

Report on Travelling to Work

There has been a dramatic increase in the number of cars driven to work each day in Australia's capital cities – a 70.1% rise over the past 30 years. That's more than 1.4 million cars on the road each day since census data began recording work travel information. The result has been a huge increase in greenhouse emissions. Melbourne has endured the biggest increase in car driving and the biggest declines in public transport, car pooling and walking. More cars are being driven to work each day in Melbourne than Sydney, despite the latter's bigger workforce. Just over 78% of Melbourne workers drive each day, while just 13.9% use public transport. Melbourne has built no significant extensions to its suburban heavy rail system in the past 30 years, and yet it has built more lane-kilometres of urban freeway and tollway than any other Australian city in the same time period.

The report also criticizes the transport funding priorities of the federal government. The Auslink scheme is exacerbating urban transport problems, because it is biased in favour of new roads and against urban rail infrastructure. Investment needs to be redirected away from urban motorways towards more environmentally friendly modes, particularly public transport and walking. This is the only way Australia can meet its international environmental obligations in the transport arena.

Ref: Uni of Melb Media Release 7/12/07

See the Report by P Mees, E Sorupia & J Stone:
<http://www.abp.unimelb.edu.au/news/pdf/census-travel-to-work-1976-2006.pdf>

"The Metropolitan Transport Forum ... chair Janet Rice said without better transport, there was little hope of meeting greenhouse emission reduction targets. 'If we're going to be serious about reducing greenhouse gas emissions, we've got to get people out of their cars and using public transport and get people into walking and cycling to work' ... a concerted effort was needed to make the switch to environmentally friendly travel, with commuters kicking normal driving habits. ... Melbourne had built more freeways than any other Australian city, which encouraged people to drive."

Ref: The Age 10/12/07



Oil & War

"A top-level United States policy document has emerged that explicitly confirms the Defence Department's readiness to fight an oil war. According to the report, Strategic Assessment 1999, prepared for the US Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Secretary of Defence, 'energy and resource issues will continue to shape international security'. Oil conflicts over production facilities and transport routes, particularly in the Persian Gulf and Caspian regions, are specifically envisaged."

Ref: Ritt Goldstein, SMH 20/5/03

"At least Brendan Nelson was honest when he said that our involvement in Iraq was all about oil!"

Ref: Estelle Bowman, The Age 30/11/07

Electric Bikes in China

"China produced 19 million battery driven bikes in 2006 and that figure could rise by 30 per cent this year The standards for newer, 48-volt bikes could be along the lines of those for the more common 36-volt bikes, limiting speed and size and setting guidelines for which companies can produce them to weed out cut throat competition. Estimates for how many companies produce 'e' bikes vary from 100 to 300 firms ... Meanwhile, 72-volt bikes that are as big and powerful as motorcycles are alarming city governments. They have been banned in the southern boom cities of Guangzhou, Shenzhen and Zhuhai. 'When you have these things whizzing along in the bike lanes at 60 kilometres an hour it's getting a little dangerous', Mr Roberts [of CHR Metals] said. 'They are known as the 'silent killer' because you can't hear them coming'. Other cities are trying to limit the bikes' speed and size, and may soon require licences to use them."

Ref: ABC News 12/10/07. More detail:

www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2007/10/12/2057469.htm

Electric bikes are a paradoxical transit solution. Advantages are reduced local noise and pollution but there are issues concerning safety (because of reduced noise) and pollution produced remotely (eg from coal fired power stations) needed for battery recharging. Obviously these barriers are not insurmountable given that energy can be produced from renewable sources and pleasant audible warning device could be utilised.

Ghost Drivers

"Record-keeping by VicRoads is so sloppy it has dead people registered as drivers, including one man listed as still driving despite being born 111 years ago and whose licence was cancelled in 1992."

Ref: Keith Moor, Herald Sun 6/12/07

Sydney Rail

More than 10 million more trips were taken on the CityRail network in the past 12 months, NSW Transport Minister John Watkins has announced. ... Mr Watkins said a 25 per cent increase in public transport usage by 2016, set down in the government's State Plan, was well within reach. 'To meet that target we need to grow by 2.7 per cent a year, and if this year on year growth continues, we'll substantially exceed that,' he said." **Ref: AAP The Age 25/10/07**

Regional Rail

"The [NSW] Transport Reliability Report for 2006-07 shows ...patronage on CountryLink services had dropped in 2006-07 by seven per cent. This was the fifth consecutive year passenger numbers had dropped, with patronage dropping by more than 25 per cent since 2001." **Ref: The Age 3/12/07**

Meantime in Victoria, V/Line "passenger trips soared by more than two million to 9.37 million, with the Bendigo line showing the highest growth of 49 per cent, to 2.2 million. The Ballarat line was next, up 38 per cent to 1.88 million trips, followed by the Geelong line, up 27 per cent to 2.57 million."

Ref: Geraldine Mitchell, Herald Sun 1/11/07

"Not only do our cities need federal funding for sustainable public transport, but so do the regions ... With some federal vision we could link the NSW and Queensland coastal railways to ease congestion and reduce carbon emissions in a rapidly expanding area. Byron Bay has 1.8 million tourists per year, yet its historic railway station on the Casino-Murwillumbah rail line is used only for buses and ticket sales. Both federal and state governments need to get serious about sustainable transport for the health of the planet and the people.

Ref: Karin Kolbe, SMH 22/11/07

Hybrid Taxis in NSW

"An environmentally friendly car will be able to be used as a taxi or hire car in Sydney as the NSW government looks to boost its green credentialsIt follows rigorous testing by the NSW Taxi Council, which found the vehicle could operate as a standard taxi. A trial by a Sydney taxi company, conducted since 2006, also found using a hybrid vehicle was commercially viable."

Ref: The Age 29/11/07

And Also... 'Nine out of ten passengers who complain don't have a ticket.' Tram Driver 10/12/07

Sending the Right Signals

"While we fiddle with light bulbs, American Samoa bans gas-guzzling cars and 4WDs. We need a government that's serious about climate change."

Ref: David Teather, SMH, 24/11/07

"If the NSW Government was serious about climate change it would make public transport the preferred option by making meaningful changes directly under its control - on-time running, integrated ticketing, better timetables, more services, etc. Instead they announce the "Breathe Easy" pass - a feel-good levy to con green commuters into paying extra for substandard public transport."

Ref: Seb Crawford, SMH, 22/11/07

"Taxpayers spent \$3.2 million last year on cars and fuel for federal MPs and their families. Department of Finance documents released to the Herald show \$741,298 worth of petrol was poured into the tanks of cars supplied to politicians and their families, and those cost \$2.47 million to lease. While private motorists in Sydney paid between \$1.10 and \$1.38 a litre in 2006, the documents reveal that 36 MPs received more than \$5000 worth of petrol last year, or about \$100 a week. The average payment was more than \$3000. Voters also picked up the \$3 million tab for chauffeur-driven Commonwealth cars; just over \$142,000 in taxi fares; \$351,600 worth of hire car charges; and valet parking fees of \$3549.

Ref: Phillip Hudson/Francis Lamb, SMH, 22/11/07

Industry – Setting a Good Example

Maunsell is one of Australia's largest engineering consulting firm that practices sustainable transport. At each office (Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth, Canberra) the reception keeps public transport tickets for use by all staff to go to client meetings, etc. In Melbourne, the tickets are Zone 1, 2 hour met tickets, and according to our recent in-house staff travel survey, more Met tickets are used than Cab charges for meetings. Maunsell has also introduced hybrid pool cars, and plan to replace all standard cars with hybrids following the normal replacement schedule, where fit for use. Apart from the operation cost savings, this policy means that all staff gain practical experience with driving hybrid cars, and thereby disperses some of the myths about hybrids.

Thanks to Marianne Støttrup for this item.

Correction: #38 should have said that 'average fare increases in Victoria are being kept in line with CPI'.

Online: www.goingsolar.com.au/transport

To receive or discontinue receiving this newsletter please send an email to the address below.