

Victorian Transport Summit

The Victorian Government has held a series of transport forums which lead up to a Transport Summit on Friday September 5, 2008. As Clay Lucas, *The Age* transport reporter, noted: "The consultation process, [Premier] Brumby said, was to find out what Victorians wanted from their transport network, ahead of the release of a 30-year transport plan in November ... [however] ... It was unclear what people had to do to get on the invitation list to the forums — hundreds of western suburbs residents complained they had not even heard they were on¹."

Preparing this Newsletter helps me keep tabs on transport events and I was hearing whispers of such forums but was not invited to any despite calling for a combined Transport and Planning Summit back in January [see #44]. I was told that despite my: 'expertise and demonstrated understanding of the key issues facing the State' I would not be invited. That begged the question: of those advocating for things like urban villages, ultra-light rail and ferries as mode of transport, who would invited? Remember, we are still building dysfunctional suburbs that encourage isolation, obesity, diabetes, social inequity, crime, pollution, food insecurity and loss of amenity. The answer is: not many.

In fact I did receive a last minute invitation to the Summit and as with the earlier Climate Change Summit, the Government is to be congratulated for providing access to Ministers and senior departmental officers. I contend that increased interaction between community/business and governments is very important.

At the Summit the delegates were divided into groups. Mine was: 'Creating a more livable, fairer and sustainable Victoria' which provided the opportunity to raise the need for transport orientated design, the use of urban villages, and even ferries on Port Phillip Bay. This was a good step forward but I'm a bit concerned that in some of the other groups the call for 'roads and cars as a priority' may still be the mantra.

¹ The Age 6/9/08. It is worth reading Clay's article at: www.theage.com.au/national/rumblings-on-the-party-line-20080905-4aqd.html

'That Edison, he's nuts. Sun power? Yeah, and what happens at night?'



Transport & Planning

Professor John Stanley of the University of Sydney's Institute of Transport and Logistic Studies "has analysed the changes needed in the land transport sector to reduce emissions by a 'modest' 37.8 million tonnes a year by 2020, or 20 per cent below 2000 levels. ... Professor Stanley is critical of the NSW and Victorian governments' failure to integrate transport and urban planning, and of the Federal Government's neglect of public transport. Transport represents about 14 per cent of annual greenhouse gas emissions, the third largest sector. It is also the fastest-growing sector for emissions after energy production. His six measures to cut transport-related greenhouse gas emissions are:

- Reducing demand for travel through better urban design to ensure people live closer to work, schools, shops etc;
- Increase the share of urban trips taken by walking or cycling from 16 per cent to 26 per cent;
- Doubling the proportion of trips taken by public transport, from about 7.5 per cent to 15 per cent nationally;
- Increasing car occupancy rates from an average of 1.4 to 1.6 people per vehicle;
- Shifting freight from road to rail and encouraging the use of larger trucks to improve efficiency of freight movements;
- Increasing vehicles' fuel efficiency by replacing older cars and introducing mandatory standards for car manufacturers."

Ref: Sherrill Nixon, SMH, 21/8/08

Less Driving Miss Daisy

"Prospects for a weak economy and continued high prices for crude oil and petroleum products are expected to cut U.S. petroleum demand by nearly 500,000 barrels per day on average for 2008, according to DOE's Energy Information Administration ... While U.S. drivers may be taking a number of actions to reduce their driving miles, such as limiting their driving for vacations, the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) also notes that first-quarter use of public transportation use increased by about 3.5%, or about 88 million trips." {See also #75} Ref: US Department of Energy, Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy News, 20/8/08

And Also ...

"In 1931 [Thomas Edison] wrote: 'We should be using Nature's inexhaustible sources of energy -- the sun, wind and tide. I'd put my money on the sun and solar energy. What a source of power! I hope we don't have to wait until oil and coal run out before we tackle that'."

Ref: Olga Galacho, Herald Sun, 22/8/08

Cycling

"Cycling is one of the most sustainable forms of transport available. It touts a number of health as well as environmental benefits:

- *Cycling burns up to 600 calories an hour and with daily cycling, you can expect to be as fit as a person up to 10 years younger.*
- *Cycling is three times faster than walking for the same amount of energy.*
- *Approximately 100 bikes can be produced for the same amount of resources as producing a single car."*



The Nulla Bike

Picture: <http://www.behance.net/Gallery/bike/111883>

"This minimalist concept may awaken a new wave cycling passion. Bradford Waugh has designed the Nulla - a stylish and lightweight machine for the urban streets. Meaning 'nothing' in Italian, Nulla has no hubs or spokes and adapts flowing curves in its simplistic design."

Ref: Green Razor #49, 18/8/08

Motor Bikes & Congestion Tax

"Single-occupant cars, often on an unnecessary trip, are the greatest contributors to pollution and traffic congestion. 70% of traffic in Melbourne is made up of single-occupant cars so the most effective target for a congestion tax is obviously single-occupant cars not motorcycles, scooters or necessary commercial vehicles. Same goes for road tolls. ... If the tax comes in ...

Motorcycles & scooters should be exempt from congestion taxes and road tolls for road safety, congestion and environmental reasons.

Motorcycles & scooters are exempt from Stockholm's congestion tax."

Ref: Damien Codognotto OAM, Independent Lobbyist, 3/9/08

And Also ... (Aviation 101)

"Flying is not dangerous; crashing is dangerous."

Ref: www.jokefile.co.uk/numerical_order/1087.html

Beijing Air Quality

"Beijing officials say the air quality in the city was the best in 10 years after authorities implemented odd and even driving days and shut factories and building sites before the two weeks of the Games, which ended on Sunday. More than half of 2000 Beijing residents surveyed said traffic control measures should continue after the Games, the state-run China Daily reported. Yet they will not get their wish. ... 'These temporary measures are meant to address the issue temporarily', said Tao Dong, chief Asia economist at Credit Suisse in Hong Kong. 'You can't prohibit people from driving their cars. You're going to have a riot'. ... [but] Air pollution-related illnesses and deaths might cost China an extra 3.8 per cent of GDP, a World Bank report said. Beijing's 15 million residents faced higher incidences of asthma, respiratory infection and lung cancer, said Hans Troedsson, WHO's representative in China." **Ref: SMH, 26/8/08**

Gold Coast Trams?

"Trams could provide a solution to transport problems on the booming Gold Coast. Queensland Transport Minister John Mickel said a new study had found a light rail system was the best option for the tourism strip because it was more reliable, more environmentally-friendly and had a longer life span than buses. The first stage of the \$1.67 billion Gold Coast Rapid Transit project would be a light rail link from Griffith University to Broadbeach, with construction expected to start in 2010. ... Mr Mickel said light rail would also ease the problem of growing population and visitor numbers. ... 'By making public transport faster, more efficient and more reliable, this project is estimated to take up to 40,000 car trips off the roads', Mr Mickel said." **Ref: The Age, 22/8/08**

Melbourne Trains

"The [Victorian] Government will soon announce a shortlist of potential bidders for the \$600-million-a-year contract to run Melbourne's trains for the next 15 years. Three companies are likely to be shortlisted - Connex, British railways operator Serco and MTR, which runs Hong Kong's underground trains. A fourth company, French operator Keolis, may be considered."

Ref: Clay Lucas, The Age, 20/8/08

And Also ...

"The problem on our trains, the problem with our lack of water resources, is caused by a failure to plan, not by population growth', [said Victorian Opposition Leader Ted Baillieu]. 'Population growth is not to be feared. What is to be feared is the people who don't plan for it'."

Ref: Paul Austin, The Age, 25/8/08

Problems with Hybrids

"Australia has no ability to environmentally dispose of the batteries from the Toyota Camry hybrids whose production has been championed by Kevin Rudd. Labor in Victoria, where the cars will be built, has conceded a 'current hole' in the nation's recycling policies means there is no capacity to environmentally dispose of the nickel-metal hydride car batteries from the 10,000 hybrid cars to be produced by Toyota every year from the start of 2010. Victorian Environment Minister Gavin Jennings appeared to concede that the hybrid Camry batteries, which can weigh more than 50kg and cost several thousand dollars, 'may ultimately end up within the waste stream'. The admissions prompted Opposition claims that Victoria would be faced with tens of thousands of used hybrid car batteries over the next decade, with no sustainable way of disposing of them."

Ref: Ewin Hannan, The Australian, 26/8/08

Parking Tax in Melbourne

"The controversial tax on long-stay car parking in central Melbourne is here to stay, despite a review of the \$820 levy beginning next year. [Victorian] Roads Minister Tim Pallas has signalled the tax, which aims to reduce road congestion, will remain and has the backing of Premier John Brumby. 'The Government sees no reason why that levy can't continue to operate', Mr Pallas told radio station 3AW. 'The Premier's view has been that he sees the continuation of the tax as being appropriate'."

Ref: David Rood, The Age, 26/8/08

EU Targets

"Car makers are not doing enough to meet proposed EU targets for cutting carbon dioxide emissions, according to a report on Tuesday, with some German and Japanese brands facing the biggest challenge to make the grade. The European Commission wants all carmakers to reduce average emissions to 120 grams of carbon dioxide per kilometre by 2012. Under EU plans, they will be expected to make engines that emit no more than 130 grams while 10 grams per kilometre are intended to be eliminated mainly through the use of cleaner fuels. The average car emission last year stood at 158 grams ..." **Ref: SMH, 27/8/08**

Melbourne's East-West Road Tunnel

"Brimbank City Council has reversed its earlier support for the [East-West] road tunnel after community uproar about the plans."

Ref: Ashley Gardiner, Herald Sun 28/8/08

Future of Motor Cars

"The admission earlier this year by the world's biggest car maker, General Motors, that oil was indeed running out was the clearest sign yet of the change in the makers' attitudes. The company that killed the electric car is now going full speed ahead on electric vehicle development. It has subsequently announced the closure of four pick-up truck factories in the US and is considering selling off the Hummer brand. ... Sure, we may see brief reprieves in oil prices when the oil-producing nations want to boost their cash reserves but, in the end, it's a finite resource that the world is using more of at a time when we are nearing the end of easily accessible, good quality crude. ... There will be no single solution to propelling our cars but several. To date this has been a problem as the world's leading car makers have gone off in different directions and tried to cover as many bases as possible. ... Fed up with waiting for hydrogen suppliers and governments to get their acts together, car makers have most recently embraced electric power. It's readily available and battery technology has developed so fast that motorists won't have to sacrifice too much driving range. ... [however] It is true that the most environmentally friendly car is one you don't buy."

Ref: Joshua Dowling, The Age, 19/8/08

"You can call it business welfare. ... You can argue, as Treasury secretary Ken Henry implicitly has, that we don't need them. You can certainly argue over how much money we should pay to keep them. But don't kid yourself that we can have a car industry without subsidising it. Even Margaret Thatcher, patron saint of economic rationalism, paid big subsidies to get Japanese car makers to set up plants in the UK."

Ref: Tim Colbatch, The Age, 26/8/08

And Also ...



Arabian Ranches Interchange in Dubai

Opened in August 2008 it replaces a simple roundabout with "a multi-tier flyover spanning eleven bridges and one underpass."

Ref: Gulfnews.com 22/8/08

Peak Oil (Pt 3)

“As if Peak Oil was not enough, there is another problem: global warming and the need to radically reduce our carbon emissions from fossil fuel use, probably to completely decarbonise the economy by 2050, far more than is being admitted politically. This will itself raise fossil fuel energy prices as carbon is properly priced, via mechanisms such as emissions trading, to reflect its environmental cost.

“There are solutions to these converging issues, but they take time to implement, and we should have been planning for this year ago. We did not do so and we are now facing the consequences. Some obvious solutions, for example increasing coal consumption, or coal conversion to liquids as Martin Ferguson recently proposed, are carbon emission intensive, and in the absence of carbon capture and storage, which is still unproven for large scale application, would be extremely detrimental to solving global warming. The two issues are inextricably linked and need to be treated with consistent and holistic policy. So what would that policy look like?

“First, we need an honest, public acknowledgment by the government and business leaders of the real challenges we now face. Second, urgent education campaigns to inform the community and gain support for the hard decisions ahead. Third, we must establish an emergency, nation-building response plan to place the economy on a low-carbon footing, minimising the consumption of oil, akin to a 21st Century version of the 1950s Snowy Hydro Scheme, but much bigger and broader, or the Marshall Plan, which reconstructed Europe post World War II.

“The components would be firstly, major focus on energy conservation and energy efficiency; second, large-scale conversion to renewable energy; third, major investment in efficient public transport, rail, bus, cycling, etc and an immediate halt to investment in freeway and airport expansion; fourth, rapid phase-out of high carbon emission facilities such as coal-fired power stations unless safe carbon capture and storage can be introduced within 10 years; fifth, urgent introduction of high-speed broadband to minimise travel and improve communication efficiency; sixth, continued investment in low emission technology; seventh, rapid reform of

the tax system to remove the perverse incentives which encourage oil use and carbon emissions.

“We face major changes to our lifestyle. It is not just high oil prices and global warming but the very question of the sustainability of humanity on the planet as population rises from 6.-1/2-billion people today to 9-billion in 2050, all aspiring to an improved quality of life. New technology will undoubtedly come to our aid but that will not be enough; our values must also change.

Conventional economic growth in the developed world will have to be set aside in favour of a steady-state economy where the emphasis is on non-consumption and the quality of life rather than the quantity of things.

“There will be far more focus on local food production, opening up new opportunities for rural areas; cities will be redesigned using high-density sustainability principles to avoid urban sprawl, and properly integrated with public transport to minimise energy consumption. Work centres will be decentralised. Rail, powered by renewable

energy, will become a major transport mode for both freight and high-speed passenger traffic. Air travel will reduce unless new technology develops jet fuel from, for example, bio sources, and even then emission constraints may limit its use. The internal combustion engine will disappear in favour of electric vehicles for many applications. Cycling and walking will become major activities for both work and pleasure - obesity and diabetes will decline!

“The challenge is enormous, but it is the greatest opportunity we have ever had to place the world on a sustainable footing, for what we are doing currently is not sustainable. We must not waste this opportunity, but it

needs far bolder and broader thinking than we are seeing at present. Which raises the question of the ability of our democratic system of government to implement such change. It will require statesmanship of the highest order, a quality sadly lacking in both national and global debate. Different forms of government will be needed, but that is a discussion for another day.

Ref: Ian Dunlop, Ockham's Razor, 27/7/08

<http://www.abc.net.au/r/ockhamsrazor/stories/2008/2313512.htm>

↳ Ian Dunlop is Deputy Convenor of the Australian Association for the Study of Peak Oil. He was an executive in the coal and oil industries for many years and CEO of the Institute of Directors.

