metro through the CBD, then out to Parramatta, then to north-west Sydney"', but that's a 30-year plan', he said. 'Sure, let's design it, but get started immediately on improvements that will be complete within the next five to 10 years'.

"Mr Moore's view is backed by the Rapid, Active and Affordable Transport Alliance, a new network of community, environmental, public health and consumer groups, transport unions, industry associations and the City of Sydney. An alliance spokeswoman, Gail Broadbent, said transitways – bus-only lanes that have priority at traffic lights – and light rail would eliminate the need for more expensive motorways. 'A bus on a busway can carry 50 to 80 times the number of passengers than a single car and use up a lot less space than highways', she said. 'It would also quickly reduce our dependence on oil'. Ms Broadbent said people already spend about \$12 billion a year on imported oil and, within 6 years, Australia could be importing 70% of its fuel.

"Mr Moore said the real enemy of good public transport was not cheap petrol or freeways but timetables. 'If people need to rely on a timetable for a bus or a train, if they have to wait another half an hour if they miss a service, they will abandon public transport', he said. Give Sydneysiders a bus or a train every 10 minutes – at a minimum – and they will come, he said. And he does not accept the argument from public transport sceptics that Sydney is too spread out, with a population density that is too low, for bus and train services to be viable. In Dallas, Texas, the population density is about 580 people a square kilometre, while in the outer Sydney suburbs of Penrith and Campelltown, densities are between 440 and 480 people a square

kilometre, he said. Last year, there was a 15% surge in patronage on Dallas's fast trams. Across the US, where the car has been king for 60 years, public transport use has reached record levels. In 2007, Americans took 10.3 billion trips on public transport – the highest number in 50 years. Even as petrol prices fell late last year, there was a 6.5% rise in bus, train & light-rail use.

"In Sydney suburbs such as Blacktown, there were enough passengers to justify buses running every 10 minutes, Mr Moore said. As passengers increase, the bus routes could become transit-ways, which overcome the second major turn-off for commuters after timetables: traffic. 'If you're on a bus, stuck in traffic for 20 minutes behind a line of cars, [it won't be long] before you go back to your own car', he said. Transitways, such as those in Brisbane, where public transport use has risen 50% in five years, can be upgraded cheaply for light rail. ...

"University of Technology expert Garry Glazebrook said the lessons for Sydney from other cities was that 'there is now a race ... to expand modern public transport systems and to curb the private car. Those cities that fail to do this will be left behind and unprepared in the new age of peak oil and climate change', he said."

Ref: Andrew West, SMH, 23/8/09



'In NSW right now we need some truth-telling.'

Transport Integration in Victoria

Victorian Public Transport Minister Lynne Kosky has said that "a proposed Transport Integration Bill would bring together all elements of the transport system – roads, rail, ports and marine – under one statute for the first time. 'In planning and developing the transport system, decision-makers will be required to take account of the bigger picture – for example, how the transport system can respond to environmental issues like climate change or social issues such as the adverse impact of higher oil prices and the ageing population on people's access and mobility. ... By establishing a clear framework for an economically, environmentally and socially sustainable transport system, this legislation will leave a major legacy for future generations of Victorians. ... setting a clear direction for transport policy in Victoria and establishing a consistent framework for use by all government agencies that make decisions impacting on the transport system'."

Ref: Victorian Govt Media Release, 31/7/09

Homemade Trams (Part 2)

"Though the [US] Federal Transit Administration manages a \$1.6 billion program for light rail, little of it, subject to complex distribution conditions, has been distributed to streetcar construction under the Bush administration. Financing has come mainly from local communities. Federal spending on light rail systems totalled \$473.4 million last year, after \$935.7 million in 2006, according to the transit administration. 'Cities opt to build locally, and eschew federal money', Mr. Boothe said. ...

"Trams in America travel at higher speeds than their counterparts in Europe, because they usually operate over longer distances, connecting city centres with suburbs, rather than circulating in downtown areas. To reach the 60 percent local content level, some manufacturers, like Siemens, have opened factories in the United States; others have hitched up with local partners. Skoda, for example, assembled trams for Portland and Tacoma, in conjunction with the Oregon Iron Works, near Portland.

"Competition is fierce. Bombardier of Canada knows the American market well. Kinki Sharyo of Japan, an affiliate of the Kintetsu Corporation, has supplied trams to the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority, south of San Francisco; to Hudson-Bergen Light Rail in New Jersey; and to the Sound Transit Central Link in Seattle, which will begin carrying passengers next year. Cities that want copies of old-fashioned trolley cars, like Charlotte, Little Rock and Tampa, have acquired them from the Gomaco Trolley Company, a unit of the Gomaco Corporation, an Iowa-based maker of construction equipment. But the Europeans say their order books are growing."

Ref: John Tagliabue, NY Times, 11/11/08



"Trams returned to Paris in 2006, above. European companies hope for more orders for light rail systems from American cities."

- New York Times 11/11/08

Picture: Jacques Demarthon/Agence France Presse

Problems with Swedish Rail

"Sweden is a well-organised country with a high level commitment to public realm policies and environmental awareness that go far beyond most countries around the world. The Vision Zero road safety policy and 'fossil fuel free' by 2020 policies are good examples of innovative Swedish thinking. It is all the more worrying therefore that the public transport systems are malfunctioning.

"On my recent trip there I checked out rail options for a journey to Stockholm Central and bought a stock of public transport tickets for local journeys. When I changed trains at Soedertalje Syd for my onward journey to Stockholm Central the ticket collector on the second train pointed out that the tickets I had bought were 'SL' and not 'SJ' (two different railway companies). She then charged me an additional 220 Swedish Kroner [A\$36] because I had switched to another company. I then carried on my journey to Stockholm Arlanda Airport again by rail and this time with no problem but on arrival at Arlanda Central I was charged an additional 60 Swedish Kroner [A\$10] because this station was a private station and charged an access fee.

"This experience besides being tedious and annoying is just bad practice for public transport operations. It is incredibly important that people switch to public transport and to encourage this the system needs to be legible, clear, easy to use, no surprises and no extra fees en route. A passenger should not know or care whether it is Connex or Arriva or shiny trains plc or SL or SJ who runs the trains and there should be no such thing as a 'private station'. The Swedish system fails the test and if normally intelligent transport planners fail to grasp these rather simple points I am worried about the future of public transport."

Ref: John Whitelegg, 22/7/09

Samoans to Drive on the Left

"The Pacific nation, which inherited left-hand drive and right-side traffic from being a German colony in the early 20th century, will become the first territory to make the switch in 31 years after Okinawa reverted to right-hand drive in 1978. ... RHD is the rule for 75 of the world's 239 countries, 2 billion of its 6 billion people and 28 per cent of its road distance."

Ref: Robert Wilson, Wheels, 3/8/09

"It will also mean that inexpensive used cars can be imported from Japan, which drives on the left. Most vehicles currently in Samoa are gas-guzzling left-hand drive models imported from the United States and nearby American Samoa."

Ref: Paul Chapman, UK Telegraph, 2/8/09

Car Dependency (Part 3)

"The car also has significant effects on people's health, in three main ways. Car travel often negates the need to walk or cycle. Increasingly, we have replaced work that was once done by hand with fossil powered machinery. This is most obvious at the macro scale in agriculture but also on the street, when people choose to avoid physical exertion by driving everywhere. This lack of exercise, combined with dietary issues can lead to obesity problems.

"Secondly, excessive car use affects air quality. In high density cities where there are lots of cars and many people, the degraded air can have respiratory impacts.

"Thirdly, cars and the act of driving involves high speeds and is dangerous. From 1967-87, 294 145 people were killed on Germany's roads, with 10 047 313 people being injured (Whitelegg 1990). Whitelegg asserts that 'the cumulative effect of air pollution through exhaust emissions, health effects of air pollution, disruption and disturbance caused by noise, community severance, fear and insecurity, and loss of life represent considerable burdens imposed on society for the illusory benefits of motorised transport.' The scale of negative 'externalities' from car dependency gives greater impetus to question the value derived from the benefits.

"Less obviously, the economic dimension of car use reveals somewhat of an unfair playing field. Many costs of car use (either financial or physical) are externalised from the driver. What may seem like 'free parking' is often actually de facto subsidised. Maddison et al argue that these externalised costs lead to car use being underpriced, where 'the variable price drivers pay is well below the marginal costs they impose' (Maddison, 1996). This underpricing in turn encourages driving. One way that such costs can be internalised is by putting a price on these traditionally externalised costs. Congestion charging is done in London to recognise the negative effect rampant car use has on the amenity of the city. This has reduced the number of cars in the city 'square mile', leading to a 40 per cent reduction in accidents and a 15 per cent reduction in pollution (Snowden, 1995).

"The life support system of car dependency is inexpensive and easily available oil. As this invaluable resource has become more scarce, nations have increasingly pursued securing its exploitation through military action. The revelation that Iraq did not possess 'weapons of mass destruction' confirmed many people's

suspicions that oil played a key part in the invasion. The lives of soldiers and civilians that are lost in such conflicts is rarely directly associated with petrol at the bowser but the connection cannot be ignored. Similarly in Nigeria, Shell's influence on the government led to military crackdowns on civilian protesters and the execution of the movement's leaders in 1995."
{To be continued in #122}

Ref: Myles Graham, 9/7/09

(For the full article email steve@goingsolar.com.au)

And Also ...

While all of the surrounding buildings were flattened during the invasion of Iraq in the Second Gulf War, the Oil Ministry remained virtually in tact.

Ref: Radio National Quiz, ABC Radio, 5/7/09

<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/quiz/default.htm>

Iranian Oil and a Coup (Part 1)

"Annabelle Quince: *In 1953 Iran had a democratic government, led by Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadeq. But before we get to that, we have to go back even further to the end of the 19th century when western colonial powers were beginning to realise the value of the Middle East's oil reserves. While Iran, unlike its neighbours, had never been colonised, by the end of the 19th century the two colonial powers of the region, Britain and Russia, began to pressure it both politically and economically. In 1901 the Shah of Iran, who was in need of money, signed an oil concession with Britain. The concession gave Britain the exclusive rights to prospect for oil for 60 years in most of Iran. Seven years later, vast quantities of oil were discovered in south-west Iran. Steven Kinzer is a veteran New York Times journalist and the author of All the Shah's Men: An American coup and the roots of Middle East terror.*

"Steven Kinzer: *When the oil was actually found, it proved very easy for the British to pay a relatively paltry sum in exchange for what Winston Churchill described as 'a prize from fairyland beyond our wildest dreams'. So all the oil that the British used to power their industrial growth during the 1920s and '30s and '40s, came from Iran. All the oil that the Royal Navy used to project British power all over the world, came from Iran. It was a vital resource that allowed the people of Britain to live at a standard of living they enjoyed, all during that period. At the same time, the Iranians, who were sitting on this ocean of oil, were living in what were some of the lowest and most miserable standards of living in the world. So you had this terrible disconnect of British power being fuelled, quite literally, by oil from Iran but Iranians not being able to profit at all because of this hugely*

unequal treaty that had been signed years earlier under the old Qajar Shahs.

“Annabelle Quince: So what was the deal, and how much of the profit from the oil reserves went back to Iran?

“Steven Kinzer: There was a vaguely worded deal in which the British agreed to pay 15% of the profits in perpetuity to Iran. However, no Iranians were ever allowed to look at the books, that was part of the deal. So you just had to take it on faith that this was a fair 15%; this amounted to a very small sum of money. In addition, the oil company was owned principally by the British government, and the British government as a way of kind of cooking the books, established very heavy taxes on the oil company, essentially was taxing itself and was just funnelling revenue from Iran through the oil company into the British Treasury. So it appears, as many Iranian analysts thought but were never ever allowed to look at the books, that even the 15% they were sending was 15% after the government had already taxed something like 80% of the company's income, and just taken it into the Treasury. So no-one really knows how much the British paid, but it's clear that it was a very tiny fraction of the actual value of the oil.”

{To be continued in #122} **Ref: ABC Radio National: Background Briefing: Oil, Democracy and a CIA Coup, 30/9/07** See: www.abc.net.au/rn/rearvision/stories/2009/2605245.htm

The Walkers of India (Part 2)

“The high share of walking in Indian cities has come out sharply from the nation-wide assessment carried out by the US based consultant body, Wilbur Smith for the Union ministry of urban development on traffic and transportation policies and strategies in urban areas in 2008. The share of walkers can vary between 16 to 57 per cent depending on the nature and size of the city.

“It is ironical that despite such high share of walk trips the cities are not walkable. Walkability simply reflects the quality of walking facilities and conditions that make walking safe, comfortable and convenient. In any typical city the pedestrian facilities and network includes sidewalks, path, crosswalk, stairways, curb cuts, ramps and transit stops. These need to be well designed, intricately connected to help pedestrians to take the shortest direct route to destinations and feel safe. But how walkable are our cities? The Wilbur Smith study has indexed 30 cities of all sizes on walkability and assessed them based on availability of foot paths on major arterial

roads, and overall facility rating by pedestrians themselves. The perception of pedestrians has also been gauged on availability of footpath and its quality, obstruction, maintenance, lighting, security from crime, safety in crossings etc. A low rank indicates inadequate and substandard pedestrian facilities. The national average index is 0.52. The best in the country according to this ranking is Chandigarh with 0.9. This is in sharp contrast to cities like London that score 1.5 to 1.7 and have active policies to encourage pedestrian traffic.

“Walkers simply don't matter in planning approaches. This is grossly evident from the state of sidewalks that are being steadily chipped away to provide more space for carriageways of motorised traffic. The Wilbur Smith study has found that the percentage of the road with pedestrian footpaths runs hardly at 30 per cent in most cities. Even the little that exists is clogged with hawkers, vendors, urinals and electric transformers in an unplanned manner. Cities have marginalised the needs of the pedestrians and given priority to the needs of the automobiles.

“Yet our cities were built to be walkable. High density, mixed land use, and narrow streets have made walking for work and recreation comfortable, feasible and popular in traditional Indian cities. In any typical city the core could just be 5 km across and easily walkable within a reasonable time. Studies have shown that more than 40 to 50 per cent of the daily trips in many of our cities have distances less than 5 kilometres. This has enormous potential to convert to non-motorised and especially walking trips. City cores even in mega cities of Kolkata, Mumbai, and many others have retained some of the characteristics of high density, mixed-land use and short trip stretches. But these features are fast disappearing as urban sprawls are expanding.” **Ref: Footfalls – Obstacle Course to Liveable Cities, Centre for Science and Environment, New Delhi, 2009** <http://www.gtkp.com/uploads/public/documents/Knowledge/Walkability.pdf> [Continued in #122]

And Also ...

“A businessman running behind schedule triggered a bomb scare on a plane in a desperate attempt to catch his flight, Indian police said today. Vijay Khandelwal, 35, was stuck in a traffic jam on the way to New Delhi airport last week when he realised he would miss the IndiGo plane ... Police arrested Khandelwal by tracing his mobile number ... Authorities declared the emergency over after 90 minutes and the plane took off four hours late - without Khandelwal.”

Ref: AAP, The Age, 18/8/09