

Public Transport and the Elderly

"Victoria's public transport will be adapted for the elderly - including better links between Southern Cross Station and major hospitals - after a report warned that seniors were being isolated in their own homes. The biggest ever review of the problems faced by the state's rapidly ageing population found transport was their major concern, followed by housing, lack of access to information for those not internet-savvy and a shortage of affordable medical services. Seniors across Victoria said they were being robbed of their independence by a lack of buses and trains, the impossibility of squeezing walking frames into crowded carriages and difficulty walking to stations."

"The problem was worse for those in the bush and outer

suburbs who said the challenge of getting to medical services often prevented them from staying healthy. Aged Care Minister Lisa Neville promised the Government would act on some of the report's recommendations, including an education program for bus, train and tram drivers to accelerate and brake smoothly to prevent seniors falling. The minister said she would work with hospital administrators to establish better transport links between Southern Cross Station and public hospitals, with a senior bus service one possibility."

Ref: Marika Dobbin, The Age, 18/12/08

"Senior Australians who travel interstate are now entitled to cheaper fares on public transport away from home, thanks to a \$50 million Federal Government scheme. Under the deal, most states will recognise each other's concession cards to encourage grey nomads to spend tourist dollars locally and reduce the cost of visiting friends and family. Negotiations are still being held with Western Australia and Queensland, but with those states included, about 3 million seniors would benefit, Community Services Minister Jenny Macklin said. 'It's been very frustrating for many senior Australians, and we want to make sure it's easier for older



"The oldies are fighting back. I got 'Zimmer framed'."

Australians, as they travel interstate, to be able to use their concession card', Ms Macklin said.

"National seniors chief executive Michael O'Neill said the scheme would make travelling costs fairer and support domestic tourism. Until now, a NSW seniors card holder could travel from the Sydney CBD to Katoomba in the Blue Mountains and back for just \$2.50, while a Victorian senior would be charged \$24.40 for the same trip. Victorian Council of Social Services spokesman David Imber said the scheme would benefit better-off and more mobile older Victorians, and his organisation would prefer 'the benefits to be directed to people much more on the basis of need than age'. Of the \$50 million provided to states over four years, Victoria will receive about \$6 million & NSW \$22.6 million."
Ref: Kate Lahey, The Age, 5/1/09

Meantime in the US

"A severely disabled New Yorker is lucky to be alive after being left alone for 17 hours on an icy bus. Ed Rivera, 22, spent New Year's Eve night in minus nine degrees Celsius temperatures strapped into an empty bus after his overseer allegedly decided to leave him behind, police said on Friday. Rivera suffers from cerebral palsy and reportedly has the mental capacity of a two-year-old. Police have charged the bus matron, who was meant to bring Rivera back home from a special school, with reckless endangerment, a police spokesman told AFP. ..."

"The bus matron left Rivera sleeping in his seat 'because she was late for church', the Daily News quoted sources as saying. 'She knew he was there. She was hoping one of the other workers would notice him'. The bus driver apparently failed to notice Rivera when he left his bus at the depot, abandoning the young man to a potentially fatally cold night. Police launched a search after Rivera's sister reported him missing but overlooked the lot at the depot where he was sitting helplessly, the Daily News reported."

Ref: The Age, (AFP) 3/1/09

And Also ...

'Sprinter' on sale in a Bendigo shop window. Sprinter indeed!

Picture: 30/12/08



Tram Validation

"Tram patronage [in Melbourne] has increased by about 10 per cent in the past two years and [Yarra Trams chief executive Dennis] Cliche said he expected passenger increases to remain above average for some years to come. More than 160 million trips were made on the Melbourne tram network in the past financial year. Mr Cliche said one of the biggest challenges facing Yarra Trams was accurately recording the number of people using specific trams to identify the overcrowded services. He said many commuters did not revalidate tickets on trams, having already validated their tickets on earlier journeys. 'We have seen a significant drop in the tram validations, which is causing all sorts of issues which relates to how many passengers are on our services', he said."

Ref: Jason Dowling, The Age, 24/12/08

Comment: Part of the problem is that on a really crowded tram you can't get near the validation machines.

Propping up the Auto Industry

"The Rudd Government has got it wrong in doling out cash to GMH to produce a 'green' four-cylinder car. Until the nation's major fleet buyers are discouraged from purchasing six-cylinder Australian cars (approximately 50 per cent of the market), what incentive have the car makers got to stop making them? Perhaps we need a major review of fringe-benefit tax rules to assist the nation's move to smaller and more fuel-efficient vehicles."

Ref: Chris Clark, The Age, 24/12/08

"Landholders are taking advantage of the latest cash crop - up to 100,000 unsold new vehicles caught in a no-man's-land between ship and showroom. There are now so many new vehicles that the companies that handle them have run out of room and are casting around for new places to store them. As many as 25,000 are languishing around Melbourne in a rapidly expanding list of wharves, bitumen aprons and dusty paddocks. The vehicles are the result of months of rapidly declining new-car sales."

Ref: Barry Park, The Age, 24/12/08

Webb Dock Parking

Photo: Craig Abraham The Age 24/12/08



Tram Triggers

"When transport experts sit down to work out what makes people take trams, the number of people living in particular areas or rates of car ownership are often cited. But a new study has found a simpler truth behind commuter numbers - it's all about the number of services. While this might seem a statement of the blindingly obvious, it in fact challenges some long-held beliefs within transport circles that other factors are similarly influential in people's decision to hop on Melbourne's trams. In other words, people are happy to take trams - they just want services that meet their needs."

"The study paper, Exploring the Drivers of Light Rail Ridership, compared Melbourne and Dublin's very different tram networks to find common drivers of tram use. It found having more frequent services to be most important - 20 times more so than the integration of services and fares, followed by the distance between stops - in getting people on trams. ... The paper's co-author, Professor Graham Currie, said the study showed Melbourne's trams are being slowed by cars and short distances between stops. 'Taking trams out of the traffic stream ... reducing the number of tram stops and (running at) higher frequency is the way to go', he said."

Ref: Reid Sexton, The Age, 21/12/08

Traffic Trauma

"Victoria has achieved its lowest road toll on record with a big drop in fatalities in the past 12 months. Last night the official toll stood at 304, down 8 per cent on the previous year and well below the 2003 record low of 330. Despite a booming population and more vehicles on the roads, Victoria's road toll has fallen dramatically since 1970, when 1061 people were killed. ... The news for pedestrians was not so bright, with almost one in five people killed on the roads in 2008 a pedestrian. Pedestrian fatalities were up 41 per cent to 58, compared with 41 in 2007."

Ref: Jason Dowling, The Age, 1/1/09

"For perspective on traffic issues in Australia or NZ: In Kathmandu there have been 319 reported traffic accidents of various forms over the last fortnight resulting in 80 deaths and a large number of injuries."

Ref: Will Fryer in Kathmandu, Nepal 22/12/09

More on the Victorian Transport Plan

“Given the universal concern about global warming and the importance of transport in the generation of greenhouse gases, it is vital that any proposal for the future development of alternative transport modes should be seen first of all through the prism of their contribution to emission reductions. After stationary energy, transport is the sector with the highest emissions. In Victoria it is 17 per cent of the total. Without savings in this sector, it is unlikely that Victoria would make its proportionate contribution to Australia’s commitment at Kyoto to cut emissions by 25 to 40 per cent.

“For the record, Victorian transport emissions were 19.9 million tonnes of CO2 equivalent in 2006. According to the Victorian Transport Plan, after the abatement measures and exogenous factors such as the assumption of a doubling in oil prices, the introduction of a carbon trading scheme and greater vehicle fuel efficiency, emissions will rise to 20.2 million tonnes CO2 equivalent by 2036. This should be seen against a study by Environment Victoria that showed Victoria could cut emissions by 9 million tonnes by 2020 and 16 million tonnes by 2030 if immediate measures were introduced.

“These include measures to boost vehicle occupancy such as putting high-occupancy transit lanes on existing arterial roads, congestion charges, create a genuine network seamlessly linking bus, tram and train services, additional bus routes in growth areas and increased investment in walking and cycling infrastructure as well as a real commitment to sustainable urban and land use planning and design so that people have to travel shorter distances and less often. Environment Victoria rightly criticised the failure of the transport plan to confront the central issue: ‘The state government essentially has a choice between significant public transport and new roads projects — there is unlikely to be enough money for both’.

“But how serious is the government about public transport? ... The spokesman for the Public Transport Users Association, Tony Morton, described the \$38 billion transport plan as an attempt to get people out of public transport and into cars. ... [but] ‘The plan gives Melburnians very little of what they asked for and lots of things they didn’t — starting with 120 kilometres of new motorways being justified by all the old discredited 1960s clichés. To come out with a plan like this when the quality of life of our children requires an 80 per cent reduction in

Australia’s emissions is simply insane’, Morton concluded.

“The document is also dishonest. In an attempt to gull exasperated Melbourne commuters into believing that the plan spends as much on public transport as on roads, it has more than \$3 billion in padding on its cost estimates for trains, trams, rail extensions and stations. The plan claims the cost of the South Morang rail extension, involving 8.5 kilometres of new track on an existing easement, is estimated to be \$650 million or more than \$76 million a kilometre. By comparison, the recently completed 72-kilometre Mandurah Line in Perth, which includes an underground section through the CBD and two underground stations, cost \$1.8 billion. This means the cost of the new Perth line, including the underground section, was about \$25 million a kilometre. Industry sources believe the total cost of the South Morang line will be between \$60 million and \$100 million.

“The plan argues the cost of 50 ... low-floor trams is \$1 billion. Industry sources say these trams will cost \$5 million each. The only way the cost could be inflated by \$750 million is by adding 40 years of maintenance costs, which is a confusion of standard accounting distinctions between capital and current costs. Similarly, the estimate of \$2.6 billion for 70 new metro trains is inflated by about \$1.6 billion and again can only be reconciled by assuming maintenance costs over the life of rolling stock is included in the capital costs.

“The plan envisages four new stations, all in new growth areas such as Caroline Springs. Even if the stations were built in the CBD, involving massive land acquisition costs, it is impossible to believe that each station would cost \$55 million. The systematic inflation of these costs suggests that the people who wrote the plan were setting up the public transport options to fail in order to ensure that the real roads agenda, beginning with the \$750 million Frankston interchange, will get priority without the electoral embarrassment of being upfront about the lack of priority for public transport. ...

“When Public Transport Minister Lynne Kosky and Roads Minister Tim Pallas say ‘it is not a matter of road versus rail — as a government we must invest in all modes to allow Victorians to choose the best means of transport for the type of journey they are taking’, it is a fair bet the ministers are joking because for the majority of their low-income constituents who live mainly in the outer and new growth suburbs, there is no choice except to continue to run two or three cars in perpetuity if they want a life.”

Ref: Kenneth Davidson, The Age, 15/12/08

Hoddle Boulevard or Traffic Sewer?

"The Age headline, "The real plan is to push us back into cars" (15/12), is prescient about the government's transport objectives. These objectives are reflected in the \$5M engineering study to create an expressway on Hoddle Street with concrete flyovers and underpasses at key intersections such as Johnson Street, Victoria Parade and Bridge Road. Hoddle Street's problems arise from the influx of vehicles exiting the Eastern and Monash Freeways. The Eastern carries 120,000 vehicles a day, while the M1 is being expanded to double its capacity. Hoddle Street congestion is compounded by the car centric approach to transport through building Eastlink and expanding the M1. These key freeway expansions were decided without proper public policy assessment based on principles of integrated transport and land use planning. Developed in secret, the Hoddle Street proposal has had no public input or consultation, or cost-benefit analysis. Nor has it been appraised against alternatives. The new \$5M study is now an admission that the Doncaster Area Rapid Transit (DART) bus system will be ineffectual to impact on mode share to alleviate congestion on Hoddle Street.

"The Government has been silent on the City of Melbourne, Yarra and Manningham joint submission to Infrastructure Australia, seeking a \$5M feasibility study of a rail service for the growing Doncaster corridor. The cost of the Hoddle Street proposals would exceed the \$1.5B cost of rail to Doncaster. Other costs are added congestion at Hoddle Street intersections, huge lost opportunity costs, reduced road safety and amenity and increased emissions.

"There is a superior alternative vision for Hoddle Street to be renovated as a key Melbourne boulevard and activity centre. The Cities of Melbourne, Yarra, Stonnington and Port Phillip, through a joint Inner Melbourne Action Plan (IMAP) have endorsed improving the quality and design of Alexandra Parade and Hoddle Street as boulevards. Submissions to the Eddington Review and Government, proposed mass transit by rail from Doncaster to Carlton and the extension of tram route 86 along Hoddle Street from Clifton Hill to Richmond and South Yarra. Improvements have been made through tree planting, footpaths and council assuming maintenance of street medians for VicRoads. The underlying objective is the development of our key parades as attractive assets like St Kilda Road. The Dynon to Domain metro rail tunnel supports the boulevard status of St Kilda Road. Similar commitment is required for a metro rail

system in the east to enable Alexandra Parade and Hoddle Street to fulfil their destiny. The Hoddle family have suggested renaming the latter as Robert Hoddle Boulevard in recognition of the huge contribution of Melbourne's pioneer surveyor, to the layout and liveability of Melbourne. The alternative view for Melbourne's key boulevards requires wide public debate and policy analysis, rather than a narrow \$5M engineering study for a Hoddle Street traffic trap."

Ref: Cr Jackie Fristacky, Chair MTF, 15/12/08

"A four-kilometre road tunnel from the MCG to the Eastern Freeway is among key recommendations in a report into fixing traffic jams on Hoddle Street, commissioned by the Brumby Government. ... The report will feed into a \$5 million study to be completed by VicRoads next year into how to improve traffic conditions on Hoddle Street. ... Hoddle Street has some of Melbourne's worst congestion points, with 47,000 cars a day battling to get through the intersection at Swan Street in Richmond. At the corner of Hoddle and Victoria streets, another 40,000 cars a day cause some of the city's worst traffic snarls."

Ref: Clay Lucas, The Age 24/12/08

Note to Advisors: Cars cause congestion.

Reduce congestion by reducing the number of cars. Do this by improving public transport and by improving amenity to encourage walking and cycling. To do this, reduce the number of cars. This is not rocket science. New roads encourage more cars. This is called 'road obesity', which leads to human obesity and related health problems. Think 'road diet', think Hoddle Boulevard, think Victoria Boulevard (all the way to Victoria Market). A sustainable approach to our city centre or more congestion?

Plan A and Plan B

"Plan A = Try to convince the Government through logic, public consultation, results of surveys, examples from overseas, letters to the editor, etc. that we don't want or need new mega-roads, tunnels, ... and do want better public transport, reduced climate change, solar panels, water recycling and better local environments. This message is ignored. Megalomania rules.

"Plan B = Organise 'Drive to work day', 'Drive to school day', 'Waste water day', 'Power-up day', 'You ignore us, we ignore you day'. Perhaps then the Government will realise they depend on the cooperation of the environmentally-conscious (most Victorians) who want do the right things, and that we should not be ignored."

Ref: Dr John Grant, 2/12/08