

More on the CBD Bus Accident

"Part of the problem with Swanston Walk is that it hasn't been a 'walk' for some time. At some point its status appears to have been changed back to 'Swanston St' (Melways shows same) but people [still] perceive it is a 'walk' ..."

Darren McClelland, 3/10/08

"Whilst it is a terrible and emotional incident, we think there is a need to be just a little even-handed about the cycle incident in Swanston Street. And we're not sure your edition [#79] does that. This was a cycle incident involving a bus, not the other way round. The tour bus operators are not some irresponsible rump of fly by night amateurs, but a professional and valuable contributor to the life and commerce of the city. As are cyclists. If there is a better solution to having the tour buses in Swanston Street, then let's have all parties identify it and work towards achieving it cooperatively. That is somewhat difficult if one party is characterised as being uncaringly guilty. We should all remember that there was an equally tragic pedestrian incident not so long ago, involving a bicycle; that incident did not lead to knee jerk calls to ban all bicycles from being near pedestrians along certain roads."

Bernie Carolan, CEO, Metlink Victoria, 2/10/08

Comment:

A careful reading of the items selected for this story (see #78) will reveal that it is more about:

- why the police blocked pedestrians from both sides of the road (but let them near the corpse);
- what happens to the trams when there is an accident or parade in Swanston Walk; and
- a suggestion to use Russell Street as an additional tram route to service the eastern end of the CBD.

There was no suggestion that either the cyclist or the bus driver was to blame as this will be for others to determine. As my tram passed the memorial flowers today (2/10/08) I certainly felt for the bus driver. I think *The Age* Reader's Comment (see #79) sums up the situation in that the chances of an accident would be greatly reduced if the buses were not operating in Swanston Walk. As for somewhere to put the buses, I note that we have just recently constructed a very expensive, purpose-built, bus interchange next to Southern Cross Station that has lots of surplus space for large buses (see #25). If the situation concerning the cyclist hitting the pedestrian refers to the 'Hell Ride', where the cyclist went through a red light, I think that there has been a fair degree of criticism through both the media and the courts.



Congestion Charging in Brisbane?

"John Mason is the head of enforcement operations for London's congestion charge, which is run by Transport for London. He told delegates at the Queensland Infrastructure Summit conference at the Marriott Hotel yesterday that the decision to cut London's skyrocketing congestion costs was the trigger for London to act. But he said Brisbane need not follow London's example. He said there were different charging schemes which could be designed to suit Brisbane. ... Traffic congestion will cost Brisbane \$9 billion a year by 2026 if no steps are taken to reduce it, the council's public transport committee chair, Jane Prentice, said. London's congestion charge was introduced in 2003. Motorists now pay up to £8 (\$18) to drive into central London. Mr Mason said the charge has helped take about 70,000 cars out of central London and cut CO² emissions by 16%."

Ref: Tony Moore, Brisbane Times, 18/9/08

"Individuals must take responsibility for the congestion, loss of time, productivity and pollution they create as well as the burden they place on the road system. They should pay a tax or fee, rather than making everybody else wait in a traffic jam. This is especially true when people continue to drive when there are alternatives like walking, skateboarding, cycling, car pooling, catching a bus, train, citycat or living closer to the city. No body likes being taxed, but without it we will have decrepit services."

Ref: Reader's Comment, Brisbane Times, 18/9/08

Brisbane's Profitable Airport Link

"Worsening Brisbane traffic has proved a huge financial bonus to the Airtrain, the rail transit line that links the airport to the central business district. Airtrain posted a 107 per cent rise in full-year operating profit to \$4.8 million. Airtrain chairman Mike Pelly said a jump in usage meant that every one out of 10 travellers to Brisbane Airport was now using the train. Patronage grew 17 per cent during 2007 to 2008 and 27 per cent during the month of June. More than 160,000 passengers a month are now using Airtrain to beat the traffic. 'We used to have a slogan 'take the train, make the plane' but now it is simply 'beat the traffic', Mr Pelly said. 'The horrendous Brisbane traffic is the main reason for the increases ...'"

Ref: James McCullough, Courier Mail, 23/9/08

More Sustainable Vehicles

"A whole new generation of electric vehicles has been on display at Iceland's first sustainable car show. Among them a motorbike that can reach speeds of 275 kilometres per hour, powered only by a battery. ... Several electric vehicles; cars, motorcycles and bicycles and Iceland's first plug-in hybrid were on display at the venue. ... One hundred percent of Iceland's electricity generation comes from renewable energy and the country is the world's leading nation in utilizing renewable energy. The remainder, mostly fossil fuels, is consumed by the transport and fishing sectors - the next target for system change towards a 100 per cent sustainable energy society."

Ref: Sky News, 23/9/08

*"Chrysler this week joined the ranks of automakers promising to bring electric cars to the market in 2010. ... 'We have a social responsibility to our consumers to deliver environmentally friendly, fuel-efficient, advanced electric vehicles, and our intention is to meet that responsibility quickly and more broadly than any other automobile manufacturer', Chrysler chairman and chief executive officer Bob Nardelli said in a statement. 'The introduction of the Chrysler, Jeep and Dodge electric vehicles provides a glimpse of the very near future, and demonstrates that we are serious and well along in the development of bringing electric vehicles to market'. The all electric sports car, dubbed the Dodge EV, would have a continuous driving range of just 240 to 320 kilometres but would have enough power under the hood to go from zero to 100 kilometres per hour in less than five seconds. It could be recharged by plugging it into a standard household outlet for four to eight hours. ... General Motors and Toyota have also promised to bring plug-in electric cars to market in 2010. **Ref: SMH, 24/9/08***

And Also ...

"Call it a not-so-subtle case of one-upmanship, but Sydney's laneways are about to get something that even the edgiest Melbourne alley is missing: armoured personnel carriers. Some of the city's smaller streets will be transformed into temporary installation spaces for By George! next month, part of the effort by the City of Sydney to transform the way Sydneysiders regard their city centre."

Ref: Leesha McKenny, SMH, 25/9/08



More Sustainable PT Wanted

"The Eastern Transport Coalition has delivered a plan on behalf of 1,000,000 [Melbourne] eastern suburban residents direct to the Premier of Victoria ... John Brumby and Public Transport Minister Lyn Kosky Cr Mick Van De Vreede said ... 'We know that in the eastern suburbs 3 out of 5 people would consider getting out of their car's if they had decent public transport options. Public transport usage in the majority of local municipalities is very low, at around 3 to 7 per cent compared with a much higher rate in other parts of Melbourne. This makes it clear that we need a generational step up in public transport. ... If the State Government includes our short, medium and long term projects in the Metropolitan Transport Plan then we will eventually have all the public transport options we need to dramatically reduce congestion, to protect our families from rising fuel prices and to negate rising greenhouse gas emissions'."

Ref: ETC Media Release, 25/9/08

*"A lobby group for property developers says Sydney's North-West Metro rail link should be paid for with money the Commonwealth collects from carbon permits. The 38-kilometre rail line would link Rouse Hill with the city but the \$12 billion project is now under review after the failure of the State Government's power privatisation plan blew a hole in the NSW Budget. Urban Taskforce chief executive Aaron Gadiel says it is more appropriate for the Commonwealth to fund the project with a small fraction of the money it raises through its emissions trading scheme. 'I think it's crucial that if they're going to be raising \$8 billion to \$13 billion from permit fees charged on carbon polluters, that a significant portion of that money be invested directly into public transport', he said. 'If people living in the Rouse Hill area can get access to reliable, affordable, clean and efficient public transport, it's going to make a huge difference to their lives'. The North-West Metro line would run underground through the city's CBD and inner west before veering north to the growing suburbs of north-west Sydney." **Ref: ABC News, 26/9/08***

"Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger has signed AB 2321, the bill allowing the Measure R election to go forward on November 4. That's the half-cent sales tax increase to pay for more mass transit and road improvements. Proponents of the measure say the sales tax would raise \$30 billion to \$40 billion over the 30-year lifespan of the tax. To pass, the measure requires approval of two-thirds of voters. The current sales tax rate in L.A. County is 8.25%, already one of the highest in California."

Ref: Steve Hymon, Bottleneck Blog, Los Angeles Times, 25/8/08

High Price for a Cheap Car

"Although hailed by the world's press this year, the [Tata] Nano factory has become a symbol of the simmering confrontation between industry and farmers who are unwilling to part with land in a country where two-thirds of the population depends on agriculture. In the case of Tata's new car, more than 1,000 acres of fertile fields in West Bengal's Singur district were acquired by the state government to set up the Nano plant. The factory will be able to produce 250,000 cars a year. Thousands of farmers who once raised four crops a year have been evicted.

"When the Guardian visited the site this year it found farmers had killed themselves after losing land, and a protestor had discovered the body of his daughter inside the factory site, strangled and burned. The heavy-handed actions have resulted in repeated clashes. This week a strike shut the factory and thousands marched, blocking access to the site. ...

"The Tata Nano was hailed as the great hope for the Indian middle classes when it was launched this year. The car, a jelly bean-shaped hatchback with a 623cc engine, was billed as the cheapest in the world. It would prompt millions of Indians to get off their scooters and into cars.

"The Nano was supposed to roll out of the 1,000-acre site in Singur, West Bengal. However, farmers have stepped up protests in recent weeks, concerned that they had missed out. Land prices in the area have shot up at least fivefold since December 2006, when the government started the land acquisition. Plots are going at 5m rupees (£61,400) an acre. The discontent has been fuelled by social activists, and opposition politicians defending the right of farmers to their land. There is also the issue of jobs. The Tata factory took the land or jobs of at least 14,000 farmers and others. In return, the plant would create only 1,500 jobs."

Ref: Randeep Ramesh, The Guardian, 23/8/08



Tens of thousands of demonstrators outside the Indian factory
Picture: World News Network 28/9/08

High Price for an Expensive Car

"India's Tata Motors said on Wednesday it had bought British luxury icons Jaguar and Land Rover from struggling US carmaker Ford for 2.3 billion US dollars." Ref: SMH, 26/3/08

And Also ... (India Needs More Cars?)



"Lane markings? They mean something? New Delhi on the Delhi-Gurgaon expressway/parking lot. I like how the middle lane is actually accommodating two lanes of traffic."

Ref: Steve Hymon, Bottleneck Blog, Los Angeles Times, 20/8/08

More on Those Seats

"Queensland police could swap their state-wide fleet of 4WD wagons for Hollywood-style Hummers, with one of the black military-style vehicles being tested on Brisbane's streets. Deputy Commissioner for Specialist Operations Ian Stewart yesterday confirmed police were investigating alternative options ... The H3 Adventure model - which boasts heated seats - retails for \$60,990 and has been a favourite with celebrities ..."

Ref: Anna Caldwell, Courier Mail, 29/9/08

Comment: Heated seats, essential in Brisbane?

More on Expensive Car Races

"New South Wales Premier Nathan Rees is today expected to announce the approval of controversial plans to move the V8 Supercar race to Sydney's Olympic Park. The proposal for the race to shift from Eastern Creek to Olympic Park has twice been rejected by the Sydney Olympic Park Authority. ... Local councils and residents groups have also opposed the plan, which will require considerable changes at the site, including tree removal. ... NSW Development Minister Ian Macdonald says he finds it hard to understand opposition to the race on environmental grounds."

Ref: ABC News 29/9/08

Wodonga Rail Bypass

“Work will begin today on the Wodonga Rail Bypass, marking the start of an historic \$501.3 million Rudd and Brumby Government project to revitalise Victoria’s north-east rail corridor by creating an interstate rail freight super-highway and delivering major passenger rail service improvements. ... ‘We are taking action to ensure our regional communities are well-equipped to grow and thrive and the Wodonga Rail Bypass project will create new jobs and drive new investment in this already dynamic regional city’, [Victorian Premier John] Brumby said. ‘Removing the rail line from the centre of Wodonga will open it up to major commercial opportunities, rejuvenate the city centre and is central to the urban development of Wodonga as a vibrant regional hub. ...’

“The Wodonga Rail Bypass project is the first major step in the \$501.3 million North-East Rail Revitalisation Project. The North-East Rail Revitalisation Project will construct a rail bypass of Wodonga and convert 200-kilometres of broad gauge track to standard gauge to deliver a first-class passenger and rail link between Australia’s economic hubs, Melbourne and Sydney and improved passenger rail services between Melbourne and Albury-Wodonga. ‘This project is great news for people in regional centres such as Seymour, Wangaratta, Benalla and Albury-Wodonga who will have access to both V/Line and interstate CountryLink services once a new standard gauge track is constructed – that’s five return services each day along the north-east rail corridor that will be faster, more comfortable and more reliable’, Mr Brumby said.

“[Commonwealth Infrastructure and Transport, Minister Anthony] Albanese said the freight route between Melbourne and Sydney was Australia’s busiest with freight volumes forecast to increase by 70 per cent in the next 20 years. ‘New rail freight infrastructure gets goods to markets more efficiently, helping to alleviate the capacity constraints on our economy. That’s why our Government is making major investments to boost the nation’s rail freight network’, Mr Albanese said. ‘This project is part of the \$2.4 billion being invested by the Australian Government and the Australian Rail Track Corporation in a better east coast rail freight line. When this investment program is complete, train travel times between Melbourne and Sydney will be slashed by 20 per cent from 13 hours and 30 minutes to just 10 hours and 40 minutes. ...’



“The Wodonga Rail Bypass Project will involve the construction of a single-track, five-kilometre rail bypass of Wodonga and a new passenger railway station in west Wodonga. It will remove 11 level crossings from Wodonga, improving safety for rail passengers, pedestrians and motorists. ...

“The North East Rail Revitalisation Project is jointly funded with the ARTC (Australian Rail Track Corporation) contributing \$285 million, the Victorian Government, \$171.3 million, with \$45 million from the Commonwealth Government through its AusLink program.

“The project includes:

- ⊙ *Construction of the Wodonga Rail Bypass to remove the rail line from the centre of the city and build a new, single-track, five kilometre bypass of Wodonga;*
- ⊙ *A major upgrade of the 200-kilometre broad gauge track between Seymour and Albury including conversion to standard-gauge;*
- ⊙ *Upgrades to the standard-gauge line between Melbourne and Seymour, including the construction of new passing loops as well as upgrade works already being undertaken by the ARTC;*
- ⊙ *Three V/Line passenger locomotives and 15 passenger carriages will be refurbished and converted to standard gauge to operate on the newly-converted rail line;*
- ⊙ *New platforms along the north-east rail line to service the new standard-gauge locomotives.*

“The North-East Rail Revitalisation Project will be completed in 2010.”

Ref: Joint Federal/State Media Release, 26/9/08

Comment: Removing the trains from Wodonga City centre would provide a perfect opportunity to use the corridors for Light Trams. These would work on the existing grades, be much quieter, use traffic lights instead of boom gates and could be paid for through the utilisation of the excess railway land. This could be world’s best practice urban regeneration with the implementation of urban villages rather than urban sprawl. The trams would provide passenger services linking up to the new railway station but you could also have special cargo trams that would service existing and new industries. Ideally the tram route would extend to Albury Station as well, providing a cross-border link for both residents and tourists. The trams could easily be run on solar power panels located on buildings alongside the tracks. This initiative would reduce congestion, truck noise, petrol dependence and greenhouse gases all at no additional cost to the taxpayers.