

Hot Petrol Prices

"The price of petrol needs to rise if Australia is serious about reducing emissions, BT Financial Group chief economist Chris Caton says. ... The compromise presented in the Green Paper avoids a potential backlash from voters already struggling with prices at the bowser rising by 30 per cent in the past year. But Mr Caton said if consumers don't reduce their hefty reliance on petrol it would be harder to reduce emissions in other sectors. In particular, he said, if the price of petrol did not move higher, the price of electricity may have to go up more than is needed. 'If you are going to get serious about reducing emissions then the price of petrol and the relative price of petrol, probably has to rise from where it is now.' Mr Caton said petrol in Australia was still relatively cheap by international standards, and in the long term, to achieve the overall emissions reductions the price of petrol must head higher. Mr Caton added surging oil prices made petrol a 'hot political issue'. 'My suspicion is that (the government's) response partly reflects that,' he said."

Ref: Sky News. 20/7/08

Oil and War

"China has supplied helicopters, attack aircraft and trainer jets [to Sudan]. In 2005, according to campaign groups, Beijing also sold £45 million (\$A92 million) of spare parts, small arms and ammunition. These supplies have continued, despite a United Nations arms embargo on Darfur. ... Yet the trading benefits work both ways. Sudan has become the largest single source of China's oil imports. The China National Petroleum Corporation has invested about £8 billion in Sudan's oil fields. This gave [President] Bashir about £3 billion in oil revenue last year. Without this, Khartoum would have struggled to sustain the war in Darfur."

Ref: The Age. 16/7/08

Oil or Tourism

"A proposed \$14 billion shale oil mining operation in the Whitsundays is shaping up to be one of Queensland's biggest environmental battles. The company behind the project says it would produce millions of barrels of oil a year, helping to secure Australia's diesel fuel needs for decades and creating thousands of jobs for the region. But conservationists say it risks causing devastating environmental damage in a key tourism area just kilometres from some of the country's most prized natural assets."

Ref: Daryl Passmore, Sunday Telegraph, 20/7/08

Biodiesel in Ballarat

"Ballarat City Council in Victoria will run its entire fleet of 100 trucks, waste and recycling compactors and other vehicles with biodiesel. The move is expected to save the council \$67,000 on fuel costs and lead to a reduction in greenhouse emissions by 280 tonnes a year."

Ref: EMN.net.au 25/6/08

Regional Rail in Canada

"Faced with resource-stressed and unprofitable line closures, the Canadian State of Saskatchewan gave its short-lines over to local management. The short line industry north of the 49th parallel is somewhat like a heavy road freight that has gone into notch eight, is cresting the grade, and is hustling to an interchange with a whole new era of railroading. This dramatic burst of performance is due to there being now a solid core of credible short line operators who have overcome the doubts and fears of the main line operators, regulatory agencies, investors, politicians, and the public by running railways they said they could if given the chance. Whilst the two transcontinental carriers - Canadian Pacific and Canadian National - determined to slim down to core systems able to generate a rate of return in line with their core strategies, community groups, farmer co-ops and short line operators filled in the gaps, running and maintaining lines which otherwise would have been lost. A further reason lay in major political and legislative changes which allowed the short-liner's to operate successfully."

Ref: Greg Gormick, Railway Age, Sept 1996:

http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1215/is_n9_v197/ai_18714240
republished in On Track December 2007

And Also ... F is for Failure

Picture Ref: www.shipmentoffail.com/



The Cars that Ate China

In China 'car culture' is bringing about volatile class divisions, the world's worst air pollution, and fierce global competition for limited resources. The Cars that Ate China, Documentary on ABC1 TV: 8.30pm Tuesday

July 29, 2008. "The film is set in Beijing, once called the 'Bicycle Kingdom' and now the epicentre of China's exploding car culture. The story is a poignant and surprising parable about a world that has profound repercussions for our own."

In The National Interest – Electric Bikes

ABC Radio National with Peter Mares 18/7/08

<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/nationalinterest/stories/2008/2307809.htm>

See also the Listener Feedback 25/7/08

<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/nationalinterest/stories/2008/2316133.htm>

And Newsletter [#66 Electric Bikes in NSW](#) 1/7/08

Electric Cars

"Did someone kill the electric car? You wouldn't know it ... in Scandinavia, where the idea of a mass-produced battery-powered vehicle is being resurrected and actual cars are scheduled to begin rolling off the production line by year's end." Ref: **Todd Woody, Business 2.0, 31/7/07**



See: <http://www.think.no/think>

"...Think Global, a Norwegian upstart plotting a U.S. invasion via pint-size, affordable electric cars. Think has been selling tiny gas-free city cars in Europe and will start peddling them to fuel-stressed Americans in 2009. The company's newly formed North American division has high hopes for the upcoming Think Ox, a concept unveiled at the Geneva International Motor Show earlier this year.

"In theory, Battery electric vehicles (BEVs) are the ideal form of transportation. They produce no noxious exhaust fumes, and minimal pollution, especially when charged from renewable energy. They are capable of acceleration exceeding conventional vehicles, but are much more quiet. Widespread use of BEVs would also reduce dependence on petroleum, enhance national security, and help mitigate the effects of global warming. So what's the problem? Historically, the issue with BEVs was the high battery costs, limited travel distance, charging time, and battery lifespan. However, new technology advancements have addressed most of these issues and some believe the time is right for the emergence of the mass produced electric car."

Ref: (inc pictures) **Daily Galaxy, 5/7/08**

www.dailygalaxy.com/my_weblog/2008/07/will-silicon-va.html

Car Buyers Guide

"Car buyers can now compare the running costs and carbon emissions of the various makes and models before heading down to the dealer, thanks to an innovative addition to the Government's Green Vehicle Guide:

www.greenvehicleguide.gov.au "

Ref: **Federal Government Media Statement, 20/7/07**

Melbourne Rail

"The Eddington rail tunnel is correctly placed to provide additional paths for the very crowded services from rapidly growing areas such as Altona, Werribee, Tarneit, Melton, Caroline Springs and Roxburgh Park. The extra capacity will also mean that the booming V/Line regional fast rail services will not need to be caught behind stopping trains. The full benefit of the successful regional rail improvements will be received when the 160 km/h regional trains can continue into central Melbourne at high speed. Where does this leave the urgently needed outer-suburban connections - serving areas beyond Cranbourne, Rowville, Doncaster and Mernda, as well as the needed electrification of the Sunbury and Melton lines? In a nutshell, expansion of the core capacity is prerequisite. When the Rowville feasibility study was undertaken several years ago by a team led by one of the authors, there was capacity on the Dandenong line to add the extra trains. This capacity is rapidly disappearing, but the addition of space for 25 trains an hour via the Eddington tunnel will mean that Rowville can be built.

"To provide a suburban level of service to Sunbury and Melton will also mean extra capacity, as will any alleviation of the existing overcrowding on the Watergardens line. Again, the Eddington proposals will meet this need. For the moment, Doncaster is being provided with Doncaster Area Rapid Transit, a smartened up bus system. Though a second-best alternative to rail, it provides some improvement for Doncaster residents. Because Doncaster does not have a massive suburban growth area beyond it, a Doncaster rail link doesn't have the same urgency as the areas where Eddington proposes the initial investment should be made. Finally, there is the Mernda extension (and the related extension of the No. 86 tram to Doreen). These should be in final planning now, since once the new bridge at Clifton Hill is completed there is no technical obstacle to extending adequate public transport to this critical growth corridor. The community is saying very clearly that it wants the option of car-free access to jobs, education and leisure. An efficient rail system is the path to this goal, and the Eddington rail proposals the best entry we are likely to get soon."

Ref: **Nick Low & Bill Russell, The Age, 22/7/08**

"Some Labor Party strategists believe a commitment to a rail tunnel would help [Victorian Premier] Mr Brumby to go to the 2010 election portraying himself as a man of the future with a low-carbon-emissions plan to cater for the transport needs of Melbourne's rapidly growing population."

Ref: **Paul Austin, The Age, 28/7/08**

What's Good for You

"We all know the air around our cities isn't exactly in great shape and one of the biggest contributors to this toxic soup is traffic. Unleaded petrol helped things out a bit, but we still have a long way to go and every time we commute, we're potentially damaging our own health. Environmental Management consultant, Adrian Heggie, believes the worst culprits from our car exhausts are nitrogen dioxide and benzene. 'The fuel that has the worst effect on us is benzene and that's because it's a known human carcinogen. It is known to cause cancer, particularly leukaemia. There is no really safe level,' he says. But there's more bad news. In recent years, scientists have become increasingly alarmed about something called 'fine particle pollution'. These tiny particles go deep into lung tissue and blood vessels, damaging the heart and brain says Professor John Gullotta. 'Fine particle condition is a lethal form of pollution leading to over 2400 deaths in Australia each year. We don't know what the full effects of this pollution are and we don't know what this will be in years to come,' says the professor."

Ref: **What's Good for You (Ch 9) 30/4/07**

What's the Healthiest Way to Get to Work?

<http://health.ninemsn.com.au/article.aspx?id=264133>

Planning for Climate Change

"Key lobby group the Committee for Melbourne has drafted recommendations to retrofit city buildings and make the public transport system green, to prepare Melbourne for the threat of global warming. The Futuremap report handed to the Government today reveals Melburnians are already living with the effects of climate change including increased sea levels at Williamstown, hotter days, drier weather and more frequent storms. The report calls for immediate action from government, business and the wider community. ... The report suggests: The immediate introduction of more green space to help cool streets; Replace concrete footpaths with plastic lattice filled with soil, gravel and grass to filter water into the ground; Collect stormwater and run-off in underground tanks. Increase support for low-income renters to install solar water heating; Compulsory parks & gardens in all planning processes. The report also called for a program to allow workers to salary-sacrifice the cost of an annual Metcard, to counter incentives to use cars more under fringe-benefit tax concessions."

Ref: **Georgie Pilcher and Mary Bolling,**

Herald Sun, 24/7/08

Sustainable Urban Design

"...when it comes to encouraging transit, mode choice -- ie., train vs. bus vs. streetcar -- isn't the most important factor in determining how many people use a transit system...Far more important is the layout of communities served by transit. In particular, compact neighbourhoods can concentrate people and jobs near major transit routes, which helps make transit more convenient and cost-effective....What I am saying is that neither buses nor trains will get as many riders as we might hope -- unless we get our neighbourhoods right first."

Clark Williams-Derry 15/5/07

www.sightline.org/daily_score/archive/2007/05/15/is-the-skytrain-the-limit

"I am one of those outer-suburban, car-dependent, disadvantaged people. I am frustrated that there is no viable, sustainable alternative to the car to allow me to maintain employment and mobility. I am fortunate that I have to travel only 17 minutes to work by car. To take the currently available public transport would take 1½ hours. The Government's continued focus on road infrastructure only encourages more traffic. Public transport is barely considered, and yet it is more cost-effective. Much of its infrastructure is there already. Improved, publicly owned transport is part of the solution: it decreases carbon emissions as people will use their cars less; decreases the cost of living as people spend less on cars and petrol; and lessens the disparity between city and outer-suburban dwellers. Something needs to be done now." Ref: **David Cox, The Age, 6/6/07**

The Spin – Driving Your Dollar Further

"A million dollars of taxpayer money that could be spent boosting Melbourne's struggling transport network will instead be spent spruiking the



'My hubby's doing his bit. All that nice concrete around our house? He's painting it green.'

Government's credentials on transport in a new television campaign. The four-week television blitz started on Sunday night with the entire media campaign to last up to a year. The ad, which says the Government is 'delivering on our plans to meet the state's growing transport needs and with many initiatives now under way the signs of an improving transport system can now be seen', has been attacked by the Opposition as a waste of valuable transport dollars."

Ref: **Jason Dowling & Clay Lucas, The Age, 22/7/08**

The Story of Highways (Pt 1)

“Annabelle Quince: *Throughout the first part of the 20th century, Freeways were seen as the epitome of modernity, but by the end of the century this began to change. ... The motor car first arrived in Europe and the US at the end of the 19th century. But according to Peter Norton, historian of technology, engineering and society at the University of Virginia, the car wasn't welcome on the city streets when it first appeared.*

“Peter Norton: *A hundred years ago of course roads were not for cars, because cars were rare, and to make roads places where cars could go, they had to be redefined. It helps us understand what the street was like to city people then, if we think of what a city park is like to us today. It's a place where we think of everybody as welcome, provided they don't get in the way of others, don't make a nuisance out of themselves, and don't endanger other people. And it was in the nature of cars to be nuisances and dangerous, and so the early response was to blame the car and to restrict the car.*

This started to change partly because people, who had an interest in selling cars and in a good future for cars, saw that this would really limit their future, this attitude would limit their future and that they would have to change it. And to do it, they had to do a number of things at the same time: one is to try to teach children to stay out of the streets. They could not rely on parents to do this because parents at that time thought of the street, at least residential streets, as proper playgrounds for children. So auto dealers and auto clubs did things like promote the construction of playgrounds, they got involved in school safety education where they taught children to look both ways before they crossed; they started sponsoring school safety patrols where the children would guide each other as they crossed the street, and most importantly, would teach children that the street is a place for cars and not for children.

They also had to get adults to concede the street to motorists as well, and reaching them was harder, and they did it in a number of ways, but I think the most effective and most interesting was a campaign to redefine walking in the street as an inappropriate thing to do, an inappropriate use of the street. And one way they did this was to invent a new term of ridicule, and direct that against pedestrians walking in streets. They used a mid-Western American

term 'Jay' which was an insult; it meant that you were uneducated and rural, and they connected it with 'walker' and invented the term 'Jay walker' and it was used as a term of ridicule against pedestrians.

“Annabelle Quince: *The other way car companies and car associations changed our understanding of the road was to promote the construction of car-only roads. Thomas Zeller is a historian of Technology and the Environment at the University of Maryland.*

“Thomas Zeller: *When we talk about roads exclusively for cars, sometimes they were called cars-only roads, there was a precedent in the United States in the 19-teens and 1920s, roads that were called 'parkways'. Those were roads that were built exclusively for shall we say pleasure drives, and they were designed in such a way that the people who drive on them experience lovely views and then once those parkways are built in the countryside, they're built so that they touch on the vantage points, and they go to the hilltops, and there are rest areas so people can enjoy the scenery. But then what we see in the '30s especially, is that two European dictatorships take over this idea of highways exclusively for cars, and those are Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, and in both of these countries you had lobbies, lobbies made up of middle-class car owners and the construction companies who would benefit from building those highways, the automotive clubs, their companies that would sell tyres, so there's a whole coterie of interest that pushed for these automobile-only roads in the inter-war period.”*

Ref: ABC Radio National program Rear Vision: ‘The Story of Highways’ produced and presented by Annabelle Quince, 20/7/08 See:

<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/rearvision/stories/2008/2281165.htm>



Dividing Cities: The Downtown Connector Atlanta, Georgia, USA

“The route was heavily reconstructed during the 1980s as part of the Freeing the Freeways program Today the highway carries as many as 16 lanes of traffic in some sections, placing it among the widest roads in the world.”

Ref: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Downtown_Connector