



The Big Issues

Some major issues confront Melbourne's planners, among them:

- mitigating global warming by cutting our greenhouse gas emissions
- living with oil scarcity
- managing growth in traffic and traffic congestion
- mitigating the effects of dredging Port Phillip Bay (or finding a viable alternative)
- reducing domestic and industrial water consumption
- maintaining housing affordability for a growing population while preserving green wedges and valuable farmland

Melbourne 2030 addresses most of these issues, but its implementation is causing a significant backlash from the community over medium density housing, and it is drawing criticism over the weakness of its public transport planning. There is widespread scepticism about the ambitious target of 20% of motorised trips by public transport by 2020. Yet transport lies at the heart of the solutions to the first three major problems listed above. What needs to be done to make Melbourne 2030 a more believable and acceptable plan?

Ray Walford

The Freight Focus

The sensible and sustainable management of truck traffic routes in metropolitan Melbourne is a critical key to our environmental and economic wellbeing. Any discussion on handling the existing traffic flow between the Eastern and Tullamarine Freeways to the north of the City needs to focus on freight first. We should seriously consider providing special freight lanes, even if the freight lanes only operate as such during the most congested times of the day.

Whether it is more acceptable for freight routes to

be in cut or above ground is dependent on what the affected communities and constituents may be willing to accept.

Commuters can choose to get caught up in congestion, or avoid congestion by driving in off-peak periods. There is limited need to increase road carrying capacity for commuting drivers, as alternatives exist, such as public transport use and travel at different times of day. In general the flexibility of time of freight operators is far less than it is for commuters.

Sustainable solutions to the urban logistics of freight movement should have as much impact on road system planning, investment and management as providing for the commuting car.

H. (Oz) Kayak

Making Our Roads Safe For Bicycles

Our roads network faces several challenges, whether immediate or in the foreseeable future. Firstly it has to cater for an ever-increasing burden of motor vehicle traffic, whether work commuters or freight-related. Secondly, there is the issue of "resource sharing" with other stakeholders.

Whilst the government attempts to address the first problem by encouraging more people to use alternative modes of transportation, or through promoting public transport (e.g. the Travel Smart initiative), it ignores, if not exacerbates, the second issue.

Most roadways in the Melbourne metropolitan area are designed to support motor vehicle usage, public transport (tramway lines) and to some extent pedestrian travel (kerbs on the side of the road). This design did not take into consideration bicycle riding activity. Some attempts at correcting it have been made and an additional white paint marking was put on some roads to indicate where bikes should be ridden.

However, this is not a suitable long-term alternative that will encourage more people to take on riding. Too often riders have to share with motor vehicle or pedestrian traffic.

The only solution to making bicycle riding safer would be to segregate bike traffic from other forms of traffic. This could be achieved by replacing the paint markings with barriers such as a small concrete pavement or pieces of railing.

Jean-Francois Delvaen

Making Walking More Pleasurable

How we use our land is a serious subject. It raises many sensitive issues. For those of us who in general enjoy walking more than using our car to travel from A to B, there are some very basic issues to address.

First and foremost our travel destination has to be within walking distance. To allow us to walk to meet our needs, nearby land must be allocated to provide our services and facilities. There are some fortunate people in places such as the City of Yarra. Yarra has the highest local "milk bar" intensity index of Melbourne.

Where we walk should be safe and secure. The environment through which we walk should also be a pleasure and a joy. The blight of visual pollution, graffiti vandalism, noise, dust, stale and acrid air, can all be found in built up areas. However, in general in metropolitan Melbourne there are many nearby walking environments that are without the blight.

In much of the municipality of Yarra it is possible to walk and ride away from offensive stimuli. The parklands of inner Melbourne are arguably some of the best in the world.

Research indicates that there are localities in the City of Yarra that are in the bracket with the highest levels of pedestrian activity (outside the CBD) in the Port Phillip region.

To increase the joy of walking, residents and visitors of inner Melbourne should write to their community opinion shapers to point out improvements needed at locations that are unsafe, polluted and degraded walking environments. The Town and Country Planning Association is an advocacy group facilitating such feedback.

H. (Oz) Kayak

The End of Suburbia

Join us at Melbourne University on Thursday 12th May for a free screening of the documentary "The End of Suburbia". This is an entertaining but serious film from the USA that examines the evidence for the peaking of global oil production in the current decade, and the likely implications for the American suburban way of life.

Afterwards we will have an open discussion about the likely implications of oil scarcity for urban planning in Melbourne.

Date: 12th May 2005

Time 5.45 pm for 6.00 p.m. screening; discussion 7.15 - 8.15 pm.

Place: University of Melbourne, Civil Engineering (C Block), Engineering-C2 Theatre, 4th floor, Room 413. Closest entry: Grattan St.