

## Federal Funding of Public Transport

The Metropolitan Transport Forum (MTF) and Eastern Transport Coalition (ETC), jointly representing 26 Melbourne Councils, have asked the Rudd Federal Government, to contribute to funding major urban public transport infrastructure projects. Both organisations also called on the Victorian Government to seek changes to Auslink to allow funding of public transport.

Cr Jackie Fristacky, MTF Deputy Chair and Cr Alex Makin, Acting Chairperson of the ETC, said there is broad agreement on the need for the Commonwealth to resume funding public transport, in the same manner as it does roads.

The Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) recently resolved that it will continue to campaign for 'federal funding of urban transport systems', a position supported by both the MTF and ETC. The new Rudd government has policy supporting Commonwealth funding; the Federal ALP platform states:

*'...ensure that Australians have access to adequate transport services by providing appropriate financial assistance to State governments to improve and extend public transport systems in urban areas.'*

The Victorian Government advocated in 2006, for Auslink to include urban public transport. With a consensus that we need to take strong action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, we are urging the new government to implement this policy and do what the last Federal ALP Government did, fund urban public transport.

There are many projects in Victoria that require substantial capital investment and which would deliver large benefits in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, congestion and prohibitive costs of transport for struggling families. The Victorian Government could seek Commonwealth contribution to any one of a number of projects; examples being: Rail to Doncaster, South Morang, Rowville and Torquay. **Ref: MTF / ETC Joint Media Release, 16/12/07**

## And Also ...

"A decision in May to extend city parking meters by an extra hour each night, to 7.30pm, has brought in an extra \$100,000 a month in fees."

**Ref: Clay Lucas, The Age 21/11/07**



## Car Trip or Paris Trip?

Carshare (or Flexicar) is an important instrument as we make the transition to a more sustainable society but there are added benefits as this item shows:

*"Within 12 months of joining Flexicar and selling our car, we saved enough money for a trip to Paris!"*  
James McArthur, Carlton, VIC.

*We all know car ownership can be hugely expensive. But it's hard to imagine just how much it costs to own a car. According to the latest RACV figures, it costs a massive \$8137.48 per year to run even the smallest of cars."*

**Ref: Flexicar Newsletter, November 2007**

## Meantime...

*"The strong Australian dollar has made buying a new car more affordable than ever, with more than a million vehicles expected to roll out of showrooms this year and into buyers' driveways."*

**Ref: Drive: Year in Review, The Age 28/12/07**

*"Stonnington Council has rejected an application from car-share company Flexicar for free car-parking spaces outside Prahran, South Yarra and Windsor railway stations. The council rejected the car-share scheme because it did not want to give away parking spots to a private company. Four other councils around inner Melbourne have given Flexicar free parking spaces as a way of encouraging residents not to buy cars....The first serious commercial car-sharing programs emerged in Switzerland and Germany in the 1990s. Now, as cutting-edge technology makes car sharing more viable by allowing online bookings and electronic access to cars, more than 600 cities around the world have car-sharing programs ....Flexicar chief executive Monique Conheady said her company helped reduce the number of car-parking spaces needed because each car was used by up to 20 people instead of just one."* **Ref: Clay Lucas, The Age 27/12/07**

Tram track repairers chose to store rails on the bike path rather than in the car parking spaces thus forcing cyclists into the traffic stream in Swanston Street. (Picture 7/1/08).

On a related matter, during major tram track reconstruction, should we not be installing cross tracks on selected intersections with a view to future expansion of the tram network? For example there is a much needed link between North Melbourne and Fitzroy particularly with all of the new residential development in South Carlton.

## Rail In Australia

Unlike most Australians, Japanese traveller, Tadaaki Watanabe visited Perth, Adelaide, Melbourne, Canberra, Sydney, Gold Coast, Brisbane and Cairns all by train. I met him at Ayres Rock in Sept 2007. These are his pictures.



## Problems with Fuel

*"Fuel consumers in Europe, particularly, are turning to [bio-] fuels as a supposedly eco-friendly alternative to petrol. But often the oil for them comes from plantations grown where forests and peat bogs once stood. Consequently, these biofuels cause more carbon emissions than using petrol. Understanding where alternatives come from and how they are produced is vital. Sustainable biofuels do exist; let's not choose unsustainable ones just because we assume their superiority to petrol."*

**Ref: Jane Rawson, *The Age* 4/12/07**

*"Lester Brown, president of the Washington-based Worldwatch Institute, said: 'The competition for grain between the world's 800 million motorists, who want to maintain their mobility, and its 2 billion poorest people, who are simply trying to survive, is emerging as an epic issue.' Last year, US farmers distorted the world market for cereals by growing 14 million tonnes, or 20 per cent of the whole maize crop, for ethanol for cars, he said. This took millions of hectares out of food production and nearly doubled the price of maize.*

*US President George Bush this year called for steep rises in ethanol production as part of plans to reduce petrol demand by 20 per cent by 2017. Maize is a staple food in many countries that import from the US, including Japan, Egypt, and Mexico. US exports are 70 per cent of the world total, and are used widely for animal feed. The shortages have disrupted livestock and poultry industries worldwide. 'The use of food as a source of fuel may have serious implications for the demand for food if the expansion of biofuels continues,' a spokesman for the International Monetary Fund said. The outlook is widely expected to worsen as agri-industries prepare to switch to highly profitable biofuels, according to Grain, a Barcelona-based food resources group. Its research suggests the Indian Government is committed to planting 14 million hectares with jatropha, an exotic bush from which biodiesel can be made. Brazil intends to use 120 million hectares for biofuels, and Africa as much as 400 million hectares in the next few years. Much of the growth, the countries say, would be on unproductive land, but many millions of people are expected to be forced off the land. Oxfam has warned the European Union that the EU policy of substituting 10 per cent of all car fuel with biofuels threatens to displace poor farmers."*

**Ref: John Vidal, *The Sunday Age* 4/11/07**

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