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SPECIAL TRANSPORT ISSUE (Part 1)

TRANSPORT - A PARTISAN VIEW

(By Alpha)

1. Transport Only One Facet of Planning Purpose

The long-awaited Metropolitan Transportation Committee's report was to have appeared in June 1968, then, it was rumored, in November 1968, now, some say, in April 1969 and others tip June 1969.

Could it be that the unexplained cause of delay has been the difficulty of resolving whether the emphasis should be on a radial freeway system, or support for improved rail systems?

We wish to examine a few recent contributions on this most vital planning issue of the mid-twentieth century.

Let us say, right at the outset, that we believe strongly that it is quite unscientific to discuss transport without integrating policies on housing densities, growth patterns, locations of major industrial and social facilities and the impact of all of these factors on social behaviour.

Thus the workability, popularity and economic feasibility of fixed rail transport for commuters, shoppers and other becomes magnified many times if (as the Government has already decided) future urban growth should be "corridor" growth along transport spines and if (which has not yet been decided) high density housing, big factories, big shopping centers and big sporting and entertainment facilities are located along the rail spines.

If, on the contrary, low-density is encouraged to continue everywhere, if corridors are abandoned, if location of major facilities are to be scattered and not rail-based, we are well on the way to the inevitable car-chocking of our vital central city area, sharply reducing its effectiveness and with it the excellence of the highest form of our cities endeavours.

As a corollary, all this has social impacts encouraging an increasingly materialistic and mediocre suburban trend, with our youth scattering in cars and failing to come together again at the end of their journey into any significant social gatherings. The mass media dictates how the vacuum is to be filled: with an increasing emphasis on "swinging it up with the Joneses" on the basis of consumer goods housed in bigger and bigger houses with more and more cars, boats, caravans and swimming pools packed into the backyard.

In the author's view, therefore, the issue: freeways or railways is not simply an economic question, not simply a technical question of the most efficient way of moving large masses of people, is not simply even a question of what is, for the moment, the most popular (although all these are factors that have to be brought into account.) More importantly the issue is one facet of a much deeper and infinitely more important question: are we to succumb to a mediocre way of life with fragmentation of social effort and declining popular appreciation of the more abiding values, or are we to fight for a way of life that is increasingly urban human and civilised?

Now to some texts and recent history:

2. A Summary of the Consultants Report:

(prepared for the Metropolitan Transportation Committee 1966 by Wilbur Smith and Associates and Len T. Frazer and Associates, costing \$850,000.00).

(1) Wilbur Smith's Facts

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Density... 50 persons per acre in inner suburbs to less than 10 persons per acre in outer suburbs..."

Location.... "63% resident within 8 miles of the centre --- about the extent of the area covered by the tramway system"

Workers.... 2/3rds in the inner western and northern are blue collar, less 1/4 of the total workers resident in the eastern and south-eastern suburbs are blue collar.

Employment... the tertiary industries -- professional finance public administration utilities and miscellaneous services -- provide nearly 1/3rd of the total jobs.

....Melbourne, Port Melbourne and South Melbourne contain 50% of the jobs in the tertiary industry but only 1/3rd of the industrial jobs.

Car Ownership.... .4 per household in inner suburbs to 1.0 per household in eastern and south-eastern (average .8 per household.)

Road.... only 5% of roads carry more than 25,000 vehicles per day... off peak speeds: 10 MPH Swanston Street, 20-30 MPH inner suburbs or streets with trams, 30-40 MPH beyond 10 miles. Peak speeds 2/3rds of above.

890 buses, 2332 taxis, 91,000 commercial, 517,000 cars

Railways.... 412,000 passengers per day 2/3rds of whom enter central business district. Therefor the "highly peaked nature of train passenger travel."

Speeds 25 MPH Frankston route, 20 MPH most other routes.

Frequencies basic off-peak frequency 20 minutes.

185 railway stations. 70% carriages more than 35 years old.

Trams.... 552,000 passengers per day, 1/4 of whom enter central business districts.

".... no off-street terminals and most loading takes place in the centre of the street."

75% of trams more than 25 years old.

"basic off-peak headway is 12 minutes.... peak less than 5 minutes..."

Speeds 12 MPH off-peak. 10 MPH peak.

Buses.... Only 17 of 205 routes enter the city

(No figures of total number of passengers per day)

..."the bus network in general supports the two main carriers --- trains and trams...."

Frequencies.... 1/4 the routes have peak headways of 20 minutes or more. In off-peak 8 routes do not operate, services on 64 routes are infrequent without regular headways, and half the routes have headways of 30 minutes or more."

"Therefore the service provided on most bus routes is much inferior to the train and tram routes mainly, because they are operating across the principal desire lines of travel in areas of low population density."

<u>Goods</u>	Within the area	99.6% by road
	To and from the area	60% by road
	Through the area	20% by road

Travel Characteristics

"....20% of all trips to central business district--- a clear indication of the attraction of the central area. About 72% of central area trips are made on public transport. 27% by train, 39% by tram and 6% by bus -- but the mode of travel in the remainder of the survey area is the reverse -- 71% by private transport and 29% by public transport..."

....Trips for work and school purposes both of which tend to occur in peak periods totalled 80% of all train trips, nearly 66% of tram-bus trips but only 34% of private transport trips...

Trends in Work Travel 1951 to 1964 private transport as their main mode of travel to work increased from 26% to 58%. 116

(ii) Wilbur Smith's Methods and Conclusions

"Because of the repetitive nature of daily travel by urban area residents, mathematical equations or models, can be derived to link land-use development, the transportation system, and the social characteristics of the population. The models developed from the current survey will be used to predict future travel, based on estimated future land use development and an assumed transportation system..." (p.12)

"...target year of 1985..."

....the trial networks range from the provisions of a complete freeway system combined with an improved public transport system offering a 'reasonable' level of service to a plan providing a 'maximum' degree of public transport movement with a much more limited freeway system. In every case the networks envisage improved access to and distribution through and around the city area by means of an underground railway and underground trams. Express bus services on freeways are proposed together with an express rail service from the Doncaster area. 'Maximum' public transport is achieved by providing faster scheduled speeds and more frequent services; the new freeway systems vary between 250 and 350 miles in length in addition to an arterial road system of 1900 miles." (p. 14)

"...Trips by private transport are expected to increase from 2,000,000 in 1964 to about 6,000,000 trips per day in 1985. Trips by train will rise by 50% to nearly 600,000 passengers per day by 1985.." (same with bus-train.)

3. Softening-Up For Freeways Commenced

(1) Wilcox's Kiteflying

"The Minister for Transport (Mr. Wilcox) revealed last night that expected requirements for Melbourne's transport up to 1985 would cost more than \$2000 million on present day costs.

Mr. Wilcox said transport facilities for the Melbourne of 1985 would include 300 miles of freeway as well as the \$80 Melbourne underground.

...The \$2000 million is double an estimate made in September last year, but this was based on a \$70 million underground and only 200 miles of freeway..."

"...the main basis of the transport plan is a survey carried out by the American Consultants Wilbur Smith & Associates..."

"...Mr. Wilcox said....that by 1985...about 3 times as many cars as now...action to keep pace with the need for a balanced transport system would require practical public support"..
Age 14/12/1968.

(ii) R.A.C.V. Survey

"Peak-hour drivers are now taking up to 75% longer than they did in 1960 to travel to the city". "The delays...are said to be adding between 30 cents and \$3.00 a week to thousands of commuter's costs of travel."

"These figures...were released by the club (ie R.A.C.V.) yesterday at the start of a campaign to gain a better deal for Victoria in the new Commonwealth aid roads agreement due to be thrashed out at the next Premier's conference in June..."
(Age 21/2/1969)

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(iii) Tram and Train Fares Increase

Stock-in-trade for the cartoonists since the steep fares increase is that only the rich can "afford" to go by public transport.

Of the latest fare increases in January 1969 which were the sixth by the Bolte Government, Leader of the Opposition Mr. C. Holding said "the Government is so private-enterprise minded that I think it is happy to let the public transport system run down to a point where it can possibly get some sort of take-over by private firms"... (Age 7/1/1969)

12/19/9 (iv) Umpteen Press Articles on Road Needs

And hardly any at all on train, tram and the feeder-bus needs.

For example, big headline, "Highway to Chaos -- Capital Cities Need Traffic Cash -- Now" by E.L. Sheehan National President of the Australian Road Federation (Herald 8/1/1969)

For example "We're Hit by Mean Deal on Roads" by Peter Cairns Herald Economist (Herald 11/1/1969).

1/19/9 (v) Loaded Propaganda

It is moral and commendable to spend public money on roads "Your taxes at Work" boast the hoardings on the new road works.

It is immoral, almost "socialistic" to spend public money on railways or tramways.

"\$11.5 million deficit for Railway" screams a page 3 headline (Age 4/12/1968) Heading could have been "We're Hit by Mean Deal for Railways!!"

4. Critiques of Wilbur Smith

14/19/9 (i) Troy and Russell

In the Australian Planning Institute Journal Vol 5 No.1 Jan 1967 at pp13-16 these appeared an article "Transportation Studies Anyone?" by Mr. Patrick N. Troy of the Urban Research Unit, Australian National University.

He does not mention Wilbur Smith but he does deal with the current method of study of transport systems, "which may be of sufficient importance to negate the validity of the study finding and, in particular, to negate so-called reductions in congestion".

.... "this is not intended as criticism of the techniques of estimation of generated trips or of net work assignment methods.. the aspects... which are being queried are the land-use estimates"

"...By concentrating the higher density residences around employment and transport nodes, significant reduction in trip volumes and lengths could be achieved... would encourage usage of public transport.... Voorkees and others (in "Traffic Patterns and Land Use Alternatives H.R.B. Bulletin 347, 1962) have shown the magnitude of the reduction in traffic volumes and trip length which can be achieved by "re-arrangement" of land uses..."

".....more rational....in trying to determine the most economics arrangement of land uses and the most economic pattern of growth with the reduction of trip length and increase in accessibility as major objectives..."

~~Mr. P. N. Troy, Director of the Urban Research Unit, Australian National University~~
~~Quoted in the Australian Planning Institute Journal Vol 5 No.1 Jan 1967 at pp13-16~~

15/19/9

Mr. Ian F. Russell in the same issue of A.P.I. Journal Traffic Engineer of the R.A.C.V. adds his weight, in a rather muted key to the above by criticising the fact that "land-use planning, land transport and other functions related to transport are generally scattered among different planning and administrative organisations"

16/19/9

Mr. R.S. Skeates an officer of the Main Roads Dept. Queensland rebuts Troy's arguments in the A.P.I Journal Vol 5 No 3 July 1967 "... 'trend' information provides a wealth of factual data on existing conditions and by reflecting the past and present value judgments of the population, it indicates the direction in which further development is pointed. Mr. Troy apparently favours inspirational (of alternatively hunch or 'seat of the pants') planning..." "demands include not only those of travel but also of land development..."

To which Mr. Troy replied ".... what Mr. Skeates understands by 'land-use planning surveys...(implies)....a static approach to communities....similar to those made of transportation studies of the type recently performed in Australia, and they bear no resemblance to the dynamic approach suggested...."

17/19/9

(ii) History Obtrudes

While the Melbourne Wilbur Smith report was prepared in 1966 apparently without reference to radically different growth patterns or radically changed housing densities (let alone an even more dynamics approach of "re-arrangement of land uses") in 1957 the Town & Country Planning Board produced a report with transport and growth pattern ideas (but no housing density ideas) and the Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works a report with growth pattern and density ideas (but no transport ideas).

The T.C.P.B. report proposed a "trunk" railway line skirting the eastern fringes of Melbourne's suburbs joining the Melbourne-Sydney line to the Gippsland line (via Ringwood and Dandenong or thereabouts) with a continuation to Westernport.

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The outward growth/Melbourne was pictured in a long south-eastern corridor towards Warragul with a southern branch to Westernport. "metro-towns" centres serving population of some 100,000 (= the size of Geelong) being strung along these elongated corridors around a commuter transport spine.

18/19/9

The M.M.B.W. report proposed siting 500,000 more people in 8,000 acres of inner Melbourne re-development at densities of 130/60 persons per acre. Outward growth was shown in 6 take-your-pick alternatives, most of which embraced the corridor idea, but all of which contained the idea of "balancing" Melbourne by growth to the west and north.

"This corridor pattern" says the M.M.B.W. Report "can make the best use of public transport although many new freeways and highways will be needed, some of which could be located in the wedges of open country between the corridors" (p 27)

"...major changes in land use, building densities and building types will need to occur within the present built-up area and in the new urban areas, new forms of urban development such as growth centres, which form a focus of community activity will need to be established. This will clearly involve greater flexibility than is at present available under the Uniform Building Regulations and Municipal By-laws, to allow better relationships to be established between buildings rather than between buildings, and the boundaries and the acknowledgement of some of the newer types of building development." (p 25)

19/19/9

In 1968 the Government adopted in principle the corridor concept the "balanced-Melbourne" concept and the high-density in inner-Melbourne concept, but was silent on any transport concepts.

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This no doubt, was inevitable (unless the Government wanted to make a farce of the Transportation Committee's studies) especially because "the transportation net works at present being tested in the Metropolitan Transportation Study relate to a proposed land-use which differs, from the corridor Growth pattern!!" (p 17 of M.M.B.W. report)

In 1968, too, research by the Housing Industry Association in "A Study in Land Usage" indicated that the MMBW had severely underestimated the potential for high-density re-development spread through the whole metropolitan area. (see Irregular No. 12 13/12/8 to 24/12/8)

5. A Few Comments

21/19/9 Most of the above-mentioned authorities produce either erroneous or at best partially-positive proposals because their transport ideas are not based on any consistent concept or the "quality of life" that is desired. There are no long terms social aims and so, a dozen short-term alternatives can be advanced; this one based on "trends" that one based on economics considerations, this one based on cars and buses, that one on railways this one based on a bigger high-density city central areas that one on decentralisation or scatteration of central-city functions among the suburbs.

21/19/9 Most primitive of all is Mr. Skeates; "trend" information... reflects the past and present value judgments of the population, it indicates the direction in which further development is pointed". This attitude can be carried to a negation of planning altogether. As well say "there are more and more youth taking drugs, here is the direction of further development or "more and more people are living permanently in fixed caravans in caravan-parks, there are value judgments indicating the future of housing."

As far as value judgments are concerned until quite recently young couples and purchasers of new houses/other choice than to "select" a detached house on a 50 feet frontage, to "select" a location remote from community vitality and "select" therefor a long tedious car-journey to work. Such process is closer to compulsion than a "value judgment". Even now there is no high-density specially designed for families with young children or teenagers in mass and so not even yet a real choice

23/19/9 More insidious than Skeates is the Wilbur Smith report because it disguises beneath scientific analysis "estimates" and predictions as if the trends shown by the computers were matters of Fate fixed unquestionable and unalterable by the wit of man.

Who said that rail transport will increase by half as much in 20 years, while car transport will increase by 3 times? Does that not depend on whether investments are spent on roads or railways? On this shattering unscientific premise, we are told we need 250 to 350 miles of freeways.

When Minister Wilcox repeats the same figures three years later and, with it, presumably, the same thinking, it is worth recalling that Wilbur Smith were the firm who did a special research job for General Motors Corporation in the U.S.A. and came up with the proposal of "metro-mobility"---a new (privately-owned) public transport system of buses on priority lanes in freeways.

23/19/9 When the Wilbur Smith (Melbourne) report says "Express bus services on freeways are proposed" (p 14) has Wilcox also taken over this idea eminently suitable to the interests of G.M.H. (Australia)? Is the city underground and express rail to Doncaster a camouflage to cover a basic freeway-based system? Is the term "balanced transport" used by Wilcox and M.M.B.W. chief planner Hepburn similarly a camouflaged for switching to a freeway-based system? Were the tram and train fare increases deliberately adopted for the same reason? Will Premier Bolte make an all-out bid for an increased road grant at the Premiers Conference, and abandon the requested grant for an underground and be silent on any grant for the \$37 Cape Schanck sewerage outfall?

24/19/9

Watch for the answer to these questions. And...as the transportation Committee will be supplying something of a "missing link" in the planning issues before the Government ...watch whether the Government or its newly-created State Planning Council fulfil the long-overdue statement of a statement of planning purpose outlining anything resembling the thoughts with which this article started----- or whether they consciously reject such ideas-- or whether they remain silent on purposes, goals, the "quality of life" but proceed with freeway plans adding thus just another dismal chapter to "drift planning."

(Next issue: Transport, continued)

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(Next issue: Transport, continued)