

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	Introduction	2
1.1	The scope of the Inquiry	2
1.1.1	Is congestion all bad?.....	2
1.1.2	Predict and provide or backcasting?	2
1.2	Critical issues for the City of Yarra	3
1.2.1	Demand for road space	3
1.2.2	Amenity along shopping strips/activity centres.....	3
1.2.3	A sense of place	3
2	Issues.....	5
2.1	The nature and incidence of transport congestion.....	5
2.1.1	Defining transport congestion.....	5
2.1.2	Effects of transport congestion	5
2.1.3	Causes of transport congestion.....	9
2.2	Approaches to tackling urban congestion.....	11
2.2.1	Supply side approaches	11
2.2.2	Demand side approaches.....	14
2.2.3	Urban planning	16
2.3	Regulatory and institutional barriers	19
3	Conclusion	20

1 Introduction

The City of Yarra believes this is an important Inquiry and welcomes the opportunity to submit comments.

Travelling to and from work in congested traffic is one of the most stressful activities which many urban dwellers are often forced to endure.. Those who choose to use bicycles or motorcycles often experience an increase in levels of stress and anxiety as they negotiate dense and fast-moving traffic during their journeys.¹

1.1 The scope of the Inquiry

The City of Yarra is concerned that the Inquiry is narrow in its scope of focusing on the 'efficiency of Victoria's transport system' and, in particular, 'business and supply chain efficiencies'. Efficiency is but one aspect of a transport system and there are many more complex, interrelated and equally important aspects of an 'effective' transport system. Transport is essential, not just for business, but also for people to lead fulfilling and participative lives - lives which include opportunities to work, rest and play.

Congestion on public transport is also very much an issue for people using and wanting to use public transport. Since this is crucial to the long-term viability of moving people and goods around Melbourne, there is an urgent need to address the complete lack of capacity on bus, train and trams particularly in the inner city during peak periods.

1.1.1 Is congestion all bad?

The City of Yarra is also disturbed that 'traffic congestion' seems to be identified in the issues paper as always undesirable. This leads readers to the conclusion that free flowing unrestricted traffic movement is therefore considered desirable in every situation. The City of Yarra contends that this is not necessarily the case since traffic congestion is, in itself, a regulator for ever increasing traffic growth. There must therefore be a more broad vision and approach to considering congestion.

1.1.2 Predict and provide or backcasting?

It is disappointing to see 'predict and provide' scenarios in the issues paper being accepted as inevitable. That is, 'by forecasting that there will be more and more traffic, we are compelled to provide for it'. The City of Yarra would prefer that decision makers and this Inquiry looked to the future (backcast) with vision and decided that a future with ever increasing freight traffic and private motor vehicle traffic was not desirable and should not be accommodated. By deciding on what future is acceptable for our City and backcasting, we can determine what policies need to be put in place to avoid such a bleak future scenario.

¹ Parliament of Victoria, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee, Inquiry into violence associated with motor vehicle use, April 2005

1.2 Critical issues for the City of Yarra

Critical to this Inquiry is the need to recognise a *sense of place* when looking at areas affected by congestion. Yarra acknowledges this Inquiry's primary focus is on congestion across major Victorian cities and on moving people and goods over significant distances. However, it is important that the lines joining transport networks and indicating traffic flows on maps, are interpreted not simply as lines but as living streets in which people live, work and play. This is particularly true for Yarra since there is little open space and a significant amount of Yarra's open space is on its streets. A sense of place is central to people's lives and helps people feel connected to their environment and community.

1.2.1 Demand for road space

The location of the City of Yarra is such that many of its key local shopping strips/activity centres are also used by Melbourne-wide traffic as through routes either accessing the Central Activity District (CAD) or beyond. In addition, many of Yarra's shopping strips/ activity centres accommodate trams or buses in addition to cars, trucks and bicycles. Demand for space on Yarra's shopping strips/activity centres is a critical issue.

1.2.2 Amenity along shopping strips/activity centres

The City of Yarra is also different from many other municipalities with the greatest number of daily trips being walk trips.² This is particularly important since these walk trips take Yarra residents to their local shopping strips and public transport also often located in those shopping strips. The City of Yarra is proud of its achievements in encouraging walking and in so doing reducing a number of short trips which might otherwise have been undertaken by car (and therefore contributing to congestion).

By providing good access to public transport, some mode shift away from cars can take place which, in turn, helps reduce congestion. Amenity along Yarra's shopping strips is also a critical issue for this city.

1.2.3 A sense of place

The focus of the VCEC Inquiry must include the economic effect on those people whose daily lives and by definition their economic contribution, are affected by traffic and traffic congestion and not simply direct business concerns.

Francis Tibbalds³ identifies the ongoing destruction of cities, particularly inner city areas:

The need to care for the urban environment has never been greater...The public realm is the most important part of our towns and cities....most urban areas have become a mess, they are not people - friendly....We need to look at urban areas as a whole and not a series of unrelated, but competing, sectorial interests... Places matter much more than either individual buildings or vehicular traffic.

Shopping strips/activity centres must not be reorganised for the exclusive use of the motorist. It is of much greater importance to consider the needs of all people, with

² Victorian Activity and Travel Survey (VATS) data

³ Making People Friendly Towns: Improving the public environment in towns and cities, 1992

priority given to pedestrians, access for people with disabilities, children and the elderly. Successful street level urban environments encourage pedestrians to move about in a variety of directions. People can no longer expect to freely take their cars into the CAD and to or through activity centres.

A key aspect of any Inquiry to reduce congestion in Melbourne, as far as the City of Yarra is concerned, must ensure that it considers Yarra's shopping strips and activity centres as vital public open space for Yarra's residents and visitors, including those encouraged to visit Yarra's many wonderful shopping/café strips, thereby supporting economic activity.

Transport planning for congestion is an evolving area and there are no easy or tried and tested solutions. Melbourne must look to other cities to learn which policies prove most successful. Realistically we will only ever be able to curb congestion growth, not stop it.

2 Issues

2.1 *The nature and incidence of transport congestion*

2.1.1 Defining transport congestion

The City of Yarra suggests that the definition of *transport congestion* should be broadened to include all road users including pedestrians, cyclists and public transport passengers. The definition as it stands in the issues paper refers solely to motorised vehicles when identifying frequently used measures of congestion, i.e. number of vehicles, time delays, variability in travel times and average traffic speed.

2.1.2 Effects of transport congestion

The City of Yarra recognises the need for passengers and freight to be transported in an effective transport system. However, realistically we also know that there are, and will continue to be, delays due to the need to move large volumes of goods and people at the same time. This is not something that we can expect to eliminate.

It is also important to recognise the inherent contradiction in transport. For example, residents want to park freely outside their homes and elsewhere but don't want others to contribute to congestion and parking demand in their streets. Similarly, businesses claim to be disadvantaged by congestion but are themselves warehousing goods on trucks rather than off road i.e. adding to unnecessary congestion. The Australian Bureau of Statistics provides data, not on the transport industry, but on the transport and storage industry.⁴ This seems a particularly contradictory grouping since one is traditionally associated with movement and the other with static locations.

Congestion has historically been calculated as a cost to motorists in time spent in traffic. There is little consideration in calculations and models used for the disruption caused by traffic to those who choose not to drive but are affected adversely by the number of vehicles. In urban areas, congestion/delay and other traffic costs to non-motorists can be and are significant.

The City of Yarra has identified a hierarchy of transport users.⁵ For a sustainable transport future, the City of Yarra places the highest priority on those transport users which provide the least negative impact on our transport environment. This includes priority to pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users. Single occupancy car users are given the lowest priority. Given this hierarchy, the City of Yarra would consider that any delay to pedestrians, cyclists or public transport users should be calculated using a much higher value against the cost of congestion than that of a private vehicle occupant. The cost of congestion as currently measured, does not take this into account.

Yarra would also argue that the Inquiry should look at congestion costs from a different angle. The cost of congestion should not be measured as a cost to those who cause it (motor cars/trucks) but as a cost to those road users who impact the least on creating congestion (and who generally are worst affected by congestion) i.e. pedestrians, cyclists and public transport passengers.

⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics, www.abs.gov.au *Economic contribution of the transport and storage industry*

⁵ City of Yarra, draft Strategic Transport Statement, 2005

2.1.2.1 Economic costs

The cost of congestion in Melbourne (\$2.7 billion) is outlined at the beginning of the issues paper. This is calculated by the estimated value of excess travel time (though no per hour value is attached) and other resource costs i.e. extra fuel use incurred when contrasted with free-flowing traffic. The original source of the information, the Bureau of Transport Economics (BTE now BTRE⁶) also points out that for actual road systems, such conditions are an unrealistic hypothetical situation and that the cost of congestion as defined is primarily the scale of the problem.⁷ It could therefore be argued that the cost as identified is higher than that which should be considered an actual cost of congestion.

Whilst it is acknowledged that there will be significant costs to business due to delays from traffic this is only one half of the equation. Economic costs of congestion must also be calculated with regard to the thousands of daily end users i.e. customers who are also impacted on by congestion. The vast majority of Australian businesses are small businesses which rely substantially on local customers. Local customers in Yarra access these businesses predominantly on foot.

Economic costs must also factor in the increasing cost of oil and how this will impact on people who have no transport choice but to drive and waste petrol sitting in traffic. Already there have been financial impacts on drivers due to the 2005 increase in fuel. These increases in fuel are set to increase due to the diminishing supply of oil relative to global demand. Unrealistic calls for short term price reductions in the form of cuts in government taxes may alleviate the financial impact, but will not help long term to ensure there is an economic future for all with access to work in our dispersed city. Providing more fuel-efficient mass transit would seem to be at the very least urgent now. Given the incredible lead times for major infrastructure projects, this should have been undertaken many years ago – the lack of fuel relative to demand is not a new concept.

2.1.2.2 Social costs

The cost of congestion as defined by transport economists does not adequately address social and environmental costs to other road users and residents in particular. These costs must be included in any measure of costs of traffic congestion. These measures could include, for example, waiting time spent by pedestrians at lights to cross roads, time spent walking to a suitable crossing point along busy roads, inability to use or access facilities due to dangers involved in dealing with high traffic volumes. Health impacts from sedentary lifestyles and increasing pollution.

i) Increasing Road Rage

Melbourne already has average road network speeds higher than those of many of the other top 15 liveable cities as identified by the Economic Intelligence Unit, London.⁸ Melbourne's average urban speed of 43km/h is 'bettered' only by Toronto (51 km/h), Brisbane & Copenhagen (50 km/h) and Perth (46 km/h). When compared with other liveable cities Melbourne fares very favourably.

⁶ The Bureau of Transport and Regional Economics

⁷ The Bureau of Transport Economics, Urban Transport – Looking Ahead, *Information sheet* 14, August 1999

⁸ Metropolitan Transport Forum, most liveable best connected, the economic benefits of investing in public transport in Melbourne, Scheurer J, Kenworthy J, Newman P. 2005

Is there a correlation between this relative ease of travel and road rage? Australia already suffers from significant incidence of 'road rage' as identified in a recent parliamentary inquiry into violence associated with motor vehicle use.⁹ Data shows that of the 23 countries surveyed, Australia ranked highest in the percentage of drivers who had experienced 'attacks or attempted physical attacks' in the past 12 months.¹⁰

A snapshot of the figures is provided below:

Australia	10%
<i>Portugal</i>	8%
<i>Argentina</i>	7%
<i>Greece</i>	6%
<i>Austria</i>	6%
<i>UK</i>	4%
<i>USA</i>	3%

Source: Parliament of Victoria, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee, Inquiry into violence associated with motor vehicle use, April 2005

Australia has more than twice the mean (4%) of the percentage of drivers who had experienced 'attacks or attempted physical attacks' in the past 12 months, of the 23 countries surveyed. The reasons given when questioned on why drivers may commit road rage include *frustration developed during commuting*. Given the higher urban road speeds already experienced in many Australian cities and the fact that the 'road rage' percentage is relatively low for the UK and USA when both are also acknowledged as 'congested', there must be other factors which need to be considered.

Gaps in data, which the Inquiry could address, are those relating to the socio-psychological effect on drivers of ever increasing expectations that we can travel quickly across vast urban distances. Is this realistic? What are the consequences when we are forced, as we inevitably will be, to slow down and sit longer and longer in traffic? Australia has some of the highest urban traffic speeds in the world – is this desirable?

By constantly accommodating traffic, are we increasing the risk of greatly increased road rage and poor behaviour and what are the costs associated with this? What are the implications for the wider community? Chapter 13 - Situational Factors of the Inquiry into violence associated with motor vehicle use, April 2005, highlights findings that show that congestion alone does not necessarily cause increases in road rage but *congestion combined with travel time expectations* appears to create more incidence of road rage.

ii) Sedentary lifestyles

Social costs must also include health factors, not just pollution from traffic, but health issues relating to sedentary lifestyles. This would be due both to time spent behind the wheels of cars in traffic and not using more active transport choices i.e. walking, cycling and public transport. The health implications of sedentary lifestyles are well

⁹ Parliament of Victoria, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee, Inquiry into violence associated with motor vehicle use, April 2005

¹⁰ EOS Gallup Europe 2004, pg 26

documented and include obesity, Type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, stroke and reduced mental health and well-being.

The following is an illustration of the costs associated with the largely preventable illness of obesity which can result in Type 2 diabetes:

a) Obesity costs Australian taxpayers an estimated \$1.5 billion per year in direct health costs. Indirect health costs are harder to estimate but include work absenteeism, production lost to premature death and weight management programs.¹¹

In no way does this submission assume active transport is the only contributor to obesity, diet is of course a crucial factor, but sedentary lifestyles are nonetheless a significant and preventable factor. Creating opportunities for participation in more active transport e.g. walking, cycling and public transport should be a priority for any government interested in reducing the long term costs related to traffic congestion.

b) Type 2 diabetes is debilitating in itself but can also lead to other health complications. These include blindness, amputations, coronary heart disease and kidney disease. The Australian Diabetes Society estimated average health costs per person per annum to be \$5,360 plus \$5,540 in benefits. A total cost of \$3 billion per annum nationally.¹²

A healthy workforce is good for businesses since businesses will benefit from increased participation and productivity. There are significant costs to businesses associated with staff illness.

2.1.2.3 Environmental costs

*Congestion is a major contributor to vehicle emissions. Fuel consumption per vehicle (e.g. litres/100km) under congested traffic conditions is approximately twice that under free-flow conditions. Therefore congestion has the potential to double the output of greenhouse gas emissions from a stream of vehicle traffic.*¹³

Unchecked policies over many years have ensured Australia has the worst record globally on greenhouse gas emissions with the highest per capita rate. Urban transport is a major contributor. As a rich nation with an educated population, this must surely be unacceptable.

The City of Yarra acknowledges the very negative impact on our residents and visitors and the environment from vehicle emissions. In 2002, transport accounted for 16.5% of Victoria's greenhouse gas emissions, with cars contributing 68%, goods vehicles 30% and buses 2%.¹⁴ The City of Yarra contends that if either the State or Federal government were serious about this issue, then more polluting vehicles should also be banned or their use severely curtailed. This has not happened.

¹¹ www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au

¹² Murphy J 2005, 'Health promotion' *Macroeconomic Policy Division of the Australian Treasury*.

¹³ The Bureau of Transport Economics, Urban congestion – the implications for Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Information sheet 16, May 2000

¹⁴ Department of Natural Resources and Environment 2002, Victoria's Greenhouse Gas Emissions 1990, 1995, 1999: End Use Allocation of Emissions, George Wilkenfeld & Associates PTY Ltd

Annual checks on vehicles to gauge roadworthiness and levels of pollution, as is undertaken in other countries, are not in place in Australia. In addition, evidence shows that new vehicles such as 4WD use far more fuel /100km and are more polluting. However, Federal government policies ensure less tax is paid when purchasing a 4WD and this has resulted in one in four new vehicles purchased in 2004/05 being 4WD.

2.1.3 Causes of transport congestion

Traffic congestion is a symptom of cheap and easy access to cars, cheap fuel and free use of road infrastructure.

2.1.3.1 Cars

Cars are the biggest competitor with trucks for road space and are therefore major contributors to their own and businesses congestion costs. Cars are cheap to both buy and run and roads are, for the most part, free to use. The average number of vehicle occupants in Melbourne's morning peak is just 1.18 people – the lowest in Australia.¹⁵ There is little or no incentive to switch modes since perceived daily car running costs are low or non-existent. Most drivers do not factor in real costs when choosing to drive. These costs have been calculated at about \$105 per week for a small car and up to \$300 for large 'luxury' 4WD.¹⁶ The most likely factors considered are petrol and parking. Where cars are company cars, both these costs can be covered by company salary packages and this means even these two costs are less than obvious on a daily basis.

This contrasts strongly with people who choose to use public transport where there is an up front cost each day a person chooses to use any public transport mode. In Melbourne, there are also the added disincentives of a zonal fare system which ensures people living in outer suburbs (i.e. transport poor but housing affordable) pay much more for poorer transport services than those living more centrally. These are also annual increases in public transport fares, not commensurate with any increases in registration or road taxes.

In addition, an estimated 40% of commuter traffic can be attributed to fleet or Novated lease cars. Novated leases ensure even unnecessary car use is undertaken since the overall cost of having a car decreases the more it is driven.

2.1.3.2 Poor public transport provision

Public transport is not a viable alternative to the private car for many residents, since in many areas, particularly in outer Melbourne, there is little or no public transport available. As new developments are built, there is no onus on developers to build in public transport infrastructure. The net result is car dependent sprawling suburbs.

By allowing suburbs to sprawl, successive governments have also created unsustainable conditions for supplying public transport services. Low density developments do not incur sufficient charges, either through rates or other means, to ensure that infrastructure, operating and maintenance costs, are able to meet greatly dispersed need.

¹⁵ Environmental indicators for Metropolitan Melbourne, Australian Institute of Urban Studies and City of Melbourne, Bulletin 8, October 2005

¹⁶ as for 15

Lower income families living in more affordable outer suburbs are already disadvantaged by lack of transport choice and the disproportionate amount of income needed to fund one or two family cars. Rising fuel prices have added extra burdens to these families and their disposable income and this will have an effect on the business sector. AC Nielsen findings, in an extract from its annual Grocery Report released in November 2005, show that to accommodate the increase in petrol prices, Australian consumers appear to be suppressing their spending habits when it comes to discretionary purchases, and this is particularly noticeable in the areas of takeaway and café/restaurant food retailing.

This interrelated but not so obvious link to congestion needs also to be understood from Yarra's businesses point of view. A great number of Yarra businesses are in the business directly affected by these discretionary purchases i.e. café/restaurants and related services often also located along Yarra's shopping strips and activity centres – i.e. those very strips which need to function as attractive destinations and not streets for through traffic.

2.1.3.3 Business practice

Many businesses have followed the practice of just in time delivery and have moved away from stocks and to flows. This means that, effectively, it is cheaper for businesses to warehouse stock on trucks than to pay for a static warehouse location. This has resulted in very much more product being carried on all streets than is necessary – hence contributing to an overall increase in congestion.

From a more global business perspective, this practice has to be questioned. Why is it cheaper for business to warehouse on trucks than in warehouses? If it makes economic sense to do this - who is paying the cost of this practice? Increased fuel costs may mean there will be move away from this but currently the extra tonnage is causing not only congestion but also damage to roads that should not ordinarily be under such transport stress. The damage caused increases by the square of increased axel tonnage, i.e. a 2 tonne increase will lead to a four-fold increase in damage. Road charges should rise exponentially with increased tonnage. Costs of increased road repairs are borne by local government and local ratepayers. Clearly there is inequity in this business solution, given that local government is unable to recoup the cost of this.

Gaps in data - To what extent is the business practice of warehousing stock on trucks costing local and state government in additional road repairs and increased congestion?

2.2 Approaches to tackling urban congestion

2.2.1 Supply side approaches

Freeing up road capacity by building more roads, slip roads or using clearways to facilitate traffic flow does not improve congestion long term.

2.2.1.1 More new road capacity

The car becomes the enemy of the car.

Research has shown that by increasing road capacity, traffic only increases. Thus to increase road capacity would run counter to this Inquiry's goal to reduce the cost of congestion. Highway capacity can never keep pace with new vehicle registrations. Gordon Price concludes that in 2003, new car registrations in Melbourne were 51,258; this equates to 140 new cars on the road each day.¹⁷ At 4.5m/vehicle this is 230km of road space or more than twice the distance from Pakenham to Melton. This is not sustainable, not affordable and not desirable. Dukes believes that better roads often encourage longer commutes, greater traffic congestion during rush hours, and greater general driver anger.¹⁸

There is research, which shows that, rather than increasing road capacity, reductions in road capacity can alleviate congestion. Rodney Tolley cites the removal of a six lane road in Birmingham's (UK) city centre and the reconnection of pedestrian spaces and improvement of pedestrian amenity.¹⁹ The result is that the traffic actually can 'disappear'. Similarly, Goodwin, Hass-Klau and Cairns' paper 'Evidence on the Effects of Road Capacity Reduction on Traffic Levels' shows that where certain criteria are met, there are many international examples to demonstrate that traffic disappears when main roads are narrowed or closed to traffic.

'...there have been increasing suggestions that forecasts may not be well-founded, particularly since (a) there is now practical experience that many cities have implemented policies to reallocate road space successfully, and (b) SACTRA concluded that increases in road capacity in congested conditions were likely to induce additional traffic. Therefore, by symmetry, it might be expected that a reduction in capacity would lead to some overall reduction in traffic volume, in which case the displaced traffic would cause less severe congestion than expected. This is supported by theoretical arguments, specifically those relating to the theory of traffic flow and assignment, appraisal methodologies, network topology, market distortion, feedback effects, the non-transport functions of streets, travel choice and behavioural response'.²⁰

2.2.1.2 Clearways

Clearways increase road capacity; increases in road capacity encourage more traffic, more traffic adds to traffic congestion.

¹⁷ Gordon Price, Smart Growth: The Vancouver Recipe, City of Melbourne, October 2004

¹⁸ Dukes, RL 2001, 'Effects of aggressive driving and driver characteristics on road rage', *The Social Science Journal*, vol. 38, no.2, p.5.

¹⁹ Rodney Tolley, Presentation to City of Yarra staff, April 2005

²⁰ Cairns, S., C. Hass-Klau and P. Goodwin. *Traffic Impact of Highway Capacity Reductions: Assessment of the Evidence*. Landor Publishing, London, 1998

The desire to implement clearways is often given, for example, to improve tram times. Whilst the City of Yarra fully supports any move to prioritise trams, it does not believe (and research referred to in this document also shows) that this will lead in the long term to significant reductions in traffic that currently delay trams. The reverse is in fact true. There is a latent demand for road space by car drivers. If a road appears to be less congested, then more drivers will be attracted to use it.

Council is extremely concerned about the removal of parking via the introduction or extension of clearways and the negative impact this would have on shopping strips/activity centres throughout the City of Yarra. The Northern Central City Corridor Study Draft Strategy²¹ gives Smith and Brunswick Streets as examples of road that “may require peak direction clearways.” Both these streets already have sections where parking is not permitted during peak hours and Council would be concerned about moves to extend them to provide for more motor vehicle throughput.

The introduction of clearways (or part time parking arrangements) makes it difficult to provide full-time bicycle lanes which is contrary to both Yarra’s (draft Strategic Transport Statement) and the State Governments (Melbourne 2030) policy on encouraging more cycling (as a way to alleviate congestion).

The City of Yarra has received many submissions from members of the Yarra community strongly opposing the introduction of new clearways. This applies to all roads but is particularly true for St Georges Road, North Fitzroy. Council’s submission in relation to the, proposed Road Management Act notes that agreement from Council should be required before any new clearways are introduced.

Council is aware that there will need to be significant changes to the way road space in inner Melbourne is managed if we are to achieve public transport improvements. Congestion and lack of priority at intersections causes extensive delays to on-road public transport. However, increasing road capacity for private motor vehicles will only make this situation worse.

Also, improving throughput for private motor vehicles will undermine the value of investments in public transport since improvements to the road network for private motor vehicles will encourage potential public transport passengers to choose to drive.

Initiatives to improve the efficiency of arterial roads run counter to *Melbourne 2030* which identifies Victoria Street, Brunswick Street and Smith Street as activity centres and calls for planning for these centres to be based around encouraging more journeys by public transport, walking and cycling. *Melbourne 2030* also calls for a new strategy for managing arterial roads, especially in activity centres. Council believes this strategy should prioritise pedestrian access and amenity, public transport and cycling movements. These should also integrate with pedestrian crossing points and improved pedestrian facilities.

²¹ Department of Infrastructure, Northern Central City Corridor Study, 2002

2.2.1.3 More public transport capacity

In 2005, public transport accounted for just 11% of all Melbourne journeys.²² Of real cause for alarm, is that around 81% of Australians (18 years and over who work and study) never use public transport.²³

From an economic efficiency and environmental impact perspective, comprehensive public transport provision with sufficient inducements (fair fares, reliability and enhanced service span) is the only realistic long-term action to improve traffic congestion. Other key actions, for example congestion pricing and parking pricing, will only be fair and possible if real alternatives are offered. In order to provide viable alternatives to private car use (the main cause of traffic congestion); it is essential to ensure there is a choice which people wish to use.

Of great concern to Yarra, is the through traffic pouring in from the Eastern Freeway and the Eastern suburbs (expected to increase dramatically when EastLink is fully operational). Although one of the conditions which allowed the Eastern Freeway to be built in the 1970's was the reservation for a railway along the centre (and associated grade separation at all intersections) the rail public transport component of this project has never been implemented. Thus there are thousands of commuters with little transport option. The City of Yarra is aware that the Doncaster light or heavy rail project is still only a long term possibility but, in the light of this Inquiry, considers it to be one of the essential elements of any plan to address traffic congestion costs.

There is a successful park and ride in Doncaster but, in the morning peak, there is no extra capacity on the buses. Buses cannot provide the same mass transit function as that of light or heavy rail and carry very much fewer passengers. While one bus can remove 30 plus cars one train can remove up to 5km of vehicles.

The City of Yarra has even been contacted by residents in Kew, wishing to travel into the city, who complain that they are unable to get on buses, as they are already full when they reach Kew. The lack of a frequent public transport service needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

To highlight the very real issues encountered in providing increased public transport in Melbourne, the State government is pinning a great deal of stock on the success of the SmartBus. In reality, this is currently just three key routes - the 700, 703 and 888/889. As innovative as this project may be in terms of providing real-time information and low floor buses, it is still only three bus routes in a project that has taken over 4 years. This rate of development will never be sufficient to provide any real impact in reducing transport congestion. Since Yarra bears much of the traffic from the outer suburbs SmartBus should be implemented far more rapidly across Melbourne.

Recent overall passenger growth on SmartBus has been very encouraging ranging from 23% -37% growth from 2002 to 2004.²⁴ The State government's own figures show the very real need for this service with concession tickets (i.e. those most likely

²² Environment Victoria, *Melbourne's Public Transport: On the Move*, 24.05.05, [online] www.envict.org.au

²³ Kenworthy, J.R. 2003, *Transport Energy Use and Greenhouse Gas in Urban Passenger Transport Systems: A study of 84 Global Cities*, Institute for Sustainability and Technology Policy, Murdoch University

²⁴ www.doi.vic.gov.au, 'What is SmartBus'

to not have alternative transport students, seniors and unemployed) being the great majority of passengers. Loadings for concession ticket holders are at just under 1,000,000 in 2004 on route 703 being nearly a third more than full fare tickets. Similarly, on route 888/889, concession tickets are just over 800,000 for 2004 compared with about 350,000 for full fare passengers.

2.2.2 Demand side approaches

2.2.2.1 *Parking*

A cheap and accessible supply of parking simply encourages greater car use. Where parking is abundant, then there is little incentive to not drive. To underscore just how true this is, some major city centre private car park operators actually advertise the cost effectiveness of paying monthly inner-city parking rent against the cost of monthly public transport tickets as a sales pitch to convince people to rent car parking space.

2.2.2.2 *Congestion charging*

This has worked well to curb traffic since its inception in Singapore in the 1970's and, more recently, in London. In London, since the introduction of congestion charging, there have been 70,000 fewer vehicle journeys each day into the Congestion Charging zone with an added effect of fewer casualties on the roads as well. London has shown increases in bus patronage which are at their highest levels since 1968.²⁵ Apart from the costs of administering the congestion charge scheme, all revenue raised from the congestion charge is hypothecated to improving sustainable transport modes, including public transport. The London system also provides exemptions for local residents, people with disabilities, electric and hybrid car and reimbursements for key workers: nurses, police and firefighters.

2.2.2.3 *Pay as you go road pricing*

This is a recent idea being trialled in parts of Europe and northern England using e-tag type technology and relates to a pay as you go charge to road use. The cost of using stretches of road depends on the time of day and size of vehicle. Peak hours are charged at a premium rate and very quiet hours attract a negligible or no charge. In the same way that it is accepted as standard, to pay for utilities (e.g. gas, electric and water) based on use, so it would seem reasonable to expect to pay for road use. Those using roads less and therefore not contributing as much to wear and tear, pollution and congestion, would pay less than frequent users.

However, safeguards would need to be developed to ensure that driving was not simply the domain of the rich.

2.2.2.4 *Public transport*

Public transport, as already indicated, can only be a viable option, if service provision is dramatically improved in all areas. This is a State government responsibility. However, the State needs to call on the Federal government to work with it and focus on investment in public transport provision.

²⁵ www.tfl.gov.uk/tfl/press-centre/press-release

2.2.2.5 Flexible working hours

Much of the strain on the transport system is caused by many people travelling at the same time i.e. to and from work. The State government should encourage businesses to adopt flexible hours in industries where it not essential to start work during the morning peak.

2.2.2.6 Walking

Walking is a legitimate and vital mode to help alleviate transport congestion. As such, provisions must be made to ensure that this mode is encouraged particularly for short trips (i.e. the most polluting by cars due to cold starts) and frequently the easiest for some people to actually change mode to. Wider footpaths and decreased traffic through shopping strips/ activity centres are important to encourage walking.

2.2.2.7 Cycling

Cycling is a real growth area as a transport mode in Melbourne and particularly in Yarra. It is a real option for many commuters of distances up to 30km/day and can therefore help contribute to decreasing congestion to some extent. Provision must be made to accommodate increasing numbers of cyclists particularly on key transport routes to the city. This includes, but is not limited to, clear allocation of road space to bicycles. End of trip facilities must be provided at businesses and provision to take bicycles onto trains must improve (a good model can be seen in Berlin where sections in train carriages remove seats and designate them pram, wheelchair and bike areas).

2.2.3 Urban planning

Urban planning has a hugely important role in relation to transport congestion. Transport and land use are inextricably linked. On a macro scale Melbourne's urban sprawl, without any meaningful public transport links in outer suburbs, has ensured a very car dependent society. In addition, the huge increase in house prices has ensured that more affordable housing can only really be found in outer suburbs. This has resulted in lower income families being doubly penalised through living further out with fewer facilities and using a disproportionate amount of money and time on travel.

Modern day urban planning does not resemble successful development models used in the past. Formerly the building of private railways and tram routes determined where development would take place. These days, large developments have been allowed to be built without any suggestion of supporting public transport infrastructure. This has meant that as people move to new developments, they have to start by having at least one car per household. Often households end up with more cars due to a complete lack of other transport options and more complex lifestyles in which household members need to travel.

Once transport habits are formed, i.e. daily car use, these habits, as with any habit, cannot be easily changed. Even in areas which may ultimately provide a bus service, this is often introduced too late, as people have already gone to the expense of buying second, third and fourth cars. All of these cars then contribute to the traffic volume on roads. These roads are not financed and maintained by the developers who chose to develop in the area, but by State and local governments.

Similarly, new developments are only required by Rescode to provide the narrowest of footpaths which are insufficient for two people to walk on side by side. In addition, there is no onus on anyone to ensure bike paths or end of trip facilities are provided. By not planning carefully for pedestrians and cyclists there is little hope of encouraging people to change modes, for even short journeys, which are the most polluting, and which they might otherwise do by car. Consequently, these cars also contribute to traffic and congestion.

With such tremendous car dependency in outer suburbs, due to a lack of viable alternative transport options, areas such as Yarra suffer.

The North American urbanist William H Whyte wrote about 100% locations. These are places that have everything right - they are on a major pedestrian route, have good climatic conditions, an interesting view, comfortable places to stand and sit and opportunities nearby to shop, eat and drink. Wherever these conditions occur, people congregate. On the other hand, wherever conditions are poor, people are scarce.

In *Places for People*, Jan Gehl identified 4 critical elements to add more life to the City of Melbourne in 1994:

- Improving the pedestrian network;
- Making gathering spaces of excellence- and making more of them;
- Strengthening street activity by physical changes; and
- Encouraging more people to use the City.

His approach was embraced by the City of Melbourne and, as a result, it is a safer, more welcoming environment.

The planning principles of liveable cities that underpinned this change have included: ensuring more street cafes, interactive ground floor frontages of buildings, calmer motor traffic, less noise and car fumes, limited through traffic, widened footpaths, increased numbers of medians and street plantings, solar access to public spaces-including footpaths, increased civic squares, forecourts and plazas, well linked and easily accessible major attractions, more street festivals, events and street markets. and more people on the streets late in the afternoon and in the evening. These are all vital elements to a lively, lived-in city, and consequently, a safe and friendly city. (Places for People: Jan Gehl)

Shopping strips/activity centres must be enhanced as places for people. Council's Strategic Transport Statement identifies a hierarchy of transport users as appropriate to ensure good transport planning which meets the needs of Yarra's sustainable transport, economic and social future. This hierarchy gives priority to pedestrians, cyclists and public transport over cars. This must be the priority in the inner city if we are to meet the health and well being needs of our community. Clearways in activity centres will only ease the way for more through traffic, increasing car commuter use, car fumes and car noise. Clearways will do nothing to meet Melbourne 2030 (M2030) objectives. They will merely diminish local amenity, retail prosperity, access for pedestrians and cyclists and safety. As a result of these factors, clearways act as a disincentive for more people to walk and ride to school, work, local shops and facilities.

Yarra's shopping strips/activity centres are context sensitive. In such cases the fundamental position is that pedestrians must have priority. To enable pedestrians to have priority, the following principles must be applied:

- On – street parking;
- Narrow lane width;
- Protection of footpath amenity from roadway hostility; and
- Parking manoeuvres that interrupt traffic flow and beneficially calm traffic.

On-street parking is also essential to retail success for the many locals and visitors that cannot walk or ride to access shops/businesses.

VicRoads has introduced a variable speed program for shopping strips. Yarra has a number of shopping strips that are part of the variable speed program, thus acknowledging the need for lower speeds in active shopping strips.

There is a growing body of evidence and acceptance that congestion is beneficial to good planning – congestion slows traffic and achieves modal shift to public transport.²⁶

If the State Government is committed to a M2030 and modal shift of 20% x 2020, it needs to demonstrate how destroying the amenity of inner city major activity centres, will actually achieve the objectives of M2030 and any modal shift in Yarra.

The following questions, derived from M2030 policy objectives, must be answered:

- How will these changes make Yarra be a more accessible, attractive, welcoming, thriving and sustainable place?
- How will these changes recognise and protect cultural identity, neighbourhood character and sense of place, improve community safety,

²⁶ Most liveable and best connected? The economic benefits of investing in public transport in Melbourne, Metropolitan Transport Forum 2005

protect heritage places and promote excellent neighbourhood design to create attractive, walkable and diverse communities?

- How will these changes give more priority to cycling and walking and promote the use of sustainable personal transport options?

Yarra has the opportunity of making enormous modal shift to walking and cycling if there is good cycling and pedestrian access and good urban design principles are followed.

Good urban design is key to ensuring liveable streets. The following 10 urban design principles for main streets, such as activity centres/shopping strips, are used in the City of Yarra.

1	Role	A centre which serves the neighbourhood day to day needs of the local community while fulfilling the special metropolitan role of the street.
2	Cohesion and Continuity	A centre focused on the continuous traditional strip extending seamlessly integrated into the surrounding urban fabric.
3	Public Space	Development which respects and contributes to the quality of the street/activity centre as public space/open space.
4	Public Transport Focus	Development and streets which are focused on public transport.
5	Walkability	A centre which gives priority to pedestrian movement and cycle access.
6	Activity and Vitality	Key activity precincts with localised character which complement the integrated functions of the Activity Centre.
7	Built Form and Image	A low-rise central strip fronting a street backed up by medium rise development to maintain sun access to the centre and adjacent residential areas.
8	Stability and Change	A centre which conserves the stable established precincts while providing areas for change and opportunities for redevelopment with a new contemporary character.
9	Public Domain	A public domain focused on, associated squares and flanked by well design built form.
10	Sustainability	Built form, public domain, transport and engineering infrastructure which contribute to a sustainable centre.

2.3 Regulatory and institutional barriers

Increasing living standards and aspirations have ensured that Melbourne and Victoria have embraced a car culture and car dependent society. Most people use cars for transport. What is particularly alarming is why people would not or cannot consider public transport as a viable option. Comparisons must be made with other wealthy international cities where public transport for most residents is an obvious choice.

Frequently the excuse of Australia being different from other countries due to its sheer size and the distance between cities, is used to reject global comparisons. This is neither useful nor acceptable. A city is a city; therefore even though all conditions may not be exactly equal, there is much Australian cities can do to learn from other cities tackling the transport issues we now face or those on the horizon.

Australia's three levels of government have conspired to work against each other and have contradictory goals in the area of transport. Institutional barriers have ensured that there is no common thread of support to ensure urban transport is sustainable. Moreover, different areas of government within the same government tier, present policies which undermine goals or desirable outcomes in other areas such as transport.

Of increasing concern to local Councils, is the increase in size of vehicles, particularly freight vehicles. Whilst there may be economies of scale to businesses due to the declining rate with respect to vehicle load, the cost of road-wear increases exponentially with axle loading and thus increases in through traffic.²⁷ These road-wear cost increases are borne by local government who has very little capacity to recoup these extra costs through any mechanisms currently available to them. Whereas State government can expect tax income growth through GST, local Councils have a limited taxation base and are already bearing the brunt of other cost shifting impacts. In addition, in areas such as Yarra, road widths were never designed to accommodate such large vehicles. The proximity of large rigid and articulated trucks to footpaths and shopping strips/activity centres is not desirable.

Fundamentally, the Federal Government's fringe benefit tax acts against public transport use and rewards unnecessary car use. This is an issue which should be addressed as a matter of urgency if there is to be any long-term solution in curbing an exponential growth in car use.

Areas of concern, which Yarra would like to see this Inquiry address, are:

- Federal government's Fringe Benefit Tax – 4WD / Cars with salary packages/ Novated leases which encourage car use.
- State Road Authority accountability and conflicts with focus on road traffic flow not people flow.
- Federal support for Australian motor manufacturers – which don't produce smaller hybrid or electric cars.

²⁷ Bureau of Transport and Regional Economics, Working Paper 57, Land Transport Infrastructure pricing: An introduction

- Availability of parking spaces in CAD where larger developments, e.g. Southern Cross, Federation Square, Children's Hospital and the Casino have a much larger parking requirement requested by the State Minister than would be by City of Melbourne's planning scheme.
- Urban sprawl – State government's continued release of land on city fringe without serious consideration for public transport infrastructure.
- Lack of contributions by developers to provide public transport infrastructure
- State government planning scheme – lack of robust bicycle end of trip facilities amendment infrastructure for inner cities – one size does not fit all, inner Melbourne has far more cycling commuters than outer Melbourne, this is not adequately accommodated in the Bicycle Facilities Amendment.
- State public transport zonal fare structure – ensures outer suburb dwellers pay more than double the cost for public transport than zone one. This encourages car use over public transport which local councils then have to manage.
- State Government's threatening and unattractive public transport infrastructure especially rail stations which local governments encourage residents to use.
- State governments bus franchises which are based on historical family rights and ensure family operations i.e. Monday to Friday with early evening finishes often ~ 6.30pm, very occasional Saturday morning service and virtually no Sunday service. This bears no relationship to the real world and travel demand in 21st Century.
- Federal fuel tax = not hypothecated to sustainable transport modes
- Hugely obstructive is that Australia's Federal government is the only OECD government which plays no role in public transport financing or decisions.
- 'Competition' between public transport modes e.g. buses are not able to pick up in High Street, Kew as there is competition with the 48 tram. Both modes start in different locations and finish up in the city in different locations but a short stretch of the total route is along the same road – this is not competition. This lack of integration and coordination between the two modes probably acts to lose passengers for both modes as it is just too hard to try and use public transport.

3 Conclusion

The City of Yarra looks forward to the Victorian Competition & Efficiency Commission examining these issues to recognise the futility of managing transport congestion by policies relying on increasing road space for cars or by managing vehicle usage. Fundamentally, managing congestion can only be dealt with through an integrated transport approach which relies on expansion of mass urban transport, walking and cycling.