



VICTORIA UNIVERSITY
MELBOURNE AUSTRALIA

Irregular no. 20; Apr. 1969

This is the Unpublished version of the following publication

UNSPECIFIED (1969) Irregular no. 20; Apr. 1969. Irregular (20). pp. 1-8.
(Unpublished)

The publisher's official version can be found at

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IRREGULAR No: 20

An Irregular publication for members of the
Town Planning Research Group (not for general
or republication.)

SPECIAL TRANSPORT ISSUE (Part II)This issue:

1. Prof. Denis Winston on Freeways
2. The Cheapest TransportLeg-power.
3. Transport-- a Partisan View. (cont)

1/20/9

1. Prof. Denis Winston on Freeways.

An address was given by Prof. Denis Winston, Professor of Town planning at Sydney University on the 24/3/1969 on the occasion of the presentation of the Barrett medal by the Governor of Victoria to the Minister for Local Government Mr. R.J. Hamer-- a function organised by the Town & Country Planning Association.

Three remarks he made were impressive.

Paraphrasing his remarks:

1. Planning resources and procedures are much too slow to meet the rapidity of change for which Melbourne is destined in the next thirty (30) years. He said the Federal Government has the money and the powers and the local authorities have the problems.-- but the money power and problems all have to be brought together. This not only because the Federal Government is the only source of big money but because only the Federal Government can see the Australian picture as a whole.
2. He called for the need for the improvement of public transport which should be faster more comfortable and cheap. He warned against freeways into the city because they simply can't work. He underlined this graphically, quoting people:
 - (a) It is like playing a fire-hydrant in the front door of a doll's house.
 - (b) Again and again American cities have proved that it can't work. From Boston recently once again, even if we have 10 lane or 15 lane freeways, it cannot solve the problem of where to park them.
3. The future Geelong-Melbourne-Latrobe Valley urban corridor should not be a sprawl of houses, but a series of communities and that where the local authorities come in, perhaps with suitable advisory committees to assist them create communities.

2/20/9

2. The Cheapest Transport Leg-power.

("by Gamma")

Pedestrian traffic has come to be taken for granted as merely a matter of a footpath on the edge of the road.

This parallel strip ruins all the pleasure of walking.

It makes you seem hopelessly slow, the car exhausts make the atmosphere smelly and poisonous, the engine noises make conversation difficult, the swishing of cars is not only wearying, but a constant reminder that cars can be lethal to pedestrians who do not cling to the side walk. Walking has become unpleasant and hazardous in many residential areas.

But, a few communities do provide separate pathways and cycle tracks, for example Stevenage in England and Radburn in U.S.A.

Paul Ritter writes: "The space requirements of the Radburn idea can be very modest....quite narrow paths, with some open gardens leading into them as has inevitably happened. But the adjacent

trees of the fenced gardens add to the sense of space. They lead into open areas that are provided in almost every civilised city by law. The big difference lies here in their practical location, eminently accessible, safe and convenient, and so they are fully used, and again from Ritter.....

"Path design is in its infancy. It is both a science and an art. Though much smaller in scale than motor roads, it needs careful, sensitive attention in every aspect to get efficiency, beauty, economy, and the variety that makes any route shorter."

It could well be argued....But people don't walk today and will walk less and less. Australia has one of the highest car ownership ratios (.8 per household.) So why provide for the future what seems to be going out of fashion?

3/20/9

Hidden Pedestrians and "Shut-in" People

Prof. Henderson's poverty survey has shown that there are "Hidden People" in our affluent society. In the same way there are "Hidden Pedestrians" ... the have nots or the third world of our car dominated residential areas. These car-less people are dependent on the car driver (if there is one) in the family. Children, elderly people and women are naturally the most numerous in this group. This dependence on a car driver for mobility restricts people in their choice of when they can go out, where they go to, who they go with, while the car driver himself spends fruitless hours acting as a chauffeur. For example the increased use of the car to transport children to school deprives the child of freedom of walking with companions of his own choice. The child's leisure pursuits can be more easily directed by adults who ferry them to activities of parent's choice. As the tram and train and bus time-tables break down, families are forced into rigid car time-tables.

A new social problem is increasingly being reported by social workers. The problems of the "shut-in" people. The housewife and the elderly people suffer from this disease. With no where to go within easy walking distance, exorbitant fare and infrequent public transport the isolation of the elderly and of the housewife is reaching the proportions of a phenomenon in our society.

4/20/9

A MINI-Market Contention

In this age of the super-market it is encouraging to hear that in some districts there are campaigns for the retention of the small local shopping centres. For example, the North Melbourne Community Development Association recently held a deputation to the Minister for Housing and to the Director of the Housing Commission asking that the present shopping centre at "Happy Valley" be retained. The deputation asked that new shops be built before the old ones are demolished and that the new shops be built around a court or arcade.

An architect's design for such a shopping centre showing the "daily needs" shops grouped around a court with coffee tables under trees, was published in the Northern Advertiser (the weekly newspaper which circulates in the district) in February this year. Some of the comments by residents about the plan were published in the next issue of the paper. Here are some extracts. "The sketch really appeals to me. I can quite imagine myself sitting there under the tree and having a bit of a chat."

"We must have shops near our homes, pensioners can't afford fares and they can't walk far to shops."

"Happy Valley shops are just right for us."

"Wouldn't that be beautiful".

"The Happy Valley shops are part of my life."

5/20/9

The Match Box and the Motor Car

Should the car be used to buy a box of matches? There is no alternative if there are no handy "daily needs" shops.

Should children be driven ^{to} the school? Parents feel compelled to do this if there are busy roads to cross, dreary and long distances to walk.

Can the isolation of the "shut-ins" be ended? It could be lessened for many if there were handy shops, and safe walkways in the residential areas.

Should dad be the "taxi-driver" for the family? If shops, recreation centres, schools public transport stops and homes planned so that all are linked by safe pleasant pathways, there would be many fewer occasions for the family car to be used for ferrying members of the family on their various errands. The family car could then come into its own as a vehicle for recreational outings for the family as a whole.

TRANSPORT - A PARTISAN VIEW (PART II)

6/20/9

Three Experts Write

(by "Alpha")

Three recent articles on transport each by experts in the field, are worth examining carefully.

They are:-

"The provisions of Railway Services in Urban Areas"
by I.D. Richards.

"Public Transport by Bus" by R.P. Wilson
and

"Public Investment in Transport" by H.M. Kolsen and P.J.
Forsyth.

They appeared in the October 1968 issue of The Australian Planning Institute Journal. Kolsen and Forsyth are economists in the University of Queensland and Macquarie University respectively. Wilson is Traffic Manager of the Municipal Tramways Trust Adelaide and Richards is Civil Engineer of the Victorian Railways Commissioners and is the "Assigned Engineer" from the Railways on the Melbourne and Metropolitan Transportation study.

We wish to deal more fully with Mr. Richard's articles because it is entirely on Melbourne's particular transport problem. The other articles, however, although more general, have some quite important concepts. We will deal with these first:-

7/20/9

Is it true: The More Passengers the Bigger the Loss?

Mr. Wilson attacks what he describes as "the commonly held view that reduced fares and improved standards of service would not only attract more people to public transport but would also result at least in a reduction in transit deficits if not in highly profitable operations" (p. 121)

He explains that "the real problem" is that "the reduction in patronage is occurring to a greater extent in off-peak periods than in peak periods" the reason is obvious: Thus if patronage was spread evenly throughout the day one bus crew and one bus could transport say 700 in 10 trips, but if 700 people wished to travel at the same time, 10 buses and 10 crews would be required for the same total fares. Thus Hong Kong Tramways for 1966 made profits (including royalties and taxes) totalling \$12.7 million because of the even spread of patronage throughout the day.

Now he argues that off-peak patronage on public transport cannot be improved because "it is doubtful if many people would forego the convenience of using their own car even if public transport services were provided free of charge."

And so he concludes that "it seems likely therefore, that any measures taken to induce people to use public transport services would be effective, if at all, in peak hours rather than at other times. Indeed this appears to be the main objective sought by those who advocate that such measures be taken as a means of reducing the number of cars on our roads and thus reducing traffic congestion problems to manageable proportions It appears however, that increased riding on public transport services during peak periods without comparable increases at other times might worsen rather than improve the already difficult financial position...."

The theory of the inevitability of off-peak travellers increasing, opting for car travel is one we will deal with lower.

In the meantime an examination of statistics adduced by Mr. Wilson to prove his case seems to us to prove something quite different and even to prove the exact opposite.

Here are the figures given in Table 2 on p. 121:-

Deficit and number of passengers carried by public street transport undertakings in selected Australia cities 1965-1966

Mr. Wilson's Figures (in box)			Our Figures (outside box)
City	Passengers carried (\$Millions)	Deficit (\$000's)	Deficit per passenger (cents)
Sydney	232.1	4878	2
(1) Melbourne	165.7	1555	+1
(1) Brisbane	90.0	1196	1½
Perth	52.5	1282	2½
Newcastle	23.0	747	3
Hobart	15.9	553	3½
Launceston	5.2	189	3½
Burnie	1.2	12	1
(2) Adelaide	53.1	261	½

(1) these figures represent the combined results of tram and bus operation. More passengers were carried by tram than by bus in both Melbourne and Brisbane.

(2) Figures for Municipal Tramways Trust Adelaide for 1966 not "selected" by Mr. Wilson.

.....

Mr. Wilson warns that comparisons between cities can be misleading because there are variables like different operating conditions and hence costs, and different scales of fares.

"However," he says "generally speaking the figures tend to show that financial losses were greater in those cities where the larger number of passengers were carried". And from this he permits himself to draw the conclusion. "This seems to suggest that a decline in patronage does not necessarily worsen a public transport undertaking's financial position, and conversely that an increase in patronage might possibly add to rather than lessen the financial burden".

Now to our way of calculation, the figures do not shown that there were bigger losses in the bigger cities. Obviously in conditions where all systems are making losses, the bigger the city the bigger the total deficit. But the significant figure is not the total deficit but the deficit per passenger. Strangely Mr. Wilson did not think of this although on p 122 he himself points out that the deficits are not as frightening as they may seem representing in the case of Adelaide tramways only half a cent per passenger carried.

We have added a column showing the deficit per passenger in cents.

The first thing that leaps out and hits the eye is that in Melbourne, Brisbane and Adelaide where there are trams, The deficit ranges from ½ cents to 1½ cents. Everywhere else they are 2 cents and over. And the smaller cities (Newcastle Hobart and Launceston) are over 3 cents except Burnie which is 1 cent.

If any valid generalisation are to be drawn from that set of figures, therefor, in our opinion they are two-fold:-

(1) Trams seem to produce deficit per passenger about half or less than that of buses in big cities of comparable size.

(2) With one exception the smaller cities with buses only produce deficit per passenger half as big again as those of

of the bigger cities with buses only (and three times as big as cities with trams.)

8/20/9 The conclusions we draw from all this are as follows:

1. we are not at all impressed with Mr. Wilson's figures as "proof" of his propositions.
2. we appreciate, however the formulation of his theoretical proposition that the bigger the peak compared to the off-peak the less economic the transport becomes and therefore to win more commuters to abandon cars and take to the trains at peak hours without comparable off-peak increases may worsen rather than improve the financial position (this theory is re-inforced by statistics in Richard's article - see ~~below~~ next issue)
3. those advocating more finances spent on railways, therefore had best not base their arguments on the proposal that this will pay better. It could mean bigger deficit. Or to put it more kindly: it may need more subsidy per head to do this.

Arguments should therefore concentrate on:-

- (a) how to attract off-peak patronage.
- (b) the over-riding reasons that may make such increased subsidy fully justified.
4. Trams on the face of Mr. Wilson's figures appear to be far and away more economic than buses, and this is a stronger argument against those who, like Wilbur Smith & Associates and the Minister for Transport (apparently) succumb to the concept of changing the form of street passenger transport from trams to buses-on-freeways.

9/20/9 To give Mr. Wilson his due, after discussing what a public transport system would do if it were run as a private business enterprise, namely simply cut out the uneconomic trips, (ie night-time, Saturday afternoon and Sunday) he says:-

"continued financial support suggests very strongly that the community in general looks upon public transport, not as a business proposition but as a much needed public service" (p 122) and he proceeds to deal with optimum operating conditions for buses e.g. difficulty of premature subdivisions creating sparse density in outer suburbs, menace of parked and double-parked cars to bus operating, etc.

However, he seems to be a trifle "bus-eyed" when he complains "the design of many estates may be aesthetically pleasing with their multiplicity of crescents and cul-de-sac but this type of lay-out does not lend itself to the efficient operation of bus-services." Surely pedestrian walk-ways that took "short-cuts" to bus stops irrespective of the road design could be devised? Mr. Paul Ritter, for sure, could solve that one!

10/20/9 What is the "Cost" and what the "Benefit"?

The economists Kolsen and Forsyth tear to pieces the ^{crude} ~~and~~ unsophisticated economic concepts of planners who step over the threshold of the planning discipline and enter the discipline of the economist. They make them appear as babes, who do not know in which direction to crawl.

"Planners sometimes regard cost-minimisation of public utilities as a major objective in urban (and other) planning and give the impression that this is, in its crude form, an acceptable and operational planning objective. It is the economist's job to point out that there are many other important factors which must be taken into consideration, and to draw attention to implied value judgements in the proposed solutions to any specific planning problem." (p 124)

We have underlined the words "implied value judgements" because this we believe is the chief virtue of the article.

They deal with the short comings of the economist's early theory of the ^{marginal} ~~imperial~~ cost-pricing principle i.e. that the expression of people's demands through the price-mechanism

should be accepted within wide limits at least as an indicator of what people really want."

But....what are "costs" what are "benefits"? "Are all the 'benefits' of, say, a road construction project to be credited to the road? How can the effects of noise and fumes, dangers to life and limb, obstructions to pedestrian and other traffic be quantified?" Even travelling time which itself is not reflected in market price cannot be directly compared as between 2 different modes of travel "some people might prefer 20 minutes reading a book in a tram to 10 minutes driving in heavy traffic."

In other words there are all sorts of "costs" and "benefits" which do not find expression in a market price, but which ~~are~~ ^{are} there nevertheless.

In determining the most beneficial allocation of capital resources therefor, an effort must be made to quantify these effects which are not valued by the impersonal market.

"The point is", they say "that quantification of" (these) "effects must proceed by careful statement of the basis of the quantification."

The difficulty is that "no one really knows what people want until they have been given a chance to show, by their effective demand, that they do in fact want it."

"But" they go on to point out "an urban area cannot be planned solely by reference to what people have wanted in the past" (p 126).

One part of their solution to the quandary we fully endorse. Although the authors do not put it this way themselves, it is really an aspect of democratic choice. They point out it is not one way of living, but alternative ways of living that the planners should provide (eg high medium or low density housing, travelling by car or rail etc.)

This brings then a sophistication in the formulation of allocating investment resources to accord with the principle that costs are minimised.

"It does not mean that public transport must be developed because it is the cheapest way of transporting masses of commuters or that people must live in high density housing because the per household costs of electricity, gas and water connections are lowest. Planners must provide for differences in user preferences" (p 127) i.e. the objective of cost minimisation is, of course, important but should be operated within each preferential type of development.

So far so good, but the next part of their argument we cannot accept. They deal with the three main transport modes, of user preference--- car, bus and rail then they say:-

"It is not possible to distinguish between these alternatives by value judgement --- i.e. whether the planner 'likes' or 'dislikes' one or more of these alternatives. So the problem is to discover what the actual and potential customers, the users, prefer." (p127) and the rest of the article is concerned largely with analysing the elements that sway user preference i.e. the costs of the alternatives and the quality of the alternatives.

11/20/9 But if these economists can teach the planners sophistication of cost-minimisation and benefit-cost analysis, the planners need to teach the economists something too.

The benefit-cost yard-stick cannot be confined to user-preference only ---- or rather to "individual-user-preference" only, if we can coin a phrase or two. This is an important element of individual choice that should always be preserved. But there is another equally important element "community-user-preference", which it should be the planners special job to preserve. In fact that is precisely what planning means--- not leave the fate of resource allocation entirely to the free

play of the individual's behaviour and the spending of his dollar (whilst making allowance for this) however, sophisticated the range of choice provided, but also, because man is a social animal with over-riding common needs to see that these common needs which are not always readily recognisable by every individual, are nevertheless met.

It is strange that the authors do not arrive at this conclusion because elsewhere they say. "In some areas eg education, we accept that the community has precedence over the individual in determining the amount of the goods or service to be consumed. So too, with reduction in probability of accidents ---- often individuals cannot know the benefits" (p127)

Precisely! Although it is not a question so much of the community "having precedence over the individual" as the community assisting the individual to widen his choice, of "user preference", actually, by equipping him better to exercise that choice.

Similarly applied to transport, should not the community throw subsidies to that particular mode of transport namely rail transport that helps to protect and develop the unique central city activities that properly related to big industries high-density estates and big social facilities grouped in district centres would help to foster lively district activities?

Any planner that cannot embrace perspectives of this type is not worth his salt, because these "community-user-preference" are precisely the ones which, if encouraged, raise the range of choice and quality of alternatives for the "individual-user-preference."

The problem in everyday language is not keeping up with the Joneses ~~to~~ even providing user-alternatives of several types of Joneses to keep up with, but to "raise the quality of life" which means involving all the Joneses in various types of community activity. Education Housing, density, growth patterns transport modes and a host of other factors all have a bearing on the solution of this, the really important problem.

This brings us to our third review:-

12/20/9

Trends
Which ~~Factors~~ Win - The Good Ones of the Bad Ones?

Discouragingly, amongst all the valuable factual and theoretical material in the above two articles here reviewed no planning purpose, no community goal, no definition of quality of life, emerges, only, (in various combinations) trends and the sophisticated analysis of trends.

The same, basically can be said of the third article by Mr. I.D. Richards, however, instructive its detailed analysis. For Melbourne this has particular significance because Mr. Richards is the Railways technical man on the Melbourne Transportation Study and from him, if from anyone, one would hope to find the most cogent arguments for railway development, which is of the highest priority importance in our view.

Mr. Richards, deals theoretically with transport problem, before examining Melbourne's transport in detail.

He comes up with the indubitable truism:-

"The stronger the city centre the greater is the likelihood of benefits accruing from a mass transport system." (p 111)

However, it is typical of the peculiar methodology of many modern planners of which the three articles here are all examples in their different ways, that it does not occur to Mr. Richards anywhere in the article, ~~the~~ turn this proposition on its head and examine the converse, that is:-

→ "The better the mass transport system, the stronger the city centre and the greater the likelihood of benefits accruing from such a centre."

This surely is the starting point? As the writer suggested at the beginning of Part I of this contribution (see "Irregular" 1/19/9) the fate of the central city area is not one of indifference to a city and its citizens.

But the methodology of Richards and others treat planning as if it were an exact science from which all desirable social goals had been carefully eliminated, and man rendered incapable of changing his social destiny. In this rarefied air all trends are neutral, none are good or bad. Planning is not concerned with strengthening the good trends to try to overcome the bad ones.

Thus Richards asks (i) why does the city exist? (ii) Will it continue to grow? (iii) What is the likely future residential and/or activity density? (iv)(v) & (vi) Where, when how much mass transport will be necessary and (vii) & (viii) at what cost and what benefits?

Through the article, not always explicit or fully stated one comes across the trend "facts" on which Mr. Richards builds his apparently dispassionate, objective, "scientific" propositions.

"In Australian cities, residential development has proceeded on a low-density basis. It is difficult to see this desire diminishing while society is affluent. So it is expected our cities will continue to spread". (p 113). Now, is that right? It is not. Even under the conditions of the shocking inadequacy of the Uniform Building Regulations and without any serious attempt to provide proper domestic and social amenities for high density building, the most startling recent fact of Melbourne's housing history has been the meteoric rise of flat building. But more seriously Mr. Richards has simply no attitude on influencing ~~the~~ the trends one way or the other.

"Even if an out-of-peak trip to the city centre is occasioned, it is more than likely preferable to ~~drive~~ drive the motor car to a parking place in the fringe area of the city and catch a tram, bus or taxi to the city destination." (p 116) Preferable to whom? It is not preferable to the railways system as Mr. Richards's whole article is designed to show (see below). Therefore it is not preferable to helping a "strong city centre," which in the long term has an impact on the life of the whole city and all its citizens. So Mr. Richards obviously means "preferable" to the short term immediate convenience of a wife (typically where there is a two-car family, at that). "The trend" of the individual has to be worshipped.

"This type of travel" (to the C.B.D. -- the central business district) will dominate the planning of rail transit in cities such as Melbourne and Sydney as long as the C.B.D. remains active" (p 119) Are planners then to stand aside dispassionately and passively watch the C.B.D.'s become inactive?

So when Mr. Richards (at p 118) states "it must also be decided whether the net value of user benefits, community benefits, or operator benefits is the criterion of the matter," and answers himself "it is considered that any transport facility should be justified on the basis of its community or total benefit" we can be excused for raising doubts as to whether Mr. Richards really has any grasp in depth of what is meant by "community benefits."

More especially is this doubt strengthened when he goes on to list at length the benefits of recent railway improvements as being benefits to the car-user (i.e. by relieving traffic congestion, car-parking etc) and the benefits to the central city area are dismissed in two lines, and each are economic or commercial benefits and not social "the employer is brought closer to the worker market. The minor retailers is closer to his client."

(Sorry "Alpha" -- your contribution is too long. The final section is held over until next issue. Editor.)