



## National Seminar on Urban Freight

### Summary

A total of 31 persons participated in the National seminar held at the Department of Infrastructure, Victorian Government, in Melbourne on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2008. A wide range of organizations were represented including, local government, consultants and academics. The Department of Infrastructure and the Town and Country Planning Association sponsored the event.

### Major Themes

A major theme was the application of new technologies, both for vehicles (e.g. performance based systems and network management (e.g. information and communication technologies). There was growing interest by the federal government with National Transport Commission (NTC) and Transport Certification Australia becoming more actively involved in urban freight.

### Program

An overview of the BESUFS (Best Urban Freight Solutions) and BESTUFS II projects as well as summary of the good practice guide was presented. The Good Practice Guide was distributed and was well received.

The recently produced National Transport plan was presented including a description of the desired outcomes in areas relevant to urban freight. The Intelligent Access Program (IAP), a compliance-monitoring scheme that allows improved access to the road network using telematics, was introduced. A description of how Performance Based Standards (PBS) can increase productivity in urban areas and reduce the community exposure to freight vehicles was given.

An overview of the development and application of the Melbourne urban freight model that is being used to assist in planning new infrastructure projects such as intermodal terminals was also presented. A summary of initiatives being undertaken in New South Wales, including a number of intermodal and container movement studies was also presented.

### Discussion

There was strong interest in the BESTUFS project as well as establishing a national “best practice” network in Australia. The need for national leadership on urban freight was highlighted.

It was acknowledged that there is growing community concern over emissions, noise and congestion caused by trucks. Issues such as how to achieve integration of government planning and policy-making were raised.

Concern was expressed about the predicted growth in the Port of Melbourne and the associated increase in freight vehicles operating in inner Melbourne. There is an increasing interest in how urban rail may be able to reduce the impact of freight in major urban areas such as Sydney and Melbourne.

*Russell Thompson*

## Good Governance for Transport Infrastructure

Members of the TCPA committee attended the Australasian Centre for the Governance and Management of Urban Transport (GAMUT) forum on “Good Governance for Transport Infrastructure” at the University of Melbourne on 1<sup>st</sup> August. Speakers included Jim Betts, Secretary of the new Department of Transport, and Brian Howe, who reflected on the Hawke Government’s Better Cities Program as a demonstration model for the integration of transport infrastructure with broader land use planning objectives. The TCPA was pleased to find that other speakers and participants took up this important issue.

While the specific structural issues of the ownership and control of Melbourne’s public transport system, such as the franchising arrangements, or a Melbourne-wide transport authority, were not addressed systematically, the forum canvassed a wide range of other issues covering matters of accountability, transparency, coherence, community involvement, planning expertise and implementation. Small group discussions reflected dissatisfaction with many aspects of present transport governance and planning. Matters raised by participants included:

- problems of government ‘silos’ and ‘tiers’;
- need for clear and long term urban transport

policy with measurable outcomes;

- 'major event' tendencies in infrastructure planning as opposed to longer term planning;
- lack of accountability, professionalism and transparency in management of both projects and operation of the transport system;
- coherence in governance, management and service delivery;
- importance of information for planning purposes;
- effective involvement of the community and local government in public transport planning.

A formal report on the proceedings will be posted in the near future on GAMUT's website (<http://www.abp.unimelb.edu.au/gamut>).

*David Littlewood*

### **Opinion: the Metro-Electric Car**

Peak oil, global warming, climate change, are all terms constantly on our lips these days. The three major contributors to the proliferation of carbon dioxide and global warming have been demonstrated to be agriculture, energy production and transport. In response, the major car companies are actively seeking 'green' solutions. The industry knows it has to change, but to what? Development options include hydrogen with its water by-product, bio-fuels (increasing the cost of food to poorer nations), super-miserly petrol and diesel (which is still in the development phases), or maybe electric and/or hybrids.

What is so often forgotten in our desire to get people out of cars is the trip from the back door to boarding the public transport of our choice.

A new breed of 'mini-electric-car' might be appropriate for the hundreds of short suburban trips, catering for school and shopping. Firstly small electric cars with limited range would be much more road-friendly. Support by "parking stations" with plug-in sockets for recharging the car batteries may feature in place of the many now defunct service stations. The new suburban parking-station-mini-hubs will be necessarily 'manned' providing an intermediate suburban safe refuge. A coffee shop could be incorporated, and possibly some of those minor services such as dry-cleaning agencies. Key bus stops could then be sited less frequently. Some buses might be planned to run express between the 'mini-hubs' providing a more efficient and faster service at peak hours. A more 'travel-friendly' environment may emerge, and go some of the way

to providing the 'individually-oriented-transport' that is so embedded in our culture.

Electrical power is the most convenient and there is a lot of collective experience with 'things electrical'. Current thinking requires an effective vehicle to store enough fuel for a trip length approaching that of current liquid fuelled vehicles. Storing and recharging the fuel remains unresolved, but for small cars over a limited range the problem is diminished.

Cars are used in many different circumstances: home-to-work, at-work, family-school-and-shopping-trips. School holidays, for example, are notable for the relative ease of travel. The current crisis will provide the opportunity for a new approach to all our activities, and you can be sure it will be "green".

Whilst electrically powered cars remain only one of many solutions, it is the one that has a lot going for it. A sweep through the pages of the national newspapers on almost any day will provide a commentary on electric cars, with a focus on power plant, size, ease of use, or batteries. Google will deliver thousands of sites on the many aspects of electric cars. So what is their place in a re-engineered economy such as we can expect in the next few years?

Public transport results in lots of personal space issues: having to stand, being squeezed between seats, and 'missing trains and buses' are just some of the problems. Even with solutions to these difficulties others are only avoided by use of our car: (a) our car provides creature comfort when it rains or is hot; (b) our car is forgiving of our disorganisation: we can just bundle it all on the back seat; (c) our car provides a personal solution to the two greatest suburban uses, school and shopping; (d) time is less critical: the car does not run to a rigid timetable. Our car is an extension of ourselves, and this may be a way to cater for this need.

*John Leavesley*