

9,100 Cyclists vs A Few Parked Cars

"Each weekend, an estimated 9,100 cyclists don their Lycra and ride the city's most popular - and controversial - recreational bike route [known as: 'The Hell Ride'] along Beach Road and around Port Phillip Bay [in Victoria]. This week their ride was made marginally safer, after Kingston Council approved a 12-month trial of no-standing restrictions for cars along sections of Beach Road ... from 6am to 10am on Saturdays and Sundays, [to] stop cyclists being injured when they either slam into the back of parked cars, or swerve to avoid parked cars. ...

In recent years, more cyclists have been injured on Beach Road, many seriously. ... Mentone resident Pete Dowe, who lives a block from Beach Road, is one of the residents who tried to stop the no-parking zones being introduced. ... 'We have thousands of cyclists on the weekend now, [and] this will bring more.' Ref: **Clay Lucas & Charlotte King, The Age, 10/2/10**



"Missed the Afghan telecast - have to watch Beach Road cycling instead."

"Beach road is a global treasure... it is a cycling icon, a joy. It should be celebrated as such by the cycling community and residents alike. There is nowhere in the world like it and now it will be a little safer for everyone."

Ref: **'PL' Comments, The Age, 10/2/10**

"This is outrageous. Everyone knows roads are for parking cars on, how else do you explain the Monash freeway? And it's not right that all the millionaires living along beach road be required to share their road with peasants, after all it's their money that lobbies the government to force poor people to pay more taxes to fix the roads. Bicycle riders should know their proper place, the ditch on the side of the road. Furthermore, as someone that once saw a bicyclist jaywalk, I am an expert and can confidently assert that all bicyclists are rapists." Ref: **'Brighton Snob' Comments, The Age, 10/2/10**

"I find it mildly frustrating that some consider that roads were 'made' for cars. Bicycles predate cars by nearly a century and roads were updated to support bicycle needs long before cars were common."

Ref: **'JW', Comments, The Age, 10/2/10**

"Which lane do me & boys ride our Harleys in?"
Ref: **'Bruiser', Comments, The Age, 10/2/10**

New, New NSW Transport Plan

"[NSW Premier] Kristina Keneally has taken the axe to the transport blueprint of her predecessor, cancelling the proposed metro network to spend the money on expanding the heavy rail system. But analysts say the 10-year, \$10 billion plan falls short because it does not include key projects that link western Sydney with the booming job centres on the lower north shore. It allocates almost three times more money to roads than to rail transport. ... Although she dumped the metro plans, Ms Keneally said the government would retain the metro corridors. ... The proposals include \$2.9 billion for 1000 new buses, \$500 million for a 5.6 kilometre extension of the light rail through the inner west to Dulwich Hill, and a 4.1 kilometre extension to the new Barangaroo development, on the western side of the city, then under the Harbour Bridge to Circular Quay.

"The government says the light rail could move up to 10,000 people an hour through the city. ... The government is also to pay up to \$100 million in compensation to construction companies that had tendered to build the metro system. ... The government has already spent more than \$200 million on preliminary work for the CBD Metro, including acquiring properties, and will have to hand back \$85 million of the \$91 million the federal government provided for a feasibility study for the West Metro between Central and Westmead. Urban planner Garry Glazebrook ... said the \$21 billion in unspecified road funding dwarfed the funds available to expand CityRail. 'If the objective was to improve public transport, that is a poor set of priorities'."

Ref: **Andrew West, SMH, 22/2/10**

"I hate to think how much money has been put into developing plan after plan after plan of what to do with Sydney, all the while never bothering to start a thing." Ref: **'Bees', Comments, SMH, 22/2/10**

"Is anyone else worried about the \$20bn allocated to roads? Looks like the RTA is still running the show." Ref: **'Daveinbalmain', SMH, 22/2/10**

"How on earth can the majority of Sydney residents know how to fix the city's transport problems but those in charge get nowhere?"
Ref: **'Leah', Comments, SMH, 22/2/10**

"London, Paris, Madrid, Barcelona, Lisbon, etc, etc all have successful Metro systems which are an integral part of the city without having the hassle of congesting the city with above ground infrastructure." Ref: **'R', SMH, 22/2/10**

Innovations in Energy Storage

“Three UK firms were acknowledged at the Carbon Trust’s 2009 Innovation Awards for their alternative concepts for storing energy through hydraulic systems, flywheels and air tanks.

“The use of air is being proposed by Ma Innovation. Its technology, which is still in the proof-of-concept stage, would take kinetic energy created by a braking vehicle to drive a supercharger that produces boost air. This boost air would then be stored in an air tank – located where the large electric hybrid vehicle battery would usually be – and later delivered to a downsized engine to help it cope with acceleration demands while the supercharger is switched off. ‘The engine only takes air at relatively low pressure at two bar’, explained Jonathan Ma, the business development director of Ma Innovation. ‘So we would store the air at the same pressure the engine would want it at later’. Ma compared the storage pressure to that of a bottle of coke. ‘So the walls of your tank don’t need to be particularly thick to store air at that pressure’, he said, adding that the air tank could be made out of a single injection-moulded membrane piece. Ma said the technology could be retrofitted to not only hybrid vehicles, but also diesel engines. The only prerequisite, he added, is the engine must be downsized – so it is designed for just cruising power – and it must be air charged with either a turbocharger or supercharger. The company estimated that depending on traffic conditions, driving a car equipped with this technology in the city could deliver a 25 per cent fuel saving compared to a standard turbo-diesel vehicle. When the technology is fully commercialised, which Ma estimated will be in about two years, it will be initially targeted for retrofitting onto buses and vans. However, the ultimate goal for the company, he added, is to build the technology into new cars.

“Another alternative for power storage is Williams Hybrid Power’s flywheel technology. The Williams engineers, more accustomed to developing technology for Formula One, have developed this technology for the wider vehicle market. The company said the electrically driven flywheel is like an electro-mechanical battery that could replace a conventional battery or ultra-capacitor pack in a hybrid system. The distinctive, patented feature of the Williams Hybrid Power flywheel technology is its ‘magnetically loaded composite’. The company claims this feature makes it possible to produce a wholly composite flywheel that integrates the magnets of the electric motor into the composite.

Williams Hybrid Power points out that the flywheel system can be made significantly smaller and lighter than conventional flywheels. It also runs at efficiencies between 97 and 99 per cent. A further alternative for energy storage involves a hydraulic system developed by Artemis Intelligent Power. Its technology removes the need for a battery and electric motor because power is stored by a hydraulic system that harnesses energy through regenerative braking.

“Ma told The Engineer that any technology that aims to replace batteries in electric hybrid vehicles will bring added environmental benefits. ‘The amount of carbon dioxide you produce to create a battery is very high and the nasty chemicals in them make them very difficult to recycle’, he said. ‘Also, batteries don’t last that long compared to the life of a car. You would need to change your battery within the lifespan of the car several times. So then you’ve got this issue seven times over where not only is the battery not particularly environmentally friendly to make or particularly environmentally friendly to recycle, but you have to have several batteries during the lifecycle of the car’.”

Ref: Siobhan Wagner, The Engineer, 6/1/10

Business Case for Forth Hovercraft

“Stagecoach announced today (25 October 2007) that it has established a ‘clear business case’ for the launch of a permanent cross-Forth hovercraft service. The Perth [Scotland]-based transport group unveiled a four-part master plan to exploit the potential of the Forth estuary, identifying a preferred link between Kirkcaldy and Leith. Stagecoach - which has significant experience of operating ferries in New Zealand and has made extensive use of specialist marine consultancy advice – announced its proposals following a detailed analysis of the results of a two-week Forthfast trial operation in July 2007. ... The service would have a journey time of around 18 minutes and the route would ensure an integrated connection with Lothian Buses’ Service 22, which runs every four minutes to Edinburgh City Centre. Financial analysis carried out by Stagecoach suggests that the crossing would become commercially viable under a three-year Kickstart pump-priming initiative. A two-hovercraft operation is expected to attract more than 870,000 passengers a year by Year 4, with significant savings in carbon emissions. ... Brian Souter, Stagecoach Group Chief Executive, said: ‘This is a major milestone in the development of an environmentally sustainable cross-Forth link. We now have compelling evidence of a clear business case for a permanent hovercraft service’.”

Ref: Stagecoach Media Release, 25/10/07

The Case for High Speed Rail (Part 1)

“Starting with a line from Madrid to Seville in 1989, Spain pursued an aggressive and determined commitment to high speed rail that, by 2012, will produce the longest system in Europe. This year alone, most of the country's €19 billion development budget will be invested in high speed rail. By 2020, [Spain's minister of transport, José Blanco] López says, more than 90% of the country's total population will be within 31 miles of a high speed train station. Here he put his country's achievement in perspective: Shielded behind overly simple, short sighted cost-benefit analysis, critics complained with those arguments against high speed projects over years, until the success of each one of the new corridors proved them wrong and showed that in troubled economic times, the best investments for a society are the ones which improve equality. History has proved rail's critics wrong in Spain, as economic development and rider enthusiasm followed it everywhere it went.

“Even so, ever unwilling to learn from the successes of the rest of the world, the U.S. is now starting the same effort at about the same place as Spain was 20 years ago. The president of the U.S. High Speed Rail Association, Andy Kunz, appeared on Fox Business last Friday to make his pitch. And what argument did the show's overcoiffed co-host raise? ‘Amtrak has been in the red for years and years and years, and nobody in charge over there seems to be able to turn a profit, despite the fact that everybody I know takes the train from New York to Washington D.C., the Acela. It's just not working though financially’, she whined.

“After Kunz explained that that the Acela leg (with a maximum speed of only about 100 mph) was in fact profitable, and that the rest of the system needed to be upgraded so that it was equally attractive and profitable and capable of speeds over 200 mph, the host pressed on: ‘How do you get people to ride it?’ Kunz patiently explained his point again, and pointed out that when Europe opened its new high speed lines, they filled up with riders immediately. The hosts then tossed off a quick wisecrack about the Chunnel and muttered about the need for profitability, but assured the audience that ‘Nobody more than Fox Business wants to see new ventures succeed’.

“Be that as it may, one wonders why Europe's success would not convince them that high speed rail would be a good thing for this country. A projection from rail proponents FourBillion.com indicates that building the 9,000 miles of high

speed corridors identified by the U.S. Department of Transportation would create 4.5 million permanent jobs and 1.6 million construction jobs, save 125 million barrels of oil, eliminate 20 million pounds of CO2 per mile per year, reinvigorate U.S. manufacturing, and generate \$23 billion in economic benefits in the Midwest alone — all alongside a long list of intangible side benefits. ...

“The UK's Labour party is also pursuing an expansion of high speed rail, having commissioned a study on building a new line from London to the West Midlands and extensions to the north. Currently, Britain has only one high speed line, the 69-mile-long ‘High Speed 1’ link from London to the aforementioned Channel Tunnel (‘Chunnel’) to France. The Tories have offered their own £15.6 billion plan, so it seems likely that Britain will soon have a new high speed project. France ... already has the wonderful 200 mph high speed TGV network, with 1,100 miles of track, more than 400 trains, and the third-highest ranking of rail passengers per year, behind Switzerland and Japan. Personally, I found it to be the most enjoyable travel experience I have ever had.



Bombardier's ZEFIRO 380

“This week, the Chinese government awarded a \$4 billion contract to build 80 high speed (236 mph maximum) electric train sets for the new 3,700-mile-long high speed train network it is building. Half of the contract went to Bombardier Sifang, a Chinese joint venture with Berlin-based rail giant Bombardier

Transportation. The company will begin delivering the trains in 2012 and finish by 2014. Bombardier is already building 20 sleeper trains for China and another 20 passenger trains, in addition to the 500 high-power electric freight locomotives that it contracted to build for China in 2007. Russia is taking the plunge into high speed rail as well, spending nearly \$1.5 billion to upgrade 401 miles of track between Moscow and downtown St. Petersburg, and buy eight electric Sapsan trains made by German conglomerate Siemens with a top operating speed of 217 mph. Four runs a day will make the trip in less than four hours, compared with an average five hours to make the trip by airplane, including the time wasted getting to and from the airport and running the check-in and security gauntlets.” {Continued in #144}

Ref: Chris Nelder, Green Chip Review, 19/10/09

Jane Jacobs (Part 5)

“Jacobs approached cities as living beings and ecosystems. She suggested that over time, buildings, streets and neighbourhoods function as dynamic organisms, changing in response to how people interact with them. She explained how each element of a city - sidewalks, parks, neighbourhoods, government, economy – functions together synergistically, in the same manner as the natural ecosystem. This understanding helps us discern how cities work, how they break down, and how they could be better structured.

“Jacobs advocated for ‘mixed-use’ urban development – the integration of different building types and uses, whether residential or commercial, old or new. According to this idea, cities depend on a diversity of buildings, residences, businesses and other non-residential uses, as well as people of different ages using areas at different times of day, to create community vitality. She saw cities as being ‘organic, spontaneous, and untidy’, and views the intermingling of city uses and users as crucial to economic and urban development.

“Jacobs contested the traditional planning approach that relies on the judgment of outside experts, proposing that local expertise is better suited to guiding community development. She based her writing on empirical experience and observation, noting how the prescribed government policies for planning and development are usually inconsistent with the real-life functioning of city neighbourhoods.

“Although orthodox planning theory had blamed high density for crime, filth, and a host of other problems, Jacobs disproved these assumptions and demonstrated how a high concentration of people is vital for city life, economic growth, and prosperity. While acknowledging that density alone does not produce healthy communities, she illustrated through concrete examples how higher densities yield a critical mass of people that is capable of supporting more vibrant communities. In exposing the difference between high density and overcrowding, Jacobs dispelled many myths about high concentrations of people.

“By dissecting how cities and their economies emerge and grow, Jacobs cast new light on the nature of local economies. She contested the assumptions that cities are a product of agricultural advancement; that specialized, highly efficient economies fuel long-term growth; and that large, stable businesses are the best

sources of innovation. Instead, she developed a model of local economic development based on adding new types of work to old, promoting small businesses, and supporting the creative impulses of urban entrepreneurs.”

Ref: Projects for Public Places

www.pps.org/info/placemakingtools/placemakers/jjacobs

Robert Moses (Part 4)

“Moses’ reputation began to wane in the 1960s as public debate on urban planning began to focus on the virtues of intimate neighbourhoods and smallness of scale. Around this time, Moses also started picking political battles he could not win. His campaign against the free Shakespeare in the Park received much negative publicity, and his effort to destroy a shaded playground in Central Park to make way for a parking lot for the expensive Tavern-on-the-Green restaurant made him many enemies among the middle-class voters of the Upper West Side.

*“The opposition reached a crescendo over the demolition of Penn Station, which many attributed to the ‘development scheme’ mentality cultivated by Moses (although the impoverished Pennsylvania Railroad was actually responsible for the demolition). This casual destruction of one of New York’s greatest architectural landmarks helped prompt many city residents to turn against Moses’ plans to build a Lower Manhattan Expressway, which would have ploughed through what is now Greenwich Village and SoHo. This plan and the Mid-Manhattan Expressway both failed politically; to this day no superhighway goes through the heart of the city. One of his most vocal critics during this time was the urban activist Jane Jacobs, whose book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* was instrumental in turning opinion against Moses’ plans; the city government rejected the expressway in 1964. ...*

“Moses’ image suffered a further blow in 1974 with the publication of ‘The Power Broker’, a Pulitzer Prize-winning biography by Robert A. Caro. ... Caro’s depiction of Moses’ life gives him full credit for his early achievements, showing, for example, how he conceived and created Jones Beach and the New York State Park system, but he also shows how, as Moses’ desire for power came to be more important to him than his earlier dreams, he destroyed more than a score of neighbourhoods, by ramming thirteen huge expressways across the heart of New York City and by building huge urban renewal projects with little regard for the urban fabric or for human scale. Yet the author is more neutral in his central premise: the city would have been a very different place - maybe better, maybe worse - if Moses had

never existed. Other U.S. cities were doing the same thing as New York in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. Boston, San Francisco and Seattle, for instance, each built highways straight through their downtown areas. The New York City architectural intelligentsia of the 1940s and 1950s largely believed in such prophets of the automobile as Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe had supported Moses. Many other cities, like Newark, Chicago and St. Louis, also built massive, unattractive public housing projects. ...

“Caro argues that Moses also demonstrated racist tendencies. ... For example, the construction of low overpasses on parkways were made purposely too low for buses to clear, and the veto against extending the Long Island Rail Road to Jones Beach, were to prevent the poor and racial minorities (largely dependent on public transit) from accessing the beach, while providing easy car access for wealthier white groups. In furtherance of this point of view, Caro also notes the provision of numerous park amenities on the West Side highway below 125th Street (the main street of Harlem) versus the provision of few (if any) amenities north of 125th Street. Fort Tryon Park and the Cloisters (both of which sit in the northern part of Manhattan Island) were built in Inwood, then an Irish Catholic neighbourhood, rather than Harlem which is predominantly black.

“Aside from the sociological view of Moses’ accomplishments, there lies the question of urban destruction and suburban mobilisation. Did Moses’ work degrade the quality of life in the inner city? Does increased accessibility from the suburbs improve the quality of life by enabling commuting? Was the general direction of Moses’ work a damaging trend which is now being corrected, or a natural part of urban evolution? While Caro and others attributed the urban decay of New York neighbourhoods to Moses’ aggressive road building, it may be noted cities with far less aggressive post-war highway construction, such as Philadelphia and Baltimore, suffered similarly negative – or even worse – social trends.”

Ref: Wikipedia {Continued in #144}
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Moses

“In Oregon, a battle raged for nearly twenty years over the construction of a highway project known as the Mt. Hood Freeway [proposed by Robert Moses]. If approved, the Freeway would have removed more than 1% of all housing stock in Portland.” See: Street Films: *The Defeat of the Mount Hood Freeway* (Time: 11 mins, 42 secs)
www.streetfilms.org/archives/lessons-from-portland/

Robert Moses on Cities (Part 1)

“In many cities this process of central decay has been encouraged and speeded up by the building of rapid transit, railroad, road, and other facilities to minutely subdivided farms and estates in outlying sections and the suburbs. The effects of this siphoning of people out of town were either not understood or were tacitly ignored by influential citizens and even the press, not to speak of the promoters immediately interested. If in New York City we had refrained from building so many miles of subways at twenty million dollars a mile and had put some of this money into rehabilitating and making liveable and attractive the older and central parts of town, millions of people would not today be crowded like cattle into hurtling trains during the rush hours. ...

“It is a curious fact that thus far, in most of the older cities, more slum clearance has been accomplished indirectly than directly – that is, through clearance not for public, semi-public, or private housing, but for parks, playgrounds, parkways, expressways, boulevards, and other public improvements. I have made the statement a number of times in New York, and it has never been refuted, that my particular little group of demolition and building demons have without fanfare and social worker abracadabra pulled down more old rookeries than all the housing experts and authorities put together. And the best thing about it is that we have substituted nothing for the rookeries but broad highways lined with landscaping and recreation facilities, open to the sun and the elements, and affording the very best incentive to further slum clearance and improvement on their boundaries. It took the greater part of twenty years to persuade reactionaries, mossbacks, rural-minded legislators, sharpshooters for taxpayers’ organizations, and legalistic comma-chasers that an arterial [road] improvement, whether it be a parkway for restricted travel or an express route open to mixed traffic, is not simply a strip of pavement in a gasoline gully, but a genuine shoestring or ribbon improvement of the entire area through which it passes. It brings with it benefits not only to those who travel in cars, but to the thousands who live along it or do business or seek recreation there.”

Ref: Robert Moses, Slums and City Planning, The Atlantic Monthly, January 1945
www.theatlantic.com/issues/45jan/0145moses.htm

And Also ...

“In July last year a Victorian woman was believed to have died in an accident because she was distracted by an elaborate roadside memorial.”

Ref: Matt Campbell, The Age, 4/2/10

Tram Freighters

A year or so ago a chap was derided at a public meeting in Melbourne for having the temerity to suggest the use of special trams to carry freight. The senior department people in attendance had never heard of such a thing. Since then I've been meaning to run an article on tram freighters and now I'm prompted by this little item in The Sunday Age (The Heckler, 7/2/10):

"And from the extensive file of things that 'seemed like a good idea at the time' comes a suggestion from Melbourne City Council chief executive Kathy Alexander. Transport-literate types at a function late last year were bemused to hear Dr Alexander say that Melbourne's city centre would actually be much nicer without so many trucks clogging up the place. As to the problem of how then to distribute freight, she pondered whether the answer might be the humble tram."

Dr Alexander might not be so far off the track as The Heckler item suggests. Those clever Europeans have been using trams to move freight for years. And, oh, Wellington and Auckland had tram freighters back in 1910 successfully picking up and delivering on scheduled journeys. Incidentally, the Europeans have also been rediscovering their waterways as a preferable way to move both commuters and freight.

We're a bit slow in Victoria. Our two largest cities spread around the bay but where are our ferries?



Tram Freighters in Dresden, Germany

Ref: <http://forums.vwvortex.com/zerthread?id=1837641>



Interview with Oz Kayak (Part 13)

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:

OK: The current bike-share initiative for Melbourne was started by the State Government – in the Department of Transport – with the successful tender being from the RACV and Alta Planning and Design (with SKM as a key consultant). That consortium is still exploring the options. The option that was on the table was 600 bikes and 50 bike parking stations almost on top of each other.

SI: This is just in the centre of the city?

OK: Correct.

SI: Does it not seem odd that the RACV, as motorist organisation, would even bid for the work or be awarded the work? It's like giving the coal-fired power stations or the electrical utilities the task of implementing solar programs. Is there an agenda within the RACV to either hinder or promote cycling?

OK: We should remember that the principal bicycle network that still shapes Melbourne was the initiative of Dr Max Lay when he worked as a Director at VicRoads. Later on, he led the RACV, and both organisations realised that each bike that is used is one less car on the road.

SI: So there is an advantage then for the RACV members to have the organisation promoting bikes? More bikes reduce congestion and make it easier for those that do need cars to move about.

OK: The RACV also has very powerful arms in insurance and service. I was trying to work out how you would get these bikes around if they are in the wrong place but just think: what has the RACV got? Firstly they have a 400-seat call centre. Secondly, they have all the maintenance vehicles – who better than to fix a bike puncture? It may not be very sexy for a car mechanic but if that's the dominant flavour in our community, I don't think the RACV has got too many options. Someone else could do it but as we all know if you let someone else into your business area, they'll take it from you, so I think the RACV has also got a protective role, that it wants to be seen, and believes that it should be seen, to be a responsible citizens' organisation. I for one have never seen the RACV as anything else but an advocacy group that started off as a touring facilitator for cars. {Continued in #144}