

Transport solutions for Melbourne's West – smarter, greener and cheaper transport

“You’ve got a system grinding to a halt, land use spiralling out of control, new roads that don’t work because they fill so quickly, fuel prices, greenhouse gases and communities lost in the outer suburbs who are car dependent. All of these things are coming together.”

Professor Peter Newman,

Director of the Institute for Sustainability and Technology, Murdoch University

The community wants fast, reliable, and safe public transport

The community wants public transport that works. The government asked the community about east-west transport links in 2008. They received 2,149 public submissions. A huge majority supported greater investment in public transport, not roads. A staggering 1,669 opposed the tunnel option, compared to only 171 who were in favour of it.

Polling consistently shows the public is unhappy with the government’s handling of public transport. For example, a February 2010 *The Age*/Nielsen Poll showed that two-thirds of voters are dissatisfied with the state government’s performance on public transport¹. An earlier poll showed similar dissatisfaction levels and that 68% of people want more funding directed to public transport *instead* of roads, and just 19% support roads as the priority².

The government’s own plan – *Melbourne 2030* – supports this approach. It focuses on developing sustainable urban form with reduced driving, traffic-calmed streets, public transport, walking and cycling access. A subsequent audit of *Melbourne 2030* reinforced this objective and recommended:

“prioritising actions to support a rapid modal shift over the next five years from car to public transport... and walking and cycling

Melbourne’s West – how long do we have to wait?

The population of Melbourne’s West has been increasing at a rate double that of the rest of Melbourne. Yet, this growth has been accompanied by low level of investment in high quality transport services³. Melbourne’s inner and outer west growth areas are least served by public transport and cycling links⁴. We are witnessing the result of a growing population not serviced by public transport. This has led to:

- Heavily congested roads
- Car dependency
- Transport related health and social well-being concerns
- “Transport poverty” and increasing oil price vulnerability
- Rising greenhouse gas emissions

Expanded public transport is urgently required to bring the supply and quality of the services available within the western region to the same level as other regions of Melbourne⁵.

The government’s proposed Westlink tunnel and freeway/tollway.

The Westlink proposal involves two kilometres of tunnel from Dynon Road and Footscray Road in West Melbourne, under the Maribyrnong river then surfacing in the West Footscray-Kingsville area, where the tunnel will link with a new above ground eight-kilometre long, six-lane freeway sitting upon a five-metre-high viaduct. It has a price tag of over \$5 billion. Meanwhile, minimal investment is going to public transport for the West.

Building roads generates more car use & creates more congestion

“The past 20 years have seen billions invested in freeways. Each augmentation has come with a promise that congestion would be cured, ignoring the tendency of new freeways to attract traffic and undermine public transport. As the greenhouse clock ticks, do we really want to commit another \$10 billion to this illusion?”

Professor Bill Russell, Deputy Director of the Centre for the Governance and Management of Urban Transport, University of Melbourne, commenting on the proposed East-West Link.

Building roads in already congested residential areas, like Melbourne's West, results in additional car travel, car numbers and congestion through the generation of more traffic⁶. This also increases downstream congestion, for example adding congestion on surface streets, particularly around on and off ramps⁷.

Supposed travel time savings have been used for economic justification and the spending of very substantial sums of taxpayers money on Melbourne's freeways over the last two or so decades. However, new urban freeway construction in Melbourne has delivered no improvements in traffic speeds due to the generated traffic that is created⁸. Research by John Odgers⁹ of RMIT University found *"major road infrastructure initiatives and the consequent economic investments have not yet delivered a net economic benefit to either Melbourne motorists or the Victorian community."*

"Congestion is the symptom. Dependence on cars is the problem."¹⁰

Freight & trucks off our streets and onto rail

Trucks and their pollution already cause major congestion, safety and pollution problems in our neighbourhoods. Yet, the volume of freight is expected to quadruple by 2035. The solution is to shift freight that is going to and from the Port off trucks, and off our streets, and onto rail. Coupled with restricting movements to identified corridors, use of intermodal hubs and smart distribution networks, our streets would have much less truck traffic. The government's plan to build a new tunnel and freeway/ tollway for this freight will just keep it on the roads instead of rail.

Public transport works – the government just hasn't invested

"While other cities are extending their rail systems to cope with rising oil prices and climate change, Melbourne has not built a new suburban railway since the Glen Waverley line opened in 1930".

Paul Mees, School of Global Studies, RMIT University.

No major rail extensions have taken place in Melbourne since the 1930's, despite an extra 2.7 million residents¹¹. In spite of



growing congestion, car dependency, greenhouse emissions and fuel prices, roads continue to receive priority funding. For example, in the 5 year period from 2000-2005, the Victorian government spent \$286 million a year on new city freeways and arterial roads, while about \$10 million annually was allocated to rail and tram projects over the same period¹². If the government spends over \$5 billion on Westlink you can guarantee there will be no money left over for major investment in public transport, despite their claims that it's 'part of the plan.' The state government has admitted that funding for Westlink is their top priority for funding from the federal government¹³.

So severe is the public transport neglect that:

- 70% of Melbourne residents have no effective access to regular public transport services¹⁴
- Only 3 % of jobs are reachable by public transport if you live outside the inner city¹⁵
- In outer suburbs poorly serviced by public transport, 95% of trips are by private car¹⁶

Its not surprising that Melbourne is one of the most car dependent cities in the world¹⁷.

Costs of car-dependence

Scheurer, Kenworthy and Newman¹⁸ observed that Melbourne is confronted with *"... mounting social, environmental and economic costs of ever-increasing car use, and ... future economic vulnerability as transport fuels become more expensive"*.

Costs to the economy

"the more a city is built around car dependence, the more that city's wealth is wasted on just getting around ... the more a city has committed itself to public transport infrastructure, the less the city spends overall on transport."

Scheurer, Kenworthy and Newman.

Costs of congestion nationally were over \$12 billion in 2002¹⁹ and have been projected to be as high as \$30 billion per year by 2015²⁰. Additional and external costs are road expenditure, air pollution, climate change, noise and accidents.

“Developing a well integrated public transport system is an effective method of increasing the efficiency of the Melbourne economy by cutting congestion and time spent in traffic”²¹.

Health and social wellbeing

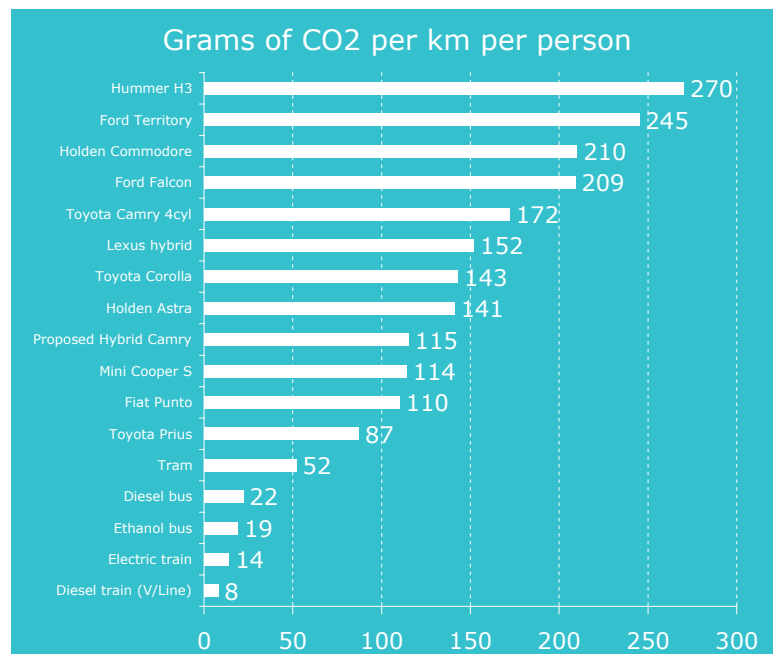
“The adverse impacts of transport upon public health cannot be dismissed ... there is a growing body of evidence linking vehicle emissions, noise and reduced levels of physical activity with increased health risk”.

VicHealth.

Inadequate access to public transport together with excessive car travel causes socio-economic distress, social isolation and limited physical activity²². Noise and air pollution from large traffic volumes will immediately and directly affect local communities and can impact on health and wellbeing. The Environmental Protection Authority states *“Noise pollution can disturb our work, concentration, relaxation and sleep. It can cause stress and create or worsen physical problems such as high blood pressure, chronic exhaustion and heart disease.”* Air pollution will increase including carbon monoxide (CO), Nitrogen Oxides (NOx), particulate matter and volatile organic compounds pollution. The biggest polluter of Melbourne’s air is motor vehicles.

Greenhouse gas emissions

Transport is Australia’s third largest and second fastest growing source of greenhouse gas emissions. The road transport sector makes up 88% of total transport emissions with passenger cars the largest single contributor (62%), followed by trucks (20%) and light commercial vehicles (16%). Without intervention emissions are projected to rise substantially to 64% above 1990 levels by 2020²³. In contrast, public transport performs with significantly fewer emissions than cars. Powering trains and trams with electricity from renewable sources would reduce their greenhouse emissions to zero.



(Source: Public Transport Users Association)

Rising fuel prices

The CSIRO found that the price of oil based fuel products will continue to rise and petrol could reach \$8 per litre by 2018, costing \$450 to fill the average car. Melbourne’s West is the most oil-dependent, least served by public transport, and most socially and economically disadvantaged region in the city²⁴. This can lead to transport poverty, which occurs when people have no option but to own and run cars which consume significant proportions of household income. Professor Graeme Currie of Monash University has found that *“on the outskirts of Melbourne alone, at least 20,000 families earn less than \$500 per week but run more than two cars.”*

Great public transport is the way to meet the West’s needs

“We need to build the needed rail lines and other public transport infrastructure that will serve Melbourne for many generations to come, helping ensure our city remains liveable and resilient to future challenges”

Metropolitan Transport Forum.

There is significant and growing demand for public transport, especially in the face of spiraling petrol prices, worsening congestion and the need to reduce greenhouse emissions. This demand can be met in large part by public transport – for example, a train every 10 minutes carries around the same number of people as a freeway. If the proportion of people travelling to work into the inner city from the western suburbs on public transport increased from 3 in 10 to just 6 in 10 this would make room on our roads for the cars and trucks that need to be there, and would cater for expected population growth for the next 17 years²⁵.

The Westlink proposal is **not** a solution. It will serve only to increase congestion, exacerbate car dependency, oil vulnerability and transport poverty, compound health risks and increase greenhouse gas emissions. Evidence demonstrates that sustainable outcomes will be significantly greater through developing public transport infrastructure and services.

As the Australian Conservation Foundation states *"we can create cities that are more efficient, cleaner and more liveable places with fast, reliable and convenient public transport and healthier people"*. The community wants it ... what is required now is the political will to implement it.



We can have smarter, greener and cheaper transport

- Train, tram and bus services every 10 minutes
- Train, tram and bus services from 6am to midnight, 7 days a week
- Staff on all railway stations to ensure safety and service
- Electrification and duplication of the train line to Melton and Bacchus Marsh
- Upgrades to deliver efficiency, and reduce cancellations and delays
- Improve bus frequency and speed through road priority
- More and direct bus routes, that connect with trains
- Upgrade bus shelters and stops providing protection from weather, lighting and real time information
- More and safe cycle paths, reinstate the bike punt at Spotswood, and secure bike parking at stations

¹ Rood, D., 2010. 'Baillieu bounds into contention'. The Age. 2 February 2010.

² Lucas, C., & Dowling, J. 2008. 'Fix public transport, Brumby urged'. The Age. 25.11.2008

³ Sheehan, P., & Wiseman, J. 2004. 'Investing in Melbourne's West: a Region in Transition'. Centre for Strategic Economic Studies and the Institute for Community Engagement and Policy Alternatives. Victoria University.

⁴ Dodson, J. & Sipe, N., 2006. 'Shocking the Suburbs: Urban Location, Housing Debt and Oil Vulnerability in the Australian City'. Research Paper 8, Urban Research Program, Griffith University.

⁵ Sheehan & Wiseman, op. cit.

⁶ Litman, T., 2010. 'Generated Traffic and Induced Travel: Implications for Transport Planning'. Victoria Transport Policy Institute and Williams-Derry, C. 2007. 'Increases in greenhouse-gas emissions from highway-widening projects'. Sightline Institute.

⁷ Litman, op. cit.

⁸ Australasian Centre for the Governance and Management of Urban Transport, 2009.

as cited in Litman, op. cit.

⁹ Odgers, J., 2009. 'Have all the travel time savings on Melbourne road network been achieved?' - A GAMUT Discussion Paper'. School of Management, RMIT University.

¹⁰ Metropolitan Transport Forum, 2008. 'Melbourne Transport Plan: PT4me2 for a change'.

¹¹ Metropolitan Transport Forum, 2008, op. cit.

¹² Millar, R., 2005. 'State favours freeways over rail, trams: expert'. The Age, 5 November 2005.

¹³ Lucas, C., 2010. 'New freeway is top priority: state'. The Age. 3 May 2010.

¹⁴ Metropolitan Transport Forum, 2009. 'Submission to Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport - Inquiry into public passenger transport infrastructure and services'.

¹⁵ Newman, P. as cited in Cowan, J., 2007. 'Researchers warn of 'transport poverty''. The Age, 27 June 2007.

¹⁶ Metropolitan Transport Forum, 2009, op. cit.

¹⁷ Currie, G., 2009. 'Australian Urban

Transport and Social Disadvantage'. The Australian Economic Review, vol. 42, no. 2, pp 201-208.

¹⁸ Scheurer, J., Kenworthy, J., and Newman, P. 2005. 'Most liveable and most connected? The economic benefits of investing in public transport in Melbourne'. Metropolitan Transport Forum, Melbourne.

¹⁹ Stanley, J., 2002. 'A Sustainable Transport Culture for 2020: an Operator's Perspective'. Bus Association Victoria.

²⁰ BTRE, 2000, as cited in Australian Sustainable Built Environment Council, 2010. 'Cities for the Future: baseline report and key issues'.

²¹ Metropolitan Transport Forum, 2008. op. cit.

²² Scheurer, et al., op. cit.

²³ Federal Department of Climate Change, 2007.

²⁴ Dobson & Sipe, op. cit.

²⁵ Rice, J., 2008 Transitioning Melbourne's transport systems to a low carbon future Submission to Victorian Government regarding the EWLNA Study.

Join Colleen Hartland in pushing for smarter, greener and cheaper transport

