

Airline of the Year

"Air New Zealand has been named Airline of the Year in the Air Transport World magazine awards. Judges said the airline won for its commitment to safety and operational excellence and groundbreaking customer service that combined passenger-friendly check-in technologies with caring staff. Air New Zealand had also maintained a 'sterling financial performance' during one of the most turbulent periods in aviation history while also leading the way in environmental initiatives, including making the world's first flight using a sustainable biofuel. Chief executive Rob Fyfe ... said the judges appeared to be impressed by the authentic Kiwi can-do style of service compared to the 'McDonald's' approach common among other airlines." **Ref: Roeland van den Berg, Dominion Post, 15/1/10**

And Then ...

"Last October, my Ryanair flight from Alicante back to East Midlands Airport was delayed by three hours. During this time I, and my fellow-travellers, expected to be offered refreshments in accordance with my rights under EU Regulations 261/2004 and alluded to on my Ryanair boarding card. I received nothing and, despite writing to Ryanair, I have heard nothing. The phrase 'no frills' appears to include no courtesy, no acknowledgement and no compensation. Perhaps you could remind them of this fact." **Ref: PF, Nottingham, The Guardian, 9/1/10**

"Please do not take the lack of communication personally. Whenever I try to contact Ryanair, they ignore me, too, and this occasion was no exception. EU Regulations 261/2004 lay down the level of assistance you must be given when flights are delayed, which includes refreshments, but it is dependent on the length of the delay and the distance of the flight. Alicante to East Midlands would appear to be a distance of 1,610km which means the refreshments would be required if the delay was more than three hours. Your delay was an agonising one minute too short, which means you were entitled to nothing – but Ryanair could have had the decency to let you know that at least on this occasion, they were in the right!"

Ref: Steve Playle, The Guardian, 9/1/10

And Also ...

"A woman wrote in to complain that her plane journey was a disappointment because the sky was far too cloudy, impeding the view for her and her children and spoiling their game of eye-spy." **Ref: Oliver Smith, (UK) Telegraph, 16/9/09**

VicRoads' Change of Heart?

"VicRoads' admission that the solution to Melbourne's traffic woes lies in reorganising the existing system rather than building new roads is what public transport and cycling advocates have been waiting years, even decades, to hear. ... But road space is a scarce commodity, & the modest gains made by sustainable transport in recent years illustrate that any reallocations would come at the cost of cars, motorcycles and other road traffic. Trips by public transport in metropolitan Melbourne soared almost 50% in the decade to last year to 491.5 million. But our roads are still clogged and the cost of congestion will double in less than 15 years without action."

Ref: Reid Sexton, The Age, 7/2/10

Cycling in Sydney & Toronto

"Copenhagen [Denmark] & Malmo [Sweden] and places like that are great places to cycle. The bicycle is well ingrained in the city, & the streets & paths are built for everybody to work/walk/ride together. And the whole place is small & flat as a tack. Sydney is a pile of jumbled unplanned crap sprawled out to hell n back running with exhausted commuters who have been 'traffic calmed' into road rage & it is just totally dangerous for peds just trying to cross a road, let alone for bikes which have to share the roads."

Ref: 'batfink', SMH Comments, 14/1/10

"More than half the adults in Toronto cycle, according to a city study released today. The study found that that 54% of Torontonians identify themselves as cyclists, up from 48% from a similar 1999 study. The most noticeable difference from the last survey is that almost a third of all cyclists commute by bike rather than just cycling for recreation. ... A key finding of the survey is that both cyclists and non-cyclists agree that better education with regards to road-sharing between bicycles and cars is necessary. More than 80% of all people surveyed said that better education for both cyclists and motorists would improve cycling."

Ref: Meghan Housley, National Post, 19/1/10

And Also ...

A "New Zealand police officer who stopped two naked cyclists at the flashy beach resort of Whangamata just before Christmas, let them off with a warning - not about the nudity but about the lack of protective clothing on their heads." **Ref: Elizabeth Farrelly, SMH, 14/1/10**



Mulga Bill Rides Again – How Regional Victoria is Cycling Again

*'Twas Mulga Bill, from Eaglehawk, that
caught the cycling craze;
He turned away the good old horse that
served him many days;
He dressed himself in cycling clothes,
resplendent to be seen;
He hurried off to town and bought a shining
new machine';*

"This extract from the great Banjo Patterson poem inspired the creation some years ago of the Mulga Bill Bicycle Trail at Eaglehawk – a suburb of the City of Greater Bendigo or as the locally produced sticker says 'Eaglehawk - the greater part of Bendigo'. Along the trail you will discover old mines, nature and present day Eaglehawk. It is a short trail and includes magnificent views over Eaglehawk and Bendigo.

"While bicycles were once a commonly used means of transport to get to work in many regional centres and country towns, their use fell away with greater access to cars and a community attitude that bicycles are for children. However there is increasing evidence that the bicycle is once again becoming a vehicle of choice for commuting in Melbourne, in regional centres and country towns.

"While Melbourne is generally flat and dedicated bicycle paths generally have gentle grades, cyclists find themselves competing against traffic, often on narrow road reservations. In contrast most of Victoria's regional centres and country towns are almost completely flat, have low traffic volumes on their roads and many roads have wide reservations. Victoria's regional centres and country towns contain both the key attributes to support cycling but also the greatest impediment. Traffic congestion is not really evident and it's too easy to jump in a car. However the enthusiasm for cycling is growing and there is increasing evidence that the bicycle is once again becoming a vehicle of choice for commuting in regional centres and country towns."

Ref: Trevor Budge, Planning News, 2008

And Also ...

An inquiry into enhancing Victoria's liveability "found that 'many parts of provincial Victoria are very liveable' and provincial Victoria can be considered the 'liveable alternative' to Melbourne."

Ref: The Age, 13/4/09

Bendigo Tram Upgrade

"The city's historic tram depot, which doubles as a workshop and a museum, will get a \$3.1 million redevelopment thanks to funding from the Victorian and federal governments and the City of Greater Bendigo. ... 'There has been a real resurgence in the last few years in the United States and elsewhere of interest in tramways for medium-sized cities', [said Bendigo Trust CEO, Tom Seddon]. 'The discussion that Bendigo is having about whether or not to return its trams to public transport is much further along than in many US cities. Christchurch, New Zealand, is doubling the length of its tramway right now', he said."

Ref: Darren Grey, The Age, 8/2/10

Light Rail Proposal for Christchurch

"Christchurch Mayor Bob Parker wants a city-wide light rail network that could cost tens of millions of dollars. Parker is calling for a return to the 'steel and sparks' era and wants trains, not buses, to start dominating Christchurch's public transport system within five years. ... Parker recently returned from an urban transit fact-finding trip to the United States and Canada, visiting San Francisco, Vancouver and Portland – cities which have invested heavily in light rail systems. 'It is not right to say we cannot afford rail-based systems, it is more correct to say we cannot afford not to think about them if we wish our city to persist, survive and grow into our future ... It cannot all happen tomorrow but we can start the planning for it now', he said. ...



"Green Party co-leader Russell Norman said the Government needed to stop being 'fixated' by roads and spend more on light rail. Rail was expensive to set up, but much cheaper in the long term, he said. 'The National Party is brain dead when it comes to public transport ... rail is the obvious way to go'. Environment Canterbury chairman Alec Neill said Parker's comments had merit. 'There is some ability to link into some rail corridors in the city ... we do need to talk about a fully-integrated transport system and light rail could form part of that'. ... Lincoln University transport studies professor Chris Kissling said cities around the world were moving towards light rail. Christchurch could do the same, but only if future urban planning included rail options. Both he and Wellington-based transport consultant Murray King said phasing in a light-rail system was the best option, but key railway corridors needed to be reserved now so city planners had all the ingredients."

Glenn Conway, The Weekend Press, 26/12/09

Downtown Planning (Part 3)

"Is downtown [city centre] planning hopeless? Must we assume that if downtown cannot be reached by everybody, or nearly everybody, by car, downtown must go? Must we assume that our metropolitan areas are to become formless sprawls, nowhere within them supporting the variety and choice of services, merchandise, contacts and culture which have been the great advantage enjoyed by a metropolitan population?"

"Some pessimists believe that this is our future that we are on our way, witlessly, to deliberate disintegration of our cities, with all the economic, social and cultural stagnation which will follow. The great planning philosopher Lewis Mumford calls this process 'unbuilding', the fate of a civilization which loses its power to maintain the complexity on which it is built and on which it depends. I do not think such a process is inevitable for us. I do not think our downtowns are doomed, because the fact is, we have not tried and failed at solving their traffic problems. We have just not tried. When we do try, I think we can succeed. At present, we kid ourselves that we do have city traffic planning. We do not. What we have are a series of expediciencies for somewhat speeding up six-passenger rubber-tired vehicles and little else.

"One example will show what I mean. Around the periphery of Manhattan Island are the East River and West Side Highways, which take through passenger-car traffic. But do they, or any equivalent system, serve the city's vital need for trucking arteries? No, the trucks and huge cargo-trailers from New England to the industrial areas in downtown Manhattan thunder through the streets, finding their way as best they can alongside where people are trying to live, to sleep, to shop, to do business, to listen to concerts and study school lessons. More than a thousand million dollars a year, it is estimated, is wasted in this one city alone by trucks slowed and halted in the clogged streets. If traffic and highway planning were really being done for the sake of the city's enterprises and people, trucks would be accommodated at least as thoughtfully as passenger and pleasure cars.

"We also kid ourselves that we are doing the best with transportation we can afford. But financially, a balanced planning for both private automobiles and mass transportation is hamstrung by the fact that revenues from car tolls and largesse from the Federal government provide a fabulous cornucopia of construction funds for bringing more cars into the cities, and

no funds for bringing in people without cars. This has reached so ridiculous an extreme in New York that the Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority, an empire built on car tolls and publicly subsidized highways, even has surplus wealth to finance the Coliseum - while meantime desperate poverty and the threat of ever-higher fares stalks mass transit. Socialism and subsidy have become moral for highways, immoral for subways and railways.

"Consider if this subsidy situation were reversed. Cars and highways today would still be pretty much back where they were in 1925, while mass transportation - subways, buses, railways, monorails, conveyor systems - would be employing devices, designs and methods some thirty years in advance of what is now actually in use. Then critics like me, who are never satisfied, would be saying, 'It is no wonder people do not use cars in preference to mass transportation. All the progress has been in mass transit! Build better highways and people will use more cars!' And the realists would answer, 'No. People just want to use mass transit, not cars. They are funny that way.'"

Ref: Jane Jacobs, Address to the New York State Motorbus Association, Nov 10, 1958

{Continued in #142}

Jane Jacobs (Pt 3)

"Jane Jacobs had no formal training in city planning or architecture or even a college degree. But when this daughter of a doctor and a school teacher moved from Scranton, Pa., to New York City in

1938, a job at Architectural Forum and marriage to an architect soon blossomed into a lifelong passion for understanding how cities are built and lived in. From her home in Manhattan's bustling Greenwich Village, the opinionated young woman watched with growing disgust as the urban renewal movement that had swept the U.S. after World War II cleared whole neighbourhoods in New York and other cities. In their place rose bland Modernist office towers that spawned a kind of urban apartheid, with downtowns set aside for office workers who commuted in from the swelling suburbs, leaving city cores increasingly dark and deserted at night.

*"The experience prompted Jacobs to write *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. Its publication in 1961 triggered a profound shift in the way we look at cities. Her premise: Cities are engines of growth whose vitality stems from the variety of activities humans engage in there. They*



Photo: Getty Images

should be lively, mixed-use places where people live, work, shop, raise families, and join their creative energies in myriad ways. Cities should be allowed to grow organically; carving them up into single-use sections, as the Modernists recommended, is like thrusting a dagger into their hearts.

“Although the so-called New Urbanism movement Jacobs helped to spark took years to be widely accepted, her views are now standard thinking among architects and city planners. Her amateur status didn't stop her from attacking the celebrated powers, from Le Corbusier, who wanted to raze the historic Marais in central Paris (but never succeeded), to New York master planner Robert Moses, who built many city highways in the face of fierce neighbourhood opposition. In the 1960s, Jacobs led activists who stymied Moses' plans to put an expressway smack through her beloved Greenwich Village.

“Nowadays, it's routine for planners to meet with local residents. More broadly, many officials realize that urban life can't always be dictated from the top down. The disorganized nature of cities is a natural ingredient of their health, allowing their energy to flourish. In the 1990s, Jacobs' ideas about mixing residential and business usage helped fuel the renewed interest in urban cores that has been revitalizing inner-city areas such as Harlem.

“At 88, Jacobs continues to rail against what she sees as sterile planning, particularly in U.S. suburbs. ‘Never before have normal human beings been consigned to such poverty of imagination and disrespect for function’, she lamented in a talk at the City College of New York this past May. The suburbs were essentially created, she said, by ‘selling out the country for cheap parking’.”

Ref: Aaron Bernstein, Business Week 16/8/04

“Opposing expressways and supporting neighbourhoods were common themes in her life. ... In 1968, Jacobs moved to Toronto, where she lived until her death. ... She quickly became a leading figure in her new city and helped stop the proposed Spadina Expressway. A frequent theme of her work was to ask whether we are building cities for people or for cars. She was arrested twice during demonstrations. She also had considerable influence on the regeneration of the St. Lawrence neighbourhood, a housing project regarded as a success. ... She died in Toronto Western Hospital at the age of 89, on 25 April 2006.” **Ref: Wikipedia, July 2008**
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jane_Jacobs

Robert Moses (Part 2)

“As the head of many public authorities, Moses's title as chair gave his entities the flexibility associated with private enterprise, along with the tax-exempt debt capacity associated with government agencies. The inner workings of the authorities were free from public scrutiny, allowing money to be freely allocated to expenses a public government could not sustain. Contrary to his public image, Moses horse-traded and dealt out patronage extensively, building support from construction firms, investment banks, insurance companies, labor unions (and management), and real-estate developers. Calling on these vast reserves of power, Moses quickly developed a reputation for ‘getting things done’ and used his influence to fast-track projects in legislators' home districts, a tactic for which these same lawmakers repaid him by granting money for ever more ambitious projects. He dealt out enough spoils to both political parties to ensure he avoided unwanted attention to his patronage politics. ...

“Robert Moses had power over the construction of all public housing projects, but the one position above all others giving him political power was his chairmanship of the Triborough Bridge Authority. The Triborough Bridge, a cluster of three separate spans, connects the Bronx, Manhattan, and Queens. The legal structure of this particular public authority made it impervious to influence from mayors and governors, due to the language in the bond contracts and multi-year appointments of the Commissioners. While New York City and New York State were perpetually strapped for money, the bridge's toll revenues amounted to tens of millions of dollars a year. The agency was therefore capable of financing the borrowing of hundreds of millions of dollars, making Moses the only person in New York capable of funding large public construction projects. Toll revenues rose quickly, as traffic on the bridges exceeded all projections. Rather than pay off the bonds, Moses sought other toll projects to build, a cycle that fed on itself.

“In the late 1930s a municipal controversy raged over whether an additional vehicular link between Brooklyn and lower Manhattan would be a bridge or a tunnel. ... Moses favored a bridge. It could carry more automobile traffic than a tunnel and would also serve as a visible monument. More traffic meant more tolls, and more tolls meant more money and therefore more power for public improvements. ... Only a lack of a key Federal approval thwarted the bridge scheme.”

Ref: Wikipedia {Continued in #142}

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Moses

Queensland Streets 2010

“Queensland Streets 2010 will encourage and facilitate good design. The guideline will provide designers and assessors with the ability to consider innovations such as laneways, streets with no on-street parking, mixed use developments with lower parking provision and narrower streets, subdivisions with pedestrian-only access and naked streets. Whilst none of these innovations are compulsory, they provide alternative solutions for developers who think beyond our current car-dominated product. This car-dominated product is often produced as a response to the ‘rules’ rather than a response to good design. Designers and assessors can now access more diverse development types with more confidence of their acceptance.

“Queensland Streets 2010 concentrates on a hierarchy of street users, as opposed to vehicle traffic. Priority of design is given to pedestrians, cyclists, public transport and cars respectively. Street types are described by their function, not their traffic carrying capacity. The new street hierarchy consists of living streets, mixed-use streets and main streets. This is consistent with international street design guidelines such as the UK Manual for Streets. Neighbourhood layouts are also addressed encouraging designers and developers to consider more permeable options. This will reduce geographical interruptions to walking, cycling and public transport routes; reduce pressure for more road space; and improve neighbourhood amenity. More intimate and secure spaces will also result through the provision of increased flexibility in street cross-sections. While Queensland Streets proposes a variety of solutions to represent the principles outlined in the document, it also encourages designers, developers and local governments to genuinely push the envelope. The ultimate aim is to achieve quality streets that fulfil their social, gathering, open-space, recreational and communication obligations - and not just act as conduits for cars.” **Ref: Steven Burgess, Urban Design Forum #88, December 2009**

And Also ...

“The fact is that every transport system is different and there aren’t too many around the world that have the complexity of ours which have the train system, the trams, with all the moving bits and all the moving parts, and of course, the buses.”

Ref: Victorian Premier John Brumby, Breakfast, ABC Radio National, 29/1/10
www.abc.net.au/rn/breakfast/stories/2010/2804390.htm

> ‘Moving bits’ and ‘moving parts’ on a tram?

New Metro in Phoenix

“Phoenix [in the US] has a huge sprawl problem. But now transit-oriented development is on the upswing in this Sun Belt metropolis. In December, the Phoenix region opened one of the most ambitious transit projects in recent U.S. history: a 20-mile light rail line with 28 stops serving three cities (Phoenix, Tempe, and Mesa). Future plans include an extension within three years, with several new corridors being studied. The Valley Metro vehicles are handsome and comfortable, and thus far ridership has far exceeded initial projections - with as many as 40,000 riders per day, compared to the expected 25,000. Each station features amenities and art installations. In addition, with many folks using the light rail as an intermodal step in their commutes, bicycles are welcome aboard.” **Ref: Street Films, 17/6/09**
www.streetfilms.org/archives/phoenixs-metro-light-rail-takes-flight/

And Also ...

“KFC - which in less calorie concerned times was known as Kentucky Fried Chicken - has come up with a novel way to help the community and advertise at the same time. The idea is for the chicken shop to fill some of those troublesome potholes in the road and then take credit with a stencilled ‘Re-Freshed by KFC’ in street chalk. ... Some say it is a great example of civic action presenting a positive corporate image while others think consumers might object to seeing advertising on roads.” **Ref: Herald-Sun, 7/4/09**

More on Pollution Emission Standards

“The [Australian] Federal Government has released proposed new car emission standards which it wants to introduce from 2012. The Government says the new standards would cut pollutants from all cars in Australia by as much as 90%. But the head of the Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries, Andrew Mackellar, says to meet the proposed rules tougher fuel standards are needed. ‘Any evaluation of vehicle emissions standards must also take into account whether or not there’s going to be a need to move to higher quality petrol in the Australian market’, he said. ‘And for that reason I think the timetable might be too ambitious’. The peak car industry body has suggested drivers be allowed to use only premium unleaded fuel to help cut emissions, but Mr Mackellar says it will come at a cost. ‘We will need to move to the premium unleaded petrol becoming the standard in Australia’, he said. ‘That has a higher octane number. It also has a lower sulphur content. If we’re going to implement enhanced standards for vehicle emissions then we must move to a better quality fuel.’”

Ref: ABC News, 8/1/10

Interview with Oz Kayak (Part 11)

Oz Kayak started as an engineering cadet with the Victorian Roads Authority, later worked with Victorian Railways and today is passionate about active forms of transport, community health and urban design. Here continues our discussion:

SI: Let's move onto 'active transport' where you have more or less reinvented yourself.

OK: More than ten years ago, to some modellers in transport, it became clear that health related issues were not being modelled into route choice. And in the mid-90s, the bicycle task, even the railway task, especially the walking task – which is quite important in the centre of Melbourne – was not being effectively built into any modelling or cost-benefit analysis. There were traditional models which looked at noise, air pollution, etc. The health benefit that is now read about on a daily basis in the media such as obesity, unhealthy aging, is now loud and clear – so the world has changed and that is where some of us are applying our skills. Russell Thompson began to introduce active transport into the modelling that was taught at Melbourne University Engineering, more than ten years ago.

SI: Is that the root of your interest?

OK: Partly through that culture change, yes. Because with a 'death-a-day' on the road network – you'd probably describe it as 'life shortening' – but three to ten times the death rate attributable to health issues related to sedentary behaviour issues is fairly important and we should be addressing it. So the modelling that is now required is to demonstrate the health benefits and the Commonwealth has now taken a major initiative, and the Heart Foundation, and others are also involved. The advocacy has shifted. Instead of noise and air pollution only, it now includes obesity and sedentary behaviour, social capital – people should talk to each other a bit more and one way to do it is by walking. People need to talk to people and active transport has that as one of its major benefits. Even this morning, there were two press releases, saying that the transition into the Alzheimers can be delayed by more social interaction and physical activity. But that evidence has also been around for nearly ten years.

SI: How are you actively involved in active transport?

OK: Primarily, in the last few years, I've assisted Russell Thompson. Secondly, I'm President of the Town and Country Planning Association, and we run workshops to push this agenda.

{Continued in #142}

More on Better Place {in #137}

"Better Place is not the transport solution for the city. It is based on the assumption that people will change as little as possible in their lifestyle and will continue their preference for cars despite the social, environmental, economic and health costs. To meet this demand does Better Place offer a zero emissions solution? Not if one takes into account the construction of the cars and their infrastructure – a massive embodied energy debt. Let alone the congestion and the resulting huge penalties of time, physical inactivity, road trauma, stress, road rage, economic losses, distortions towards environment-destroying infrastructure paving over land, etc. This of course applies to fossil fuel car transport as well.

"Congestion is mainly a problem of our larger cities. Your correspondent does not take into account the smaller rural cities with next to no public transport where several million Australians live, or the outer suburbs of the big cities saddled with the legacy of the car-based sprawl, or the problem of women juggling small kids, shopping, elderly parent transport etc. Despite my personal desire to see the majority cycling and walking and using PT for personal transport, I have to admit that cars will be seen by a huge number of Australians as their first transport choice for a long time to come. Eventually I think that we must approach the Swiss system of looking after the transport needs of rural communities with electrified PT, as part of their social and economic rights.

"In the present situation, Better Place is very cleverly placed to provide the infrastructure for the cars of the future. Its use of smart PR, marketing and advertising to raise funds is a necessary activity in our capitalist system. If we are to continue with the system as is most likely considering the stability and inherent resistance to change (conservatism) of social systems, we cannot deny enterprises like Better Place their modus operandi. Perhaps a social democratic government as the Swedes had for decades would offer the 'best of both worlds'.

"Rather than focus on Better Place as a transport solution, one should look at transport in its entirety, including the generators of demand to move goods and people, management of the demand rather than just scrambling to meet it, and low environmental impact transport systems. We also should consider the social and health implications of transport choices, and the enjoyment of the trip as well as reaching the destination. This being said, let us hope that Better Place lives up to its name!" {See the previous articles in #137}

Ref: John Merory, 28/1/10