

Oil Flap

Comment: Why all the flap over oil prices? Either you believe in the market economy or you don't. Demand exceeds supply: prices rise. Surely our governments won't be claiming that they didn't know that oil was a finite resource? Or that it is really stupid to continue to build oil-dependent dysfunctional cities and lines of supply? But then again, you only have to look at this month's state and federal budgets to see that road building gets the lion's share.

"An oil and commodities analyst at the National Australia Bank, Gerard Burg, has backed predictions that oil could reach \$US200 a barrel. It was unlikely the world would see a downturn in fuel prices in the near future, with futures trading in oil as far forward as 2016 still at a premium, he said." **Ref: AAP, The Age. 25/5/08**

"OPEC can't change things. Members of the global oil cartel were the 'bad guys' in the last oil crisis. This time round they seem to be making things worse by refusing to lift production, but increasingly it's looking like OPEC won't lift production because in reality it can't - the extra oil is simply not there. In November, the International Energy Agency is due to publish a landmark report on the condition of the world's 400 biggest oil fields - it is expected to show OPEC has less oil than everyone thought. ... The maths are scary. [T. Boone] Pickens: the veteran Texan oil tycoon says the world needs 87 million barrels and we're producing 85 million barrels a day. Go figure!"

Ref: James Kirby, The Sunday Age 25/5/08

And Also ...

Headline in the Australian (28/5/08):

"Enough oil to last 'for at least another 30 years' "

Comment: Wow, one generation – then what?

More Oil & Gas?

"The rapidly melting Arctic Circle is at the heart of rival claims to huge oil and gas reserves only now in reach because of climate change. Representatives of five countries bordering the Arctic will meet in Greenland this week to discuss the impact of climate change on the icy region and how to divide up its as-yet untapped rich resources. Canada, Denmark, Norway, Russia and the US are at odds over 1.2 million square kilometres of seabed, which according to the US Geological Survey could hold 25 per cent of the world's undiscovered oil and gas."

Ref: AFP, Herald Sun, 28/5/08

More on Eddington

"Labor branches, unions and factions are urging [Victorian] Premier John Brumby to reject Sir Rod Eddington's proposal for a multibillion-dollar east-west road tunnel under Melbourne and instead dramatically boost spending on public transport. Resolutions being prepared for tomorrow's ALP state conference call on Mr Brumby to throw out Sir Rod's controversial transport blueprint for the city and put a moratorium on new freeways. ... A draft urgency motion ... calls on Mr Brumby to declare a moratorium on building new freeways in inner and middle Melbourne. It urges the Government to reaffirm its promise to ensure that 20% of all journeys in Melbourne are on public transport by the year 2020, and says cabinet should urgently prepare a new action plan to ensure the transport sector 'makes a major contribution to meeting Victoria's greenhouse gas emissions reduction target'."
Ref: Paul Austin, The Age. 23/5/08

Victorian Motion

The following resolution was passed at the Victorian State Labor Conference held on the weekend of May 24/25 2008:

"That State Conference resolves that it calls upon the Victorian government to address the pressing needs of the whole metropolitan area and calls for a moratorium on the announcement of any new major transport infrastructure, until the preparation of a metropolitan transport action plan that:

- Addresses transport disadvantage by providing mobility and choice – especially in outer Melbourne;
- Reaffirms Labor's 20/2020 target – 20 percent of all journeys by public transport in metropolitan Melbourne by 2020;
- Maintains and enhances the liveability of Melbourne;
- Addresses compelling capacity constraints in the rail system;
- Accelerates smart bus improvements and upgrades the minimum bus service standards; and,
- Addresses the need for the transport sector to make a major contribution to meeting Victoria's greenhouse gas emissions reduction target."



**'Climate change? No worries!
I'm selling fridges to the Eskimos.'**

**Thanks to
Chris Anderson
for this item**

Ultra Light Rail in the UK

"The situation in Stourbridge [UK] demonstrates the 'problem' of lightly used rail lines where the provision of a rail link is publicly celebrated yet traffic volumes do not provide sufficient revenue to create a business case. ... The most significant feature of rail as a mode of passenger transport is its costs. High initial costs of infrastructure (stations, track and rolling stock), in addition to the cost of fuels, signalling and staffing, mean that there are barriers to entrepreneurs entering the market, and subsidies mean that the rail network is a burden to central government.

The Parry People Mover [PPM] is able to offer environmental benefits from its fuel use, quoted as a quarter of the fuel that conventional rail vehicles use, and the cost of each vehicle is two-thirds that of the vehicles used at present."

[PPM NOTE: vehicle cost depends on specification and can be much lower than this].

Ref: Matthew Albery, Action Briefing Feb 06 Parry People Mover Website

Slow Plane Movement

"Qantas and Jetstar planes have slowed their flying speed in a bid to beat soaring jet fuel costs. Jetstar has been flying more slowly since last month to conserve fuel, adding several minutes to flights, News Ltd reports today. A spokesman for Qantas, which owns Jetstar, confirmed its planes had been using variable speed to cut fuel consumption for the past two years." Ref: AAP, The Age. 23/5/08

"High fuel prices and a weakening US economy have stalled the US airline industry's modest recovery from the downturn encountered between 2001 and 2006. Seven small airlines have filed for bankruptcy or stopped operating in the past five months and, if oil prices stay at current levels or go higher, some major US airlines may seek bankruptcy protection, experts say. Oil prices have roughly doubled in the past year. US crude, which hit a record of \$US135.09 a barrel last week, was trading around \$US130 on Wednesday."

Ref: Mark McSherry, The Age. 30/5/08

And Also ...

"Holden, the company that sold more V8s last year than any other time in its 60-year history, will sell a petrol-electric Commodore 'within two years' – but it wants the Federal Government to give hybrid cars a tax break."

Ref: Joshua Dowling, The Age, 20/5/08

Traffic Calming

Following a recent trial of 40 km/h zones at 18 strip shopping sites the speed limit will continue at those sites and the Brumby Government will be investing \$600,000 to introduce 40 km speed limits at five new sites.

"[Ports and Roads Minister Tim] Pallas said reducing limits along streets with high pedestrian activity was an effective tool for reducing the number and severity of injuries to pedestrians. ... 'The trial showed that there had been a reduction of around 17 per cent in pedestrian casualty crashes in the trial areas compared with other untreated sites over the same period. ... Road safety is a shared community responsibility and I urge all Victorians to work together to reduce senseless and unnecessary accidents on our roads'. ... Mr Pallas also announced the release of the VicRoads guidelines which outline the criteria and process for establishing speed limit reductions at further shopping strips. 'To be eligible, shopping strips need to fulfil a set of criteria outlined in the guidelines, including having high levels of pedestrian activity, are at least 400 metres long, and that the speed limit reduction has the support of the local community and council', Mr Pallas said. ... VicRoads will liaise with local councils to provide a copy of the guidelines and advise on the process for submitting a proposal for consideration under a future roads program."

Ref: Ministerial Media Release, 16/5/08

Comment: This is clearly a good initiative and the government is to be congratulated, but I got the impression that even the Premier's media contact was surprised at the \$600,000 price tag. It might be a valid amount but it would be good to know. Some of the signs will be electronic with LEDs that use very little power and could be easily run from solar panels which are much cheaper than digging up roads.

Honda on Hybrids

"Honda plans to launch a cheaper hybrid car to go on sale from early next year. The maker says it expects to sell 200,000 of the entry level hybrid cars a year, although we don't know if they will be available in Australia. Honda says the cheaper hybrid will allow more people around the world to adopt cleaner motoring technology and reduce global car emissions. It anticipates total sales of 500,000 hybrids a year. As well as the new affordable hybrid, Honda will build a Jazz hybrid and sporty CR-Z and Civic hybrids. It plans to reduce its production costs with a new electronic control unit and a thinner, more compact battery. A thinner motor has also been developed."

Ref: Susan Bredow, The Age, 30/5/08

Fast Trains

"Today I read (with a mixture of envy and admiration) about yet another feat of European civil engineering, the recent completion of the HS1 train link for the Eurostar that enables high-speed rail travel between London and Paris, Brussels and Lille. An upgrade to European levels of train travel is not a cheap fancy, but the vision associated with such infrastructure investment is something we could learn from in Australia, in an era of climate change and ever higher petrol prices. It doesn't seem a wild leap to envision a train system in Australia that connects our major capitals at even relatively low average speeds (by modern standards) of 150-180 km/h. Oh, and perhaps with wireless internet, a comfortable environment and power sockets to run my laptop, and delivery into the centre of town, please. Melbourne to Albury in 1½ hours? Brisbane to Sydney in under five hours? Why not?"

Ref: Scott Grierson, The Age 24/1/08



**The Ave S103 train at Santa Justa Station, Seville
Photograph: Alamy**

"The Ave S103 is the kind of train that British commuters can only dream of, and forms the centrepiece of plans to make Spain a model for the rest of Europe, and the world leader in high-speed trains by 2010. Its 200-metre aluminium chassis carries 404 passengers, whose reclining chairs - which can swivel to face the direction of travel - are fitted with video and music players. 'They are the future of travel in Spain and show that the train is anything but obsolete,' said Aberlado Carrillo, the director general of the state rail operator Renfe's high-speed service. 'Trains will again be the dominant mode of transport in this country.' ... The aim is to have 10,000km (6,200 miles) of high-speed track in Spain by 2020, meaning that 90% of the population will be no more than 30 miles from a station through which the train passes. The Barcelona line is to be extended to Perpignan in France, making the Catalan capital just four-and-a-half hours from Paris. Work to join Madrid and

Lisbon is under way. December saw the opening of lines connecting Madrid to Valladolid and to Málaga, which have slashed journey times and proved hugely popular. Carrillo describes the success of these two lines as 'unprecedented and well ahead of what we expected. Traffic has doubled on the Málaga line, and grown by 75% on the Valladolid line.'

"The distinction between the Spanish and British models of investment, says Christian Wolmar, the author of a history of Britain's railways, comes from conflicting philosophies of rail's worth. 'We ignore the social values of trains,' he says. 'Just as we don't expect motorways to pay their own way, we shouldn't expect trains to. All the recent legislation in the UK, with privatisation, franchising and the complex structures of investment, has meant that it is impossible to have a rational transport policy to maximise the use of trains for environmental and economic reasons.' But, says Carrillo: 'The Ave has to be profitable. From 2010, it will not receive any public subsidies. Our experience of the Madrid-Seville line is that it will be profitable.' The success of the Madrid-Seville corridor - the first high-speed link, which opened in 1992 - is partly a result of its pricing policy, with affordable tickets that help to keep demand high and trains full. ...It will be the Madrid-Barcelona connection, though, that will test the high-speed service...[as] it will face stiff competition from the highly successful air-shuttle, with a route that is one of the busiest in the world. The 'air bridge' operated by Iberia airlines allows passengers to turn up at the airport, buy a ticket, and board, within 20 minutes. Iberia alone has 60 flights a day, carrying 8,000 people. ...Carrillo argues that the comparison between train and plane is a false one. 'Time spent in a train is time won, while in a plane it is wasted,' he says. 'In a train you can work, read, talk, use the internet, eat, or simply relax and enjoy the journey. With a plane, the only objective is to arrive. ...I am not bothered if the plane arrives 20 minutes earlier than the train'.... The fact that more than 80% of travellers choose the Ave over the plane on the route between Madrid and Seville supports his argument.

"There is also the environmental question: trains produce at least four times less carbon dioxide per mile than planes, and even less when compared with short-haul flights. Spain is preparing itself for a future in which there may be limits on the number of flights a person is allowed to take, particularly within the EU. In the end, says Carrillo, it will come down to the quality of the service: 'What we are offering is unavailable in the rest of Europe in terms of comfort, speed and punctuality.' Look away now if you are a British commuter used to mind-numbing delays: if an Ave train arrives more than five minutes late,

passengers are reimbursed the full price of their ticket. And the only problem for those hoping to get their money back is that the trains are nearly 98% reliable.”

Ref: Paul Hamilos, The Guardian, 2/2/08
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/spain/article/0,,2251264,00.html>

“Spanish airlines are facing growing pressure on their domestic routes from the expansion of the country's high-speed railway network, which the government says will be the world's most extensive by 2010. ... The high-speed AVE trains, which are fitted with video and music players and chairs that can swivel in the direction of travel, can make the 660-kilometre trip between Madrid and Barcelona in about two and a half hours. Passengers say bullet trains have more roomier and comfortable seats than planes, faster check-in times and have the advantage of arriving and departing from downtown cores. Business travellers also like the availability of mobile services and electrical outlets in their seats that allow them to work on their laptop computers along the way.

“There is no question that high-speed rail attracts passengers who would otherwise fly’, said Henry Hartevelde, travel industry analyst at Forrester Research, a San Francisco-based consultancy. ‘Taking the train is easier’. He predicted that airlines facing competition from bullet trains would focus their flights on those routes to serve passengers who want to fly beyond key hubs. ... A study by Spain's Vigo University concluded that airlines would find it difficult to compete with trains for journeys that could be covered in up to three hours. Beyond that time, the plane continues to be the preferred option, it found.” **Ref: AFP, SMH, 26/5/08**

Industry – Setting a Good Example

About 18 months ago we formed a ‘Green Team’ that has looked at implementing a range of both practice and design issues within the office. More recently we launched an office car-free day (monthly). Employees are provided with a card (similar to the free coffee cards), and if they don't use a car for that particular day (for travel to, from and within work) they get their card stamped. At the end of the day we have prize draw for all those with stamped cards – with a different prize each month from ‘green’ suppliers. **Thanks to John Sprunt, recently of Hayball Leonard Stent (Architects) for this item.**

Connex Receipts and Expenses

“Connex received \$174 million in revenue from ticket sales in 2005. The figure jumped to \$225 million in 2007, while fines increased from \$22.5 million to \$28.4 million.”

Ref: Jason Dowling, The Age, 2/6/08

Community Transport

The City of Port Phillip (in Melbourne) has extended its free community bus service. The buses are available for everyone but are timetabled to mostly suit local elderly people. Special buses have been designed for easy access and adapted for wheel chair loading. The drivers have an understanding of (and empathy for) those with mobility issues. Deputy Mayor Janet Bolitho noted that some people regularly catch the bus for the sake of something to do. It fulfils a role beyond transporting people from point to point. Community transport provides local services and is also an important link to the standard transit systems.



Above: Community Cake (with the bus routes)
Below: Launch of the new service 28/5/08

