



Congestion Inquiry

The TCPA made a submission to the Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission (VCEC) Inquiry into '*Managing Transport Congestion*' in December 2005.

The Committee's purpose was to influence the debate and thence any formal advice to the Victorian government concerning changes in financial incentives for use of transport that would reduce, as far as possible, unsustainable demand for road transport.

Our concern was that any road-pricing scheme that focused purely on reducing congestion could lead to undesirable geographic shifts in land-use location decisions (i.e. sprawl), whilst leaving transport demand at high and unsustainable levels.

The following is an extract from this submission.

Value of transport: It is most important to define and then evaluate the comprehensive set of measures of 'value' and thus value-creation and value-addition in transport. Obvious definitions and measures include *sector of usage* (freight, passenger) and functional *attributes* (e.g. \$ cost to users and funders, transit time (mobility), time reliability, psychological attributes, negative and positive externalities) that are seen by stakeholders (including users) as providing both positive and negative value. VCEC's issues paper uses only the unit of travel time as a measure of congestion, and avoids the word "value" (of transport).

Policy makers must distinguish between *congestion* and *accessibility/mobility*.

The TCPA suspects that there is less scope than many congestion-pricing advocates assume, to force changes in the time-based travel patterns by the penalty-pricing of congestion.

Worthy strategic goals: Scope beyond congestion

A road transportation pricing system should be much broader in application than congestion pricing alone. The goals of road and other

transport modes' pricing must be comprehensive, with time horizons similar to or beyond the infrastructure lifecycles. One sub-set of these goals must be a major and sustainable shift in personal travel from private cars to public transport and non-motorised travel.

The need for equity of outcomes also requires any road-pricing scheme or system (RPS) to pledge its revenues to developing improved and more sustainable transport networks and strategically desired nodes of land-use consolidation. RPS schemes must achieve desired outcomes for the integration and optimisation of land-use and transport.

Public transport, insofar that it is taxpayer subsidised, is notoriously regressively inequitable in the pattern of its service delivery. The issue of transport-rich, affluent inner suburbs is well understood. Any road-pricing regime, including congestion pricing, must minimise the extent to which its operation causes much loss or gain to individual entities, other than rewarding those who use cars less, and either reduce their physical travel or/and switch to use of public transport, walking and cycling.

Improving accessibility and mobility whilst reducing congestion

The TCPA argues that both transport "demand" ("stick") and "supply" ("carrot") strategies must together be brought to bear in reducing congestion whilst improving the mobility of valuable travel.

The obvious case in point is where road network capacity and travel speeds are improved via major arterial road construction, which triggers more travel demand (largely via migration of land uses to the new road corridor), which leads to renewed congestion and reduced quality of access.

Road pricing revenue should be devoted not to additional road capacity, but to

- (i) improving speed and reliability of road-based public transport;

- (ii). improved and expedited mass transit and safer cycling infrastructure;
- (iii). rectification of bottlenecks (e.g. rail crossings), which create traffic delays/build-ups; and
- (iv). rail and road freight infrastructure

Activity dispersal vs. strongly integrated transport and land-use planning

Land-use and transport infrastructure policies must always be aligned. No road-pricing regime that aims to promote public transport usage will work without a close physical intertwining of land-use sites with public transport access nodes.

Risk strategy in planning

In Victoria, the threats from peak oil production and greenhouse restriction of carbon emissions have been neglected: for example, what is the justification for the goal of 20% personal travel modal share by public transport as stated in Melbourne 2020? Planning strategy should be robust in the face of feasible scenarios, e.g. oil decline or severe restraints on carbon emissions.

Integrating these themes into a general road transport pricing concept

Use Electronic Road Pricing (ERP) to separate freight trucks and passenger cars into different lanes by price-driven preference, with mobility priority for emergency, PT and freight vehicles. Road pricing transponders to be installed in all vehicles, to be paid for by vehicle "occupier" (owner/user). This is now being offered by Norwich Union General Insurance in UK for "pay-as-you-drive" insurance premiums.

Benefits would include reduced transport infrastructure congestion, improved travel times, lowered freight vehicle running costs (other than the road or rail pricing), improved public transport and cycling networks, road infrastructure, enhanced district centres, improved ambience of living environments, and cross-subsidies of transport-disadvantaged communities.

Verbal Submission

The committee is preparing to give a verbal presentation to the VCEC.

A Personal View on Congestion Costs

"A congestion tax like London's is unlikely to be as effective by itself in Melbourne as our roads are still well below congestion traffic levels for much of the day. CBD cordon tolls would drive commerce to the suburbs and away from the rail hub.

A better approach is what I call "Wide Area Road Pricing" based on variable per-driven-metre tolling whose rate varies with time of day (and congestion levels), quality of available PT (public transport) alternatives, class of vehicle, purpose of trip, etc. Convert fixed vehicle costs like rego, insurance to this distance-based fee. It is possible to set up and justify a 50 cents per km toll. It is fair in that those who drive more would pay more into the public kitty for transport, and those who drive less pay less.

In inner suburbs where trips are well catered for by PT, a high distance toll rate would apply. In outer suburbs with poor services, a low rate would apply. Currently motoring is around 50 to 70 cents per km, and cross-suburban bus trips average around 45 cents per km, plus \$1 per km of time costs additional to car travel time. Upgrade train and bus services to 10 minutes headways in daytime, to cut a lot of this extra PT trip time.

The necessary technology already exists. I am a transport consultant and I have developed and presented these strategies in professional forums as part of what I call "Transport Equity Pricing" (TEP). Other aspects of high road tolling charges in TEP are to displace part or all of current fuel taxes, to fund the PT system and its expansion, road construction and maintenance, and to affect a shift in public subsidies from the inner toward the outer suburbs in part-payment of municipal council operating costs, by partially substituting property rates."

Peter Hill

Nowingi No Go

TCPA made a verbal presentation in June this year to the panel hearing for the proposed solid waste containment facility at Nowingi, in northwest Victoria. Our principal concern is with the transport risk and associated exhaust gas emissions from trucks, but our fundamental position on waste storage is that it should be considered as a short-term solution, which should be phased out as cleaner industrial processes are developed.

An edited version of TCPA's written submission to the Planning Panel (Victoria) will be posted soon at TCPA website <http://www.tcpa.org.au>

Channel Deepening and Alternatives

The committee is developing a position on channel deepening in anticipation of public hearings early in 2007. A brief outline of three possible scenarios follows.

The background to channel deepening is the growth in medium value semi- and fully-manufactured goods, which has been maintained in various continents, particularly Asia. Logistics and supply chain strategies have extended the competition in manufacturing to the transport task, largely undertaken in containers.

The rise in the concentration and influence of the 'megacarrier' container ship has resulted in an equivalent loss of influence by seaports. Instead, they must now make themselves attractive as ports of call to the ship operators if they are to retain their role as an internationally competitive port.

One perspective might be to canvass three options; being (a) deepening the Port Philip Bay channel, (b) developing the existing deeper natural channel in Western Port, and (c) the utilisation of a northern port on the east coast, such as Gladstone.

In the case of Port Philip, the long-term investment has been made by the private sector in much of the wharf infrastructure. This is obviously the favourite choice and has already been slated for additional terminals at Westgate (the site just below the Westgate Bridge). It is estimated that investment in high levels of I.T. and infrastructure would make the terminals effective until current throughput is at least trebled, leaving the problem of domestic inner city congestion to be resolved.

Option (b) may be seen as complementary, requiring little investment in dredging and marine infrastructure, but far more investment in landside terminal and transport infrastructure. Serious consideration is being given to a third rail track on the Dandenong line and the Stony Point rail line is currently in use. Large tankers use the BHP/Esso Long Point Jetty (Hastings), and Bluescope Steel has a roll-on-roll-off jetty a little to the north. Reservation of appropriate land is still possible.

Option (c) is a significant departure from existing strategies. This option envisages the utilisation of the national rail networks of South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland to bypass southern States in tandem with extensive investment in Queensland. Sites from Brisbane to Gladstone have been suggested. The scale economy advantages of a single East coast port to handle all container operations from Adelaide to Gladstone are clearly worth considering. In addition, the decreased distance from Northern Australia to the northern hemisphere may provide substantial benefits in shipping times and freight rates. The negatives include the obvious political objections raised by the most populous States, the effects of uncertain climate, and access to water, which will impinge on such a development. At a less esoteric level, the variety of railway gauges throughout the nation will continue to provide substantial barriers to more effective domestic transportation. Queensland employs a 1,067mm (narrow) gauge, New South Wales 1,435mm (standard) gauge, and Victoria 1,600mm (broad) gauge. It must, however, be noted that Melbourne-Sydney-Brisbane is joined by standard gauge and some Victorian lines have standard gauge. The problems, however, are greater than simply changing the rails, as evidenced by the costs and disruption experienced by the recent Victorian upgrades to regional centres.

John Leavesley

Mega-Chadstone exposes growth plan's fatal flaw

This letter was originally published in The Age newspaper in December 2005.

Planning Minister Rob Hulls is indeed correct when he asserts that the massive expansion of Chadstone Shopping Centre is in line with the Bracks Government's metropolitan planning blueprint, Melbourne 2030, which identifies Chadstone as a "principal activity centre" where growth should be concentrated.

However, this does not mean that the expansion is in keeping with the objectives of the planning blueprint, which emphasizes the need to increase public transport so as to achieve the (seemingly oxymoronic) state of "sustainable growth". It is, rather, the result of some peculiarly anomalous provisions of the "activity centre" section of the report that assert that town centres based around public transport nodes, and stand-alone, car-based shopping centres are not, in fact, different entities, but are merely two variations on the theme of principal activity centres.

This is quite contrary to previous planning policies for metropolitan Melbourne, which have fully recognised the major differences between the two types of centres and sought to encourage major new development in town or district centres, which were well served by public transport, to incorporate a wide diversity of non-retail activities and to restrict the development of stand-alone shopping centres.

Unfortunately, the *Melbourne 2030* plan includes a provision that "where catchments overlap in any part of the network of centres, priority of investment and location of significant land uses will be given to principal activity centres". This means that, under the plan, it is considered more appropriate for development to take place at Chadstone rather than at, say, Oakleigh or Malvern, both of which have excellent access to fixed-rail public transport and community facilities such as libraries and municipal and government offices.

Two questions need to be answered as a matter of urgency by Rob Hulls and his senior planning bureaucrats:

- Just how serious are they about making Melbourne a more sustainable city, with increased public transport usage?
- Why does the plan contain nothing that could in any way be seen to constrain the unlimited expansion of free-standing shopping centres, even though this expansion is clearly contrary to the stated objectives of the plan?

It should be noted that, by deleting the condition sought by Stonnington Council calling for the Government and the shopping centre owners to study transport to Chadstone, including the construction of a possible rail link, Mr Hulls is not even paying lip service to the (very limited) public transport encouragement provision of the activity centre section of the plan, which states that "the Government will work with the private sector to help effect improvements to public transport at principal activity centres".

So at least as far as achieving environmentally sustainable, public transport-accessible, major activity centres is concerned, the *Melbourne 2030* plan is hardly worth the paper it is printed on, which is, at least, as the inside of the front cover so proudly proclaims, 100 percent recycled.

Ken Duxbury