

## Melbourne's Sprawl

"Melbourne is at a fork in the road... Our city has reached the point where we need to change. ... Compared to other major cities throughout the developed world, Melbourne has one of the highest rates of carbon emissions per capita. Our city's cars, trucks, motorcycles and public transport services were recently recorded to generate 11 million tonnes of carbon dioxide a year, compared with just 8.5 million tonnes in London. This equates to 3.1 tonnes of carbon per person in Melbourne compared with 1.2 tonnes per person in Greater London. One of the key reasons for our significantly higher rate of emissions per person is because of Melbourne's larger geographic area, which means journeys tend to be longer and heavily reliant on cars. ...

"Everything that makes our city the great place to live, work and raise a family, is potentially under threat if population growth and urban sprawl continue at the current rate. We must implement a strategy to control population growth, urban expansion and development. Our way of life, open spaces and infrastructure cannot be sacrificed on the altar of ever expanding population. We have a responsibility to secure our city's future through thorough, thoughtful and detailed planning. This planning should not include an expanding Melbourne waistline. ...

"Encouraging urban sprawl and ever increasing high density developments will lead to a more polluted, congested and unsustainable Melbourne. Bringing millions of people in to Melbourne will increase the stress on water supplies that are already strained, increase reliance on fossil fuels by communities that are on our urban fringe, and it will increase Melbourne's carbon footprint when we must be reducing it. Regrettably the planning process in Melbourne is not being used to achieve environmental sustainability. Melbourne is generating more greenhouse emissions, using more water, losing open space and turning into a high rise steel and concrete jungle. Planners and policy makers talk the talk of protecting Melbourne's environment, but their actions have the opposite effect. They behave as [former PM] Gough Whitlam once described rowers facing in one direction but heading in the opposite one. We need an environmentally sustainable development planning policy for Melbourne. We do not need more intense development or more sops to local residents. We do not need attacks



'Looks like a fork in the road.'

on residential amenity through further loss of open space, high rise buildings which are turning Melbourne into Shanghai or Mexico City, ever larger dwellings such as the energy guzzling McMansions or policies which encourage reduced numbers of people per dwelling.

"Local communities live with bad planning decisions for a lifetime and it is important that local amenity issues are considered before we continue to concrete the Green Wedges at the expense of open space that allows us to live and breathe. We get told that population growth is inevitable and that it is desirable. Population growth has traditionally come at the expense of open space. Future public policy

must take into consideration the threat which population growth poses to our existing public open spaces. Managing population growth so that it does not threaten the liveability of our city ought to be a priority of Governments. Victoria has the capacity and resources to address climate change, fight the global economic crisis & manage urban sprawl by investing in renewable energy infrastructure and projects both at the large and small scale levels. We must invest heavily in improving public transport infrastructure to reduce car dependency and support jobs. We must hold the line on urban sprawl and put our social and environmental wellbeing first."

Ref: Kelvin Thomson MP, July 2009

"We and many others have noted an extraordinary coincidence between the recommendations for land proposed to be released under the new Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) and land presently owned by five or six major land developers. This coincidence may be so abnormal as to merit an investigation by the Auditor General's Office, and possibly the Ombudsman's Office. This coincidence has already been noted by the Australian Financial Review. ...

"There appears to be no proper cost/benefit analysis of the totality of the extensions of the UGB; of the fostering of more motor vehicle use, emissions, and transport costs; and the destruction of Green Wedges, agricultural land, and urban amenity. The promoters of the new UGB may thus have failed to note:

- "Land is not cheap if the lack of alternative transport means outer and fringe suburb families must run 2 and 3 cars. ... The cost of cars in the outer and fringe suburbs is about the same cost as a house mortgage.

- *“70% of households have no realistic access to public transport at present. This will rise towards 80% under the timeframe. ...*
  - *“Those without a car - such as many of the elderly, the young, and welfare and disability pensioners - suffer from employment difficulties, education barriers, social isolation, and health problems.*
  - *“Petrol prices are expected to rise steeply over the next 10/20 years. The International Energy Association states that oil reserves are currently running down at 9% a year.”*
- Ref: Brian Buckley, July 2009**

*“There is already a serious and widespread backlog in the delivery of public transport infrastructure across established suburbs and existing growth areas. This backlog will be compounded by extension of the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB), with high infrastructure costs due to sprawl and low residential density. Existing growth suburbs are public transport deprived and highly car dependent. ...*

*“The proposed residential development for the new growth areas averaging 15 dwellings per hectare is too low to sustain the urban infrastructure of transit oriented development (TOD). This represents a low-efficiency model of land use. Although official documentation supporting the proposed extension of the UGB sets out the need for TOD with new housing supported by community infrastructure, implementation of such infrastructure is expected to be compromised. Urban sprawl comes at a high price for the provision of effective public transport and other infrastructure & services. ...*

*“The proposed extension of Melbourne’s UGB has grave implications for Melbourne as a sustainable and liveable city, supported by peri-urban land for agriculture, water and open space. ... The extension of the UGB will exacerbate the social divide for Melbourne as a ‘Tale of Two Cities’, with a core well serviced with jobs and infrastructure and an outer ring of highly car dependent suburbs with inadequate public transport, jobs, services or community infrastructure. ... The creation of the Growth Areas Authority (GAA) to oversight growth areas highlights governance issues associated with planning for Melbourne. Melbourne 2030 goals of urban consolidation have been compromised by the precedence being given to planning by the GAA. This emphasises development in growth areas at the expense of integrating planning for Melbourne as a whole.”*

**Ref: Metropolitan Transport Forum, July 2009**  
(Full copies of these three submissions are available)

## **Government Selects Speed over Safety**

*“VicRoads has refused to budge on demands to cut the speed limit along Port Melbourne’s busy Bay St shopping strip. Traders want an urgent speed reduction but the road authority has refused. Business association president Sandy Britter said the 60km/h limit was ‘ridiculous’ and needed to be dropped to 40km/h as soon as possible - a move backed by Port Phillip Council and a local politician. Ms Britter said traders were collecting signatures for a petition. Another Port Melbourne traffic headache was the intersection of Liardet and Bay streets, where motorists risked an accident each time they tried to cross, she said. ‘People just barge through because there is no other way to get through’, she said. ‘We are getting more and more populated down here and public safety is something we need to think about’. Albert Park Labor MP Martin Foley said a 40km/h limit should be applied to the street. Mayor Frank O’Connor said the council supported the traders’ pitch to drop the speed limit to 40km/h. VicRoads Metro North West Project Development Manager Vince Punaro said Bay St had been evaluated but was considered a ‘lower priority in terms of improving road safety outcomes’ compared with other Melbourne streets.”*

**Ref: Paul Riordan, Port Phillip Leader, 20/10/09**

**Comment:** When parked (and parking) cars block trams the government can’t act apparently because of the traders, but when the traders want a safety measure, the car is still king.

## **Problems with Tyres**

*“Two-thirds of used tyres from Australian vehicles are being sent to Asia under cheap waste export deals that have quietly tripled in size over two years, undercutting national recycling plans. ... About 11 million car and truck tyres are sent overseas, mainly via Vietnam, according to confidential Federal Government estimates and industry data. Australian companies have filled a void left by a European Union edict which scaled back old tyre exports from Europe to Asia in 2007 because of health and environmental concerns. ... Tyres contain many toxic additives, including lead, cadmium and acids, which can seep into waterways and enter the food chain. Tyres have been linked to the spread of dengue and yellow fevers in tropical regions because they retain stagnant water, in which mosquitoes breed. The Total Environment Centre said a lack of national direction had left tyre recycling languishing for decades, even though tyres can be profitably reused as adhesive mixtures, as road base and even as a diesel fuel.”*

**Ref: Ben Cubby, SMH, 20/10/09**

**Senate Report Extracts (Part 1)**

**2.16** "The public transport share of total urban travel (passenger kilometres) stood at about 50% in 1945. It then dropped steadily to the present low level of around 10% by 1980. Reasons for this were predominantly rising incomes and car ownership; but also the declining share of commuting trips relative to other trips; more flexible working hours; and increased workforce participation by women with resulting increase in multipurpose trips. As well, as cities have grown outward a greater proportion of people live in fringe areas that require more travel and are poorly designed for public transport."

**2.17** "The public transport share has remained generally stable since 1980 as ridership has grown slowly in proportion to population growth. However increases in ridership significantly above trend have occurred in most capital cities in the last few years. This has led to complaints about overcrowding and focussed attention on the need for improvements."

**2.21** "Bicycle ownership in Australia is high (from 29 per hundred people in Sydney to 65 per hundred people in Canberra), but very few city people use a bicycle on an average day (from 1% in Sydney to 4% in Perth), and only 1-2% of work trips are by bicycle."

**2.31** "If services are improved (for example, more frequent services on an existing routes, or greater density of route coverage), patronage will increase. However patronage may not increase enough to cover the extra costs. The total subsidy needed may increase even if the subsidy per trip decreases. This discourages governments from improving services. However better services may still be beneficial to total economic welfare because of the external benefits of public transport. This applies particularly where public transport reduces traffic congestion."

**2.32** "A major challenge for public transport authorities is how to get 'social service' services up to a level of frequency that can begin to attract 'choice' riders, without excessively increasing the cost in public subsidy."

**2.33** "The public subsidy to public transport is significant. This reinforces the need to ensure that the money is spent effectively, and that the other policies are in place which are needed to maximise the benefit from it (primarily, best practice management of a fully integrated network, and urban planning policies to support public transport use."

**2.34** "However the cost should be seen in context of the high costs of alternative car transport. Australians spend about \$55 billion per year on buying and operating cars. The public costs of providing roads and parking spaces, and the external costs of road transport, such as congestion and accident costs, must be added."

**2.35** "For example, Dr Glazebrook estimated that in Sydney the full economic cost of travel including private financial costs, public financial costs, and non-financial/ external costs, is: train 47c, bus 57c, and car 86c per passenger kilometre. The externality cost of car travel is roughly equal to the public subsidy of bus or train travel at about 38c per passenger kilometre."

**2.37** "The Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics has estimated that if all public transport, walking and cycling trips were car trips, the avoidable cost of traffic congestion (eight capital cities) would be about \$3 billion per year higher than it is. The subsidy to public transport seems to be reasonable value by comparison, considering that it also serves other social purposes."

**2.38** "It is often noted that the subsidy to public transport goes disproportionately to inner and middle ring suburbs which have better services - and where the residents tend to be people of higher socio-economic status. This creates equity concerns. In the Committee's view the concerns are valid. The proper response is not to reduce service in inner areas which are now well served (and where public transport has the most important role in moderating traffic congestion). The proper response is to improve public transport in outer suburbs and rural and regional areas."

**Ref: Investment of Commonwealth and State Funds in Public Passenger Transport - Senate Transport Reference Committee, August 2009**  
[http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/rrat\\_ctte/public\\_transport/report/report.pdf](http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/rrat_ctte/public_transport/report/report.pdf) {Cont. in #131}

**Nitrogen to the Rescue**

"The UK's largest tire replacement company, Kwik-Fit, has launched a nitrogen tire inflation service, which it claims for £1.00 per tire could reduce the country's fuel bill by £1.2 billion (US\$1.9 billion) a year. As Nitrogen molecules are bigger and drier than compressed air, they are less prone to leaking or evaporating from a tire, meaning they can maintain the correct tire pressure for far longer periods. Experts say that running on tires that are underinflated by as little as 4psi (0.3 bar) can increase fuel bills by 5%."

**Ref: Traffic Technology Today, 25/8/09**  
[www.traffictechnologytoday.com/news.php?NewsID=15404](http://www.traffictechnologytoday.com/news.php?NewsID=15404)

## Rail in New Zealand (Part 3)

*“Rail’s primary market strength is in the transport of bulk commodities, both short-haul and long-haul. The advent of container trains servicing ports from inland container terminals in Auckland and Christchurch are examples of new short-haul traffic. With New Zealand facing a swathe of wood maturing in forests over the next decade, current uneconomic lines have the potential for greater utilisation and to become economic, such as North Auckland and the Napier – Gisborne railways. Such traffic needs to be pursued by rail, and any road/rail alternatives need to be ‘measured comprehensively’ so that they can be compared on equal terms.*

*“The rail system operates as a network, & while some sections may be perceived as uneconomic when taken in isolation to abandon them will reduce the efficiency of the network as a whole. Branch lines provide important traffic for the main lines, and if these branches are allowed to wither, then main line utilisation suffers. Once a line is removed, the ability to service new industries is lost with the cost of reinstating infrastructure invariably being prohibitive. Four examples are:*

- *“The Stratford–Okahukura line is nominally uneconomic, but is an alternative route should the line from Marton to Taumarunui be closed. With the recent announcement of milk product traffic from Fonterra’s Whareroa plant being transferred from the Port of Taranaki to Auckland, Tauranga and Napier this line is able to carry some of the additional rail traffic. The alternative of transport by road would, at best, be impractical.*
- *“Traffic on the Castlecliff Industrial Line has been suspended since 2002, but with the establishment of a milk powder factory adjacent to the line, it is being reopened. Should the tracks have been removed shortly after 2002, rail would not even have been in a position to compete for this new traffic.*
- *“In the early 1980s consideration was given to closing the Rolleston to Greymouth line. Should that have occurred, the West Coast export coal industry would not have the transport cost advantages it now has. New Zealand would have lost out on the major tourist revenue earning passenger service, The Tranz Alpine Express, known as one of the world’s great railway journeys.*



- *“The establishment of a freight hub by Fonterra on the Taieri Plains in the former Fisher and Paykel factory will mean additional business for KiwiRail using part of the Otago Central Railway branch line. This initiative is driven entirely by the need for the greatest commercial efficiency in the dairy industry.*

*“In the United Kingdom, the longer-term implications of many of the ‘Beeching’ cuts of the 1960s are now being expensively faced because of increased traffic brought about by the resurgence in, especially, passenger patronage. That situation has resulted from a number of causes, including new and improved facilities and equipment (also following years of Government-dictated underinvestment) and the relative cost and convenience of rail transport compared with the alternative of increasingly congested highways.”* Ref: Submission to the National Infrastructure Unit of the Treasury, New Zealand Railway and Locomotive Society Inc, 1/10/09

## More on Regional Rail in NSW {in #129}

*“There are still some high hurdles to clear, but there is a real possibility of a branch line revival if people are given opportunities to develop appropriate rail services to help satisfy a range of regional freight demands. This was very difficult under the highly centralised administrations which the government systems used through nearly all their histories, and it is not happening now due to the lack of interest among the large operators. Partnerships among smaller operators offer much greater promise. By North American standards, many of our branch lines should be viable and secure on the basis of their traffic volumes. They will be much more secure if they do not depend so heavily on seasonal traffic. ... The councils which got together to fund the feasibility study are to be congratulated for their initiative and their cooperative approach. The process currently under way could become a model, tuned as necessary, for other revival projects.”*

Ref: Ian Gray, On Track, Vol 3, No 4, Oct 09

## Problems with Oil

*“The Shell oil company in Guam has been fined for violating a US federal environmental law. In July we reported that the US Environmental Protection Agency had ordered the multinational oil company clean up its facility in Guam’s west. A survey of the area uncovered contaminated groundwater, which has the potential to leak into nearby rivers and the ocean. With the facility due to be sold, the agency raised its concerns that the vital clean-up of hazardous waste may be neglected.”*

Ref: ABC Radio Australia, 20/10/09

[www.radioaustralia.net.au/pacbeat/stories/200910/s2718658.htm](http://www.radioaustralia.net.au/pacbeat/stories/200910/s2718658.htm)

## Making Transport Attractive (Part 6)

*"In addition to the pioneering events in Manchester and Karlsruhe, new tramways or light rail systems have started appearing on urban streets in many countries worldwide. More than 100 cities in North America and Europe (especially France, Germany, Spain and Italy) have developed or are planning completely new light-rail systems, financed via different public sources. In the UK, there is additional input from the private sector. In some countries, like Switzerland and Belgium, the remaining pre-war tram systems have been updated and improved. In many cases, building a new light-rail system has been the occasion for revamping citywide public spaces.*

*"Nantes and Grenoble pioneered this approach and Strasbourg combined its new system with a traffic reduction and pedestrianisation programme with special emphasis on rolling-stock design and related urban furniture. Barcelona's new light-rail line uses the main diagonal thoroughfare crossing the city. In Bilbao, the new light-rail line follows an industrial waterway that is presently undergoing a complete renewal, coordinated by a single public enterprise (Rià 2000) entrusted with the landholdings of different public owners. It links new developments like the Guggenheim Museum with Old Bilbao.*

*"Rouen (France) has a specific combination of trams, buses (classic articulated buses guided by optical system) and 'trams on tyres' (aka busways) designed like tramways and benefiting from a segregated right of way to escape traffic congestion. This system narrows the reserved busway, leaving more space for other street uses. The North American boom in new light rail systems even in cities like Dallas and Houston is interesting because it recognizes the limits of 'automobility.' Elsewhere, Turkey has an*

*outstanding number of cities with new light rail systems. Sometimes the rolling stock is pre-owned tram cars from Europe – in Istanbul, surplus metro cars have been adapted to run on streets. In Japan, the government merging separate ministries into the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport could open the way to new light rail systems running on roads."*

*{Continued in #131}*

**Ref: Pierre Laconte, Light Rail: Making Urban Transport More Attractive, Japan Railway & Transport Review 38, March 2004**

## And Also ...

*"When an RACV executive launches a bicycle scheme for Melbourne, how does he choose to get there? By car, of course. The RACV's general manager of members and motoring services, Gordon Oakley, was in the city yesterday spruiking the motoring group's credentials as a 'mobility' group - not just an automobile group. Mr Oakley's mode of transport highlighted his organisation's preference for the car louder than any words could have done. After the media event was over, Mr Oakley rode the bike, brought for Roads Minister Tim Pallas to have a spin on at the launch, to the nearest taxi rank. He then hired a maxi-cab to carry him and the bicycle."*

**Ref: Clay Lucas, The Age, 2/11/09**

## Budapest Trams

What's right with this picture? It was taken by City of Yarra Councillor Alison Clarke while she was in Eastern Europe. Note the very long and modern trams. Alison writes: *"Just in case anyone thinks that the Hungarians are substituting vehicle size for service frequency [below is] a photo of a bridge over the Danube on which you can (I hope) see four of these trams, they look like giant caterpillars going back and forth. At one point there were five of them on the bridge at once, but I wasn't quick enough with my camera."*



## Suburban Sprawl in Europe (Part 2)

*“For the new urbanists, building an eco-town is not a matter of building ‘green’ buildings. More important is creating places that encourage people to change their unsustainable behaviours and then enable them to do it. New urbanism arose in the 1980s in reaction to the planning and design practices of the preceding decades. The new urbanists sought to integrate all of a town’s functions, blending components to create mixed-use and mixed-income developments, compact and densely populated, where the pedestrian and bicyclist would have priority over the driver. For inspiration they looked back to traditional urban design, especially the close-knit European towns that had thrived for centuries.*

*“European governments – as well as some in India and Asia – have begun turning to them in an effort to forestall further unsustainable growth, reclaim the lost primacy of their cities (along with their sustainable density and scale), and deliver a built environment with a much diminished carbon footprint. There are already some remarkable examples of new urbanism. Works in progress include compact, mixed-use, pedestrian-, bicycle-, and transit-friendly ‘urban extensions’ underway in Amersfoort, the Netherlands; in Hammarby Sjöstad outside of Stockholm; and in Adamstown, outside of Dublin.*

*“Since the greatest share of greenhouse gas emissions comes from buildings and cars, national and local governments have initiated efforts to reduce the carbon footprint of the built environment – ‘sustainable cities’ in the US, eco-cities in China, villes durables in France, eco-towns in India. It’s one thing to talk about ‘walkable’ and ‘bikeable’ places, but what are the practical essentials of a carbon-neutral urbanist town and how does one go about developing one?*

*“In the UK the need was particularly urgent. The government hoped that along with new public transportation initiatives and regulations on industry and coal power, its eco-towns would help the UK meet its commitment to bringing*

*greenhouse gas emissions to 80% below 1990 levels by 2050. However, it was a lack of clear planning – as well as politics – that has mired the UK’s proposed eco-towns. So public reaction was cool in 2007 when Prime Minister Gordon Brown announced an initiative to develop 10 new communities in the countryside, each of 5,000 to 15,000 homes. Citizen’s committees formed; irked that the government had first asked developers, not regional and local planning authorities, where or whether they wanted these towns built. They predicted more cars on already crowded roads. The press suggested they were green washing suburban development as usual.” {Cont. in #131}*

**Ref: Bruce Stutz, Carbusters 38, 2009**

[www.carbusters.org/magazine/index.php?issue=38&go=feature3](http://www.carbusters.org/magazine/index.php?issue=38&go=feature3)

## Transportation Land Use Impacts

*“During the last century, many transportation and land use planning practices reinforced the cycle of increased automobile dependency and sprawl [as illustrated in the diagram]. This was generally unintended, reflecting a lack of consideration of the full impacts of these decisions. For example, when deciding how much parking to require for a particular type of land use, traffic engineers were probably not thinking about the additional sprawl that would result from a more generous standard, they simply wanted to insure motorist convenience. Similarly, planning decisions that affect roadway supply, transit service quality or*

*roadway user fees often overlooked various land use impacts. ... The disciplines of geography, urban economics, land use planning, landscape design, and environmental studies have long recognised these impacts, and the desirability of more integrated planning, but current transport planning often overlooks such impacts and objectives,*

*particularly when evaluating relatively small, individual policies and projects, such as how much parking to require at a particular site or whether to expand a particular intersection.”*

**Ref: Todd Litman, Evaluating Transportation Land Use Impacts, July 2009** See full report:

<http://www.vtpi.org/landuse.pdf>

