

## Congestion Charging for Qld?

*"The Queensland Government is considering congestion charging as part of a revamp of transport plans for the state's southeast. The revelation comes as Main Roads Minister Craig Wallace admitted yesterday the Government was modelling a variety of tolling options to reduce congestion. Both Mr Wallace and Transport Minister Rachel Nolan refused to rule out expansion of current tolling to include charging motorists to use city roads if they become congested. 'It would be highly irresponsible for my department not to examine all of those options'; he told yesterday's Budget Estimates hearings. 'In this regard the department continues to explore world's best practice in tolling and innovative tolling strategies involving distance, time and travel, vehicle occupancy and carbon emissions'."*

**Ref: Craig Johnstone, Courier Mail, 18/7/09**

## Road Curfew in Dublin

*"Private motorists will be unable to pass through College Green in Dublin during peak times from Monday as a new bus corridor comes into effect. The College Green bus corridor will operate between the hours of 7am-10am and 4pm-7pm Monday through Friday and only public transport vehicles and bicycles will be permitted to travel through it. ... The aim of the corridor is to reduce journey times for cross-city public transport as well as increasing reliability and frequency. ... Motorists who drive through the corridor during peak times face a €60 fine, increasing to €90 if not paid within 28 days, as per the Road Traffic Act 1997. ... To coincide with the launch Dublin Bus will charge passengers a special city centre fare of 50 cent from Monday. The fare will link the main shopping and business areas, according to Dublin Bus."*

**Ref: Luke Cassidy, Irish Times, 25/7/09**

*"Traffic chiefs believe re-routing drivers away from College Green from next Monday will open up the city for more business. Some 60 million public transport passengers pass through the bottleneck each year ... The change will see bus journeys reduced by up to 30 minutes, and the city council says the ban will cut traffic congestion, delays and safety issues for pedestrians, which are a 'recognised problem' there. ... More than 4,300 Dublin Bus vehicles pass through the bottleneck every year, carrying 10 times the number of people travelling by private car. Dublin City Council says that 12,883 cars use the College Green route each day, with almost 7,000 of these travelling at peak times."*

**Ref: Paul Melia, Independent, 21/7/09**

**Comment:** Perhaps Melbourne should trial an evening road curfew (4.30pm – 6.30pm) around Flinders Street Station and at the La Trobe Street intersections with Swanston and Elizabeth Streets, near Melbourne Central Station?

## Servants on Bikes in the ACT

*"The ACT Department of Environment has bought a fleet of five bicycles in a bid to reduce carbon emissions, save money and boost staff health. Workers are being encouraged to ride the bicycles to meetings in nearby suburbs instead of driving. Environment Minister Simon Corbell says he*



*hopes it will serve as an example to other Departments. 'Having a bike fleet at your workplace improves staff health, it also allows them to get around more quickly for short journeys, perhaps to another part of the same suburb, and it*

*help reduce greenhouse gas emissions from otherwise using a motor vehicle fleet', he said. 'So it makes a lot of sense, and I'm really pleased the Environment Department's taken on the challenge'."*

**Ref: ABC News, 24/7/09**

## More Cars for Australia

*"An estimated 565,000 Australians intend to buy a new car in the next 12 months (excluding Fleet, Government and Rental Buyers). This is up on the July 2009 figure of 488,000. The number of Australians intending to buy a new car in the next four years is 2,207,000, up strongly on the July 2009 figure of 2,001,000 and above the long term average of 2,053,000."*

**Ref: Roy Morgan Research Media Release, 18/9/09**

## EU Carbon Tax on Road Fuel?

*"Brussels is considering a Europe-wide carbon tax on road fuel as the European Commission seeks to bring more carbon emitters into line with the European Union's climate change policy. The proposed tax on petrol, natural gas and diesel would hit consumers directly and is supported by the Nordic countries and by France, which has introduced a carbon tax on domestic fuel. Britain is opposed to the tax, but the proposal is gaining support among other European countries. The proposal, from Laszlo Kovacs, the European Taxation Commissioner, gained Belgium's backing as a means of shifting revenue collection from unpopular payroll taxes to consumption taxes on carbon."*

**Ref: Carl Mortishead, Times Online, 6/10/09**

## Subsidies for Polluting Industries

*"Many countries, including the United States, provide tax breaks and direct payments to help produce and use oil, coal, natural gas and other fuels that spew carbon dioxide, the chief greenhouse gas. ... The cost of these subsidies is estimated in the tens of billions of dollars annually worldwide. In the US alone, the federal government gave \$US72 billion (\$A82 billion) in subsidies to the fossil fuel industry between 2002 and 2008, according to a study by the Environmental Law Institute. The subsidies encourage the burning of fuel that leads to global warming and other pollution ... Eliminating the subsidies would help slow global warming, reduce health problems from pollution, make the United States more energy independent and foster economic growth,..."*

*"Fossil fuel industry officials said the idea did not make sense and would hurt US energy security. Environmentalists cheered the idea as a constructive use of free markets. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) said in a report last week that removing fossil fuel subsidies could reduce greenhouse gas emissions by more than 10% in 2050. OECD is a Paris-based international organisation with 30 democratic countries as members, including the United States and most of Europe. 'Removing environmentally harmful subsidies to energy consumption and production would be an important first step', OECD Secretary-General Angel Gurría said. 'It would also improve economic efficiency. For instance, the budgetary savings could be used to reduce other distorting taxes or to alleviate poverty in a more targeted and efficient way'.*

*"The biggest energy subsidies in non-OECD countries are in China, India, Brazil and Russia, according to the OECD. Twenty of the largest non-OECD countries spend more than \$US400 million (\$A458 million) in fossil fuel subsidies that could be spent elsewhere ... In 2008, countries that subsidised fossil fuels increased their consumption by one million barrels of oil, while those that didn't reduced their consumption by about 1.5 million barrels ... In the US the biggest fossil fuel subsidies are tax breaks, the foreign tax credit and the credit for production of unconventional fuels that add up to \$US29.4 billion (\$A33.6 billion) over six years, according to the Environmental Law Institute report. 'We found that there are significantly higher subsidies of fossil fuels than of renewables' even though fossil fuel firms are more established, said study author John Pendergrass. 'Some of it is going to companies making record profits'.*

*"While big oil companies make large profits, most American oil and natural gas producers are small and independent, said Jeff Eshelman, spokesman for the Independent Petroleum Association of America. Eliminating subsidies 'would be a direct hit on small independent businesses right away, the ones that are really providing America with its energy'. Eshelman said small producers tap 90% of US wells, but that only translates to about 20% of oil Americans use. Ending the subsidies could hurt development of crucial technology, such as carbon sequestration from coal plants, that is needed to fight global warming, said Frank Maisano, a Washington spokesman for coal utilities, oil refineries and wind developers. He said it also could hurt fuels that are home grown. But Frank O'Donnell, president of Clean Air Watch, a Washington environmental group, said there is 'no greater cause of climate change than fossil fuels. There's no greater cause of that than artificial subsidies. It's a great idea to eliminate those subsidies and let the marketplace work'."*

**Ref: Seth Borenstein, The Age, 23/9/09**



Photo: Lea Suzuki, The Chronicle

**Market & Fifth Street Intersection to Go Beige**

## Beige to Slow Traffic

*"San Francisco transportation planners, looking for a way to make Market Street safer for pedestrians and bicyclists, decided Tuesday to scrap their earlier idea of tinting the asphalt at two dangerous Market Street intersections a brick-red colour to grab drivers' attention. After consulting the colour chart and state traffic code, they opted for beige. Timothy Papandreou, a top planner at the Municipal Transportation Agency, told the Insider it was 'organic fair-trade Frappuccino'. Brick red, it ends up, is better suited for transit-only lanes. The tint will be tested on Market Street at the Fourth and Fifth Street intersections to see if they help slow down drivers. The coffee-and-cream-coloured-pavement experiment is part of a larger endeavour to create 33 'safety zones' along Market Street that will focus on the curb-side travel lane adjacent to Muni Metro/BART stations and Muni's F-line boarding platforms. Look for new pavement markings, 10 mph speed-limit signs and other measures to slow traffic on Market Street."*

**Ref: Rachel Gordon, SFGate, 23/9/09**

## Making Transport Attractive (Part 1)

*“In the 19th century, the interurban road network was largely private and operated under concession. Contractors were in charge of building and maintaining roads and collecting tolls. In the UK around 1820, an estimated 20,000 miles of roads were operated under concession agreements. Starting with the interurban link between Liverpool and Manchester in 1830, railways gradually expanded worldwide and, in addition to interurban services, opened suburban areas to the urban middle class. Private businesses were entirely responsible for determining routes, acquiring land, and investing in tracks and operations. They are naturally concerned with marketing and segmentation by classes of potential passengers.*

*“Suburban land development became a key objective of rail operators and combined the creation of property values and urban passenger markets. Probably the most adventurous and successful combination of passenger transport and urban development was the extension of Cairo planned by the Belgian banker, Edouard Empain (1852–1929). Empain bought a huge tract of plateau desert land some 10 km from the centre of the city and a tiny corridor through the desert on which he built a tramway line and utilities (water supply, sewage, etc.). He subdivided the desert land according to a simple, high-density low-rise street grid and public services master plan and thus created a huge suburban passenger market between Cairo and the new settlement called Heliopolis.*

*“The success of the market-led Heliopolis transport and land-use project later enabled Empain to repeat it on a larger scale in Paris where he financed the metropolitan railway network. He again combined property development and electricity generation with investment in public transport. The project was entirely private. No elected officials attended the opening in July 1900. The new Metro was an immediate market success - helped by the 1900 Paris Exhibition - with more than 16 million passengers during the first five months of operations.*

*“Electricity and the combustion engine were possibly the two most important transport-related technical innovations of the late 19th century. The telephone also played a role as a substitute for travel but even more so as an incentive to additional physical mobility. Generation of electricity on an industrial scale facilitated the rise of new urban transport operators backed by*

*a modern industrial sector. Steam-locomotive hauled commuter trains boosted interurban travel and suburban travel into the countryside, while electric tramways allowed convenient short-distance urban transport in cities. In very large towns, the gap between the two modes opened the mobility services market to the electric underground metropolitan railways; the first lines in London, New York, Paris, and Budapest appeared exactly when surface traffic had reached a peak of congestion and pollution caused mainly by horse-drawn carriages.*

*“Since neither steam-locomotive hauled carriages nor horse-drawn carriages could be put underground easily, the market was open to building long underground tunnels for electric railways, which meant the acceptance of daily underground mass travel by city dwellers, leaving the street to individual transport. Paradoxically, a delay of a few years would have permitted building tunnels for cars and their affluent solo drivers, leaving the streets to the city dwellers.”*

**Ref: Pierre Laconte, Light Rail: Making Urban Transport More Attractive, Japan Railway & Transport Review 38, March 2004 {Cont in #126}**

## More on Rail Deconstruction {in #123}

*“The Rees Government is facing a backlash from the ALP about its plan to rip up rail tracks throughout NSW. Labor MPs and officials have spoken against legislation that will threaten key regional lines. The federal Labor MP for the north coast seat of Page, Janelle Saffin, has launched a petition to save the line between Casino and Murwillumbah, which has been a prime target for developers who want to take over rail land in Byron Bay, Bangalow and Mullumbimby. Ms Saffin's petition comes after the Herald revealed an official briefing note from the Minister for Transport, David Campbell, which said the legislation, introduced into Parliament on Tuesday, would ‘enable the [rail] corridors to be cleared of this remnant infrastructure and revenue to be obtained from its sale’. Ms Saffin said her community was overwhelmingly opposed to the plan. ‘Everyone is talking about it here and I have a responsibility to say something, to speak up’, she said. She is pushing a regional transport plan that involves linking the rail line to south-east Queensland, where the Bligh Government is building a Gold Coast light rail to the NSW border. ‘We do not want this option out of the picture’, Ms Saffin said. ‘We do not want this [line] taken out’. The Labor Deputy Mayor of Lismore, Isaac Smith, said local ALP branches were furious and had passed resolutions against the legislation.”*

**Ref: Andrew West, SMH 3/10/09**

## Testing an Alternative to Fuel Tax

*“Researchers [in the US] are looking for 1,500 drivers in six cities, including Albuquerque, to test an on-board computer system that taxes motorists based on miles driven rather than fuel taxes paid at the pump. That mileage-based tax is being considered by the University of Iowa Public Policy Center in a \$16.5 million study for the U.S. Department of Transportation to determine whether it's a viable option for paying for surface transportation, including roads and railroads, in the future. ...*

*“Currently, motorists pay 18 cents per gallon of fuel to the federal Highway Trust Fund to pay for surface transportation, (said Jon Kuhl, a University of Iowa professor and principle investigator on the study). All states except Alaska also charge a state gas tax. But the tax - the primary source of federal highway program funds - has become less effective in recent years. ‘As vehicles become more fuel efficient, the money raised by the gas tax goes down’, Kuhl said. And drivers of the increasingly popular electric, hydrogen and hybrid vehicles aren't paying their fair share for road use. ... A congressionally mandated commission on transportation financing alternatives recommended switching to a vehicle-miles traveled tax, but estimated it would take a decade to put a national system in place. ...*

*“Under the system, a small computer is installed in a participant's vehicle and will record miles and road use. It can also tell what state a person is driving in and can charge different tax rates based on the fuel mileage of the car being driven, Kuhl said. The information would be uploaded to a database, which will distribute the funds to the states, counties or cities in which the travel took place. ‘People are rightfully concerned about the potential that this technology would be used in ways that would compromise their privacy’, Kuhl said. If privacy wasn't an issue, there's many ways the system could be used to tax drivers to achieve social objectives. For example, drivers could be taxed higher rates for driving during rush hour or lower rates depending on their car's overall carbon footprint, not just its gas mileage. Kuhl said the study will be completed in September 2010.”*  
**Ref: Heather Clarke, SF Chronicle, 9/7/09**

## And Also ...

*“Bob Dylan is considering lending his voice to a SatNav system, raising the prospect of having the music legend growlingly tell you: ‘You have reached your destination’, spiritually or otherwise.”* **Ref: AFP, The Age, 26/8/09**

## Poppy Power

*“Commercial production of biodiesel in Tasmania is getting closer. Since taking delivery of two presses in September last year the Macquarie Oil Company near Cressy has been fine-tuning the production of biodiesel from poppy seeds. Managing director Rob Henry said that at full production Macquarie Oil expected to produce about 15,000-20,000 litres of oil a day. ‘That will be converted to biodiesel’, he said. ‘At the moment the oil is going to a biodiesel plant in Newcastle and being made into biodiesel. While that is going on we are busy commissioning our own plant’.*

*“The Tasmanian biodiesel operation is seen as environmentally sound because Mr Henry's raw product is basically waste. Poppy seed not fit for human consumption from Tasmanian Alkaloids and GlaxoSmithKline is crushed for oil. ... ‘It is a funny little seed but it is extremely oily. One of the contracts we are looking at is with Metro which can run their buses on B20 - which is 20% biodiesel and 80% low sulphur diesel. Metro and Hydro would use five million litres a year and just about use up what we are doing at the moment’. .... The lack of waste also adds to the environmental soundness of the Tasmanian product.”*

**Ref: Nick Clark, The Mercury, 15/7/09**

## PARK(ing) Day

*“PARK(ing) Day was started in San Francisco in 2005 by art and design group Rebar to highlight the impact of the car on urban space. Since then it has moved to cities across the world such as London, New York and Los Angeles. The inaugural Brisbane PARK(ing) Day occurred last year and has grown to include 60 spaces commandeered by QUT students, with Brisbane City Council permission. ‘It is meant to start a conversation about how we use our public space’, PARK(ing) organiser Amy Saunders said. ‘70% of our public space is for the automobile; that is a large amount of space and is that really what we want it for?’*

**Ref: Scott Casey, Brisbane Times, 18/9/09**



Photo: Brisbane Times

## Cars with Wind

*“Cars could be the solution to the intermittent nature of wind power if a multimillion European project beginning on a Danish island proves successful. The project on the holiday island of Bornholm will use the batteries of parked electric cars to store excess energy when the wind blows hard, and then feed electricity back into the grid when the weather is calm. The concept, known as vehicle-to-grid (V2G) is widely cited among greens as a key step towards a low-carbon future, but has never been demonstrated. Now, the 40,000 inhabitants of Bornholm are being recruited into the experiment. Denmark is already a world leader in wind energy and has schemes to replace 10% of all its vehicles with electric cars, but the goal on the island is to replace all petrol cars. ... Each electric vehicle will have battery capacity reserved to store wind power for the island rather than for travelling. When the cars are plugged in and charging their batteries, they will absorb any additional load the grid cannot cope with and then feed it back to power homes when needed.”* Ref: Duncan Graham-Rowe, Guardian Weekly, 26/6/09

## Pressure on Flats

*“Community groups are increasing pressure on Banyule Council [in Victoria] to oppose plans to build a freeway through Banyule Flats. The \$6 billion project to join the Metropolitan Ring Road in Greensborough to the Eastern Freeway in Bulleen is yet to receive funding, but discussions between the council and Roads Minister Tim Pallas have continued. Concerns raised with the council include the potential acquisition of houses, partition of the suburb and the environmental impact on Warringal Parklands and Banyule Flats. Protectors of Public Land Victoria secretary Julianne Bell rejected claims by the South Eastern Integrated Transport Authority that tunnelling under parklands could be environmentally sustainable. ‘The project would be a juggernaut, bulldozing its way through – and laying waste to – a swathe of environmentally sensitive parkland and heritage landscape’. Banyule mayor Tom Melican has also questioned the project’s sustainability and suggested the money go to public transport instead.”* Ref: Michael Quin, Friends of Banyule Newsletter, May-June 2009  
More information: [www.friendsofbanyule.org](http://www.friendsofbanyule.org)

## Developers' Freeway Route

*“A new ring road planned around outer Melbourne was shifted almost two kilometres west after lobbying by property developers, including a company half-owned by Ron Walker.*

*“As a result, grasslands that environment groups say are critical to the survival of key species - and that would have been partially saved under the Brumby Government’s original plan - are set to be lost to make way for housing. The Government has rejected suggestions it acted in the interests of property developers, but would not make public the grasslands research upon which its decision was based. The 73-kilometre Outer Metropolitan Ring Road is an eight-lane freeway.”*

Ref: Clay Lucas, The Age, 5/10/09



## Traffic Jam Art

*“It’s all about context. ... Traffic jam on highway: normal (and boring). Traffic jam in the Spanish mountains: art (and very curious). In 2005, artist Maider López put the call out for willing participants to create an intentional car cluster muck in the Aralar Mountains. In response, more than 400 folks drove up to the countryside in 160 vehicles to get stuck. The result: an unexpected invasion to illustrate the automobile’s impact on the landscape.”*

Ref: Moe Beitiks, Inhabitat, 6/6/09



Pictures: Maider Lopez, traffic jam art

## And Also ... (Strange Facts)

*“In Tennessee, it is against the law to drive a car while sleeping.”*

Ref: <http://www.strangefacts.com/laws.html>

### Transforming Public Transport (Part 3)

*"I propose that we replace fares with a metropolitan transit levy (MTL). I have been making these arguments for some 20 years with support from, among others The (Melbourne) Age newspaper which actually goes 'the whole hog': advocating 'free' public transport, i.e. without even a levy.*

*"The levy idea would replace some of the hidden taxes that currently support public transport by replacing fares with an annual Medicare-like levy. Once bedded into taxation infrastructure the levy would raise a politically determined proportion of regional and capital city public transport costs. It would then return our cities to us with enhanced community, environment & health. Federally collected annually, from employed urban Australians, it would be a natural end point to 150 years of awkward and alienating fare schemes. In Melbourne it could be in place in time to rescue its residents from the problems associated with the next billion dollar plus fling about to, about to, about to [sic], smarten Melbourne's public transport fare collection scheme (i.e. 'myki').*

*"An MTL would mean:*

- *Public transport free at point of access.*
- *Public transport free to rural visitors and tourists (just like water). Along with rural fast rail, this would provide an incentive to use rural public transport to commute to the cities.*
- *A built-in incentive for urban residents to use public transport – annual payment would remind us that we'd paid (something real at least) toward it & therefore that we may as well use it.*
- *An improvement in the status of travel on 'The Met'. It would no longer be seen as the 'poor cousin' of the DODOs. It would simply be the way to commute in our cities.*
- *Removal of one major source of direct stress and therefore alienation associated with commuting. Not least, a dramatic decline in the deaths and injuries from crashes and the plethora of diseases directly attributable to auto-commuting; in Melbourne alone some 600 deaths annually.*
- *Removal of indirect stresses associated with train travel, through e.g. heightened community activity and commerce at stations (more below).*
- *Removal of favours to those wealthy enough to afford congestion taxes (e.g. city parking fees) and avoidance of the resentment such favours generate.*
- *The usual Medicare-like support for people for whom the levy would be an excessive burden.*

- *Removal of barriers to the poor to use public transport.*
- *A general 'disarming' of the public transport system with transit assistants replacing the 'fare police' and therefore the return of the space & vacant buildings around railway platforms to commerce and the community, and a welcoming and attractive system, partly arising from the greater density of users!*

*"Therefore:*

- *An improvement in the community spiritedness of our already friendly city.*
- *Removal of the threat to monitor citizens' movements by tracking us through the coming 'smart' ('myki') cards.*
- *Enhanced participation rates. These would provide political constituency for dramatically improving the current carrying capacities of our metropolitan transit. Relieving rail-congestion is, at least in the long run, so much cheaper and healthier than relieving road-congestion. Consider the neglected costs of making good planetary damage caused by global warming and the many other negative effects of DODO commuting outlined above!*
- *A more open and equitable system in which payment for the system was overt rather than covert as at present (where real payment comes from consolidated revenues). Indeed the annual MTL bill could indicate the proportion of the total cost of metro-transit it actually covered.*

*"For all this it must be recognised that dramatically increasing the capacity of our urban rail systems is no mean feat. It will cost billions, take time to do and create substantial public disruption. Indeed, an argument against the MTL is precisely the government's fear of overloading the current system! For all that, we live in a representative democracy and the government requires constituency before it acts, so overloading the system is in a sense the only language it can hear.*

*"Finally, one of the most valuable implications of a MTL and a dramatic improvement in public transport availability would be the support that they would give to Melbourne's best kept secret: the effectiveness of the bicycle-rail collaboration. Thirty years ago, in various publications, Alan Parker pointed out that the fastest, cheapest, healthiest and most sustainable way to get around much of the Melbourne Metro Area was (and today still is) a combination of bicycle and rail. I.e. bicycle to and from rail. It requires greatly improved bike parking facilities at stations and an improved capacity to carry bikes on trains."*

**Ref: Frank Fisher, Arena Magazine, 4/6/09**