

Car Free Cities

"The industrialised nations made a terrible mistake when they turned to the automobile as an instrument of improved urban mobility. The car brought with it major unanticipated consequences for urban life and has become a serious cause of environmental, social, and aesthetic problems in cities. The urban automobile:

- *Kills street life*
- *Damages the social fabric of communities*
- *Isolates people*
- *Fosters suburban sprawl*
- *Endangers other street users*
- *Blots the city's beauty*
- *Disturbs people with its noise*
- *Causes air pollution*
- *Slaughters thousands every year*
- *Exacerbates global warming*
- *Wastes energy and natural resources*
- *Impoverishes nations*

The challenge is to remove cars and trucks from cities while at the same time improving mobility and reducing its total costs."

Ref: J H Crawford <http://carfree.com/>
(*'Carfree Cities proposes a delightful solution to the vexing problem of urban automobiles.'*)

"Cars kill city life. They make the places they invade unpleasant, noisy, dangerous and smelly. But, of course, they deliver mobility. Making the city car free does not mean making car access impossible. But it does mean keeping cars out of central areas and making the public transport network more effective. Cities are taking the car-free challenge not just to save the environment, but to compete with other cities in creating places where people will want to work, live and spend. In this century, economic success comes with environmental quality. Venice, one of the world's most admired cities, is of course car free. In England, even the city of Birmingham, in the heart of the car industry, has turned its central area over to people on foot. London is taming the car with a congestion charge. Montpellier in the south of France has made its



central retail and entertainment district a place for walking. These are examples of a movement that has swept Europe in the past 30 years and is catching on in the US. The first Australian city to go car free will gain a huge competitive advantage. Melbourne should not be looking for a single iconic building to win fame. Its whole central grid of streets and lanes is its icon."

Ref: Nicholas Low, The Age, 9/9/07

Counterpoint (3)

"Melbourne's tram system is a major factor in our road traffic problems. The technology is obsolete and cannot be refined. The system consumes and wastes enormous amounts of coal-generated power, the capital and recurring costs of building and maintaining rolling stock drain the public purse, and the pollution of wires, poles, steel tracks and screeching steel wheels are negative factors in our enjoyment of this beautiful city. St Kilda Road would be better served by a flexible and low-fare bus system on the service lanes. This would enable bus stops to be kerb-side (sic), next to footpaths. This ultra-conservative Government should invest in bus technology and fuel systems, and restructure the road-taxing and operational structures to the benefit of clean, flexible and user-friendly public transport."

Ref: Mervyn Jenkins, The Age, 19/2/08

Comment: Trams reduce traffic problems. Tram tracks mark a route. Compare the number of passengers on the next five buses that you see out of the peak with the number on the next five trams. Buses, preferably running on clean and renewable fuels are an important and essential part of our transit network. The most appropriate mode must be selected for the route. Other responses:

"Mervyn Jenkins' view is astonishingly short-sighted and utterly contradictory. His claims that a trail of hundreds of loud, stinky, combustion engine buses would increase the enjoyment of this beautiful city, more so than electric trams, is truly laughable. While the tram network in Melbourne is largely powered by coal-fired electricity, there is nothing stopping us from adapting it to use renewable energy, once it is available on the grid. Adding hundreds more oil-drinking buses removes the renewable-electric option, solves nothing and guarantees emissions from fossil fuel or dependence on unsustainable bio-diesel."

Ref: Adam Gilbert, The Age, 20/2/08

Picture: San Francisco's Light Rail / Metro System

"Light-rail subways have been used successfully in many cities in Germany as a halfway between a full metro system and road-based trams. Subway light-rail systems can continue to use roads in the outer suburbs and the CBD but be sent underground on congested inner-suburban routes, such as St Kilda Road or Victoria Street. Light-rail subways are also cheaper and more flexible than heavy-rail subways; many trams can be linked for increased capacity, but they can also manage steeper grades and tighter corners, giving more choices when designing routes for tunnels."

Ref: Tristan McLeay, The Age, 20/2/08

Cycling and the Victoria Government

"Bikes help relieve congestion on the roads and on public transport - they should be the greatest friend to the roads and public transport ministers. It's not just the verbal support that is lacking for bikes in Melbourne, which is losing ground as one of the world's most liveable cities. Few dollars are being spent by the State Government encouraging bike use. Anyone who has visited Brussels, Amsterdam or Copenhagen recently would know Melbourne's bike network is rudimentary at best."

Ref: Jason Dowling, The Age, 13/1/08

'Suppose there's a sort of upside to global warming. There won't be just one Venice.'



Drive-to-Work Day

"It would be a suitable response to the recent anti-cyclist hoo-ha if the 70,000 Melburnians who cycle each day were to organise a Bike Free Day. They would just need to agree to drive a car to work instead of cycling, thereby claiming an extra 1000 kilometres or so of road space during peak hours. The effect on traffic congestion would be quite noticeable, one would think." **Ref: Colin Smith, The Age, 20/1/08**

A Day on the Bay

I recently caught the train down to Geelong on an excellent V/line service and then hitched a ride back to Melbourne on a fast vessel via Rippleside, Avalon Airport, Portarlington and Point Cook. The trip reinforced the potential for a ferry commuter / tourist service (which would also act as a backup to V/line), and highlighted that Port Phillip Bay is an underutilised resource.



Geelong from the Bay

And Also ...

Is enough being done to meet increased demand for public transport? See the results in the Age Poll: <http://www.theage.com.au/polls/national/results.html>

Federal Funding of Public Transport

In submissions to the State and Federal Government's the Eastern Transport Coalition (ETC) has sought co-operation to tackle one of the most significant contributors to rising greenhouse gases and rising petrol prices – private transport. Cr Mick Van De Vreede, ETC Chairperson said that the seven councils wanted to see the funding criteria for AusLink changed to allow the \$3-billion a year funding program to fund urban public transport. *"If we are going to reduce the amount of greenhouse gases we emit and help families avoid the rising petrol prices we need to increase the availability of public transport now. A long term plan to reduce climate change requires a long term plan for the expansion of public transport. It would take two simple steps, the Federal Government can show national leadership and change their policies and then the State Government can make a formal request for AusLink funds to start scoping work or actually implement some of the ETC's four broad key projects."* Cr Van De Vreede concluded.

Ref: ETC Media Release, 15/2/08

"Company director Sir Rod Eddington has been appointed chairman of the policy advisory body Infrastructure Australia. In a similar role for the British Government in 2006, Sir Rod argued for congestion-targeted road pricing to ensure all transport users met the costs of their greenhouse gas pollution. ...Federal Transport Minister Anthony Albanese has already made road congestion a major focus and has signalled a role for Canberra in funding and planning public transport, traditionally a role for the states."

Ref: Katharine Murphy, The Age, 27/2/08

"Infrastructure Minister Anthony Albanese ... signalled ... future transport projects must take into account greenhouse gas implications, rather than leaving the task of reducing emissions to the energy sector. 'What's clear is the challenge of climate change is a whole-of-government challenge that can only be met with a whole-of-government response'."

Ref: Katharine Murphy, The Age, 28/2/08

Congestion

"There are plenty of studies showing that increasing road capacity doesn't permanently reduce congestion. It's a suckers game. The challenge is not to meet the demand, but to change the culture and structure of cities to destroy that demand. Since, if you hadn't noticed, fuel is going to get expensive." **Ref: 'TimA', ABC TV**

Difference of Opinion: Are We Running On Empty? Message Board 22/8/07

<http://www.2b.abc.net.au/tmb/Client/Message.aspx?b=70&m=10670&ps=20&dm=1&pd=3>