

# Melbourne Transport Strategy

## Response to Issues Papers by Carlton Residents Association

### 1. Background

The Carlton Residents Association (CRA) has long-term interests in traffic, transport, parking and related issues, dating back to the Carlton Association and Eastern Freeway debates of the 1960's. Predictions made long ago on traffic congestion, air pollution, noise etc have now unfortunately been realized. Successive State Governments have long favoured roads, freeways and tollways over public transport infrastructure. Private commuter motoring (90% driver only) now dominates the high levels of traffic which traverse Carlton daily. Federal tax law favours commuter motoring and associated car parking against public transport usage. The Mitcham-Frankston Tollway appears certain to inject a further 30,000 vehicles per day into the northern central city area, including Carlton, exacerbating already intolerable traffic levels.

All these issues were exhaustively canvassed by the *Northern Central City Corridor Study* (NCCCS) in 2002-04; many recommendations arose from this study but have not been implemented. The current *Melbourne Transport Strategy* revisits most of the issues examined by NCCCS. CRA is concerned that despite many studies over the years which have identified the problems and suggested solutions little progress has been made. Integrated transport policies, adequately funded, are an urgent requirement for Carlton, considering known future traffic growth and impacts of *Melbourne 2030* development policies. Triple bottom line analysis should be applied to all transport proposals along with demand management, to control growth in traffic levels.

“More road space will provide opportunity for people to drive further to satisfy basic needs. This will create more traffic and congestion. Building more freeways does not relieve congestion ----. Free market ideology prefers to let the individual decide for his own selfish benefit, but this does not produce a liveable city. A governed process is required, to intervene and direct individual decisions (Enrique Penalosa, former Mayor of Bogota, Issues Paper: International Experience).

### 2. Melbourne Transport Task

The overview paper analyses the history and responsibilities for broad-scale development and implementation of policies on transport matters within the City of Melbourne. CRA accepts this overview as a fair statement of the situation. Issues papers provide in-depth analysis and conclusions for the broad range of matters under review. We agree with the overall thrust of these papers and make the following observations:

#### 2.1 Issues Papers: Round 1

- **Cycling:** This is an important mode of transport around Carlton. *Bike Plan* is strongly supported along with improved bike safety amid the heavy vehicular traffic. The existing bike path network requires expansion and upgrading in a planned and strategic manner. CRA continues to oppose cycling through parks and gardens due to considerations of pedestrian and child safety. The

siting of cycle tracks between parked vehicles and the footpath is also problematic from safety considerations.

- **Walking:** Pedestrian traffic is high on Carlton streets. Street safety, environment (noise and air pollution) and green links encourage foot traffic. Shared walking and bike paths can be dangerous for both modes. Traffic speed zones and traffic calming measures contribute to safety for cyclists and pedestrians.
- **Public Transport:** CRA is a strong supporter of the public transport network which services Carlton. MCC recently agreed to explore the feasibility of a community bus service which will usefully add to the transport mode mix.

We continue to lobby for an extension to the existing underground city rail loop to service hospitals, University and Museum within the Carlton area. This proposed underground loop could terminate at Clifton Hill thence on to Doncaster and Blackburn via the Eastern Freeway median. This rail link together with a “congestion tax” on Eastern Freeway traffic and city car parking levies are responses to the present unfettered growth in commuter traffic through Carlton. Improved *Park & Ride* facilities at suburban public transport nodes would increase public transport use by commuters.

The feasibility of banning commuter car traffic from the CBD should be explored, along with the advantageous tax treatment of cars and parking (GST, FBT, salary packaging etc) against that available for users of public transport. The targeting of roads only for Federal funding, at the expense of public transport modes, should be reversed. Centralised coordination of all public transport is important for efficiency. *Melbourne 2030* planning regime assumes low impact transport such as walking, cycling and public transport will be dominant in Activity Centres, but offers no policies to ensure funding is allocated accordingly (20% public transport usage by 2020 is a statement of faith). The introduction of free public transport on a regular basis would test the impact of such policy on traffic congestion eg. car free days. *IMAP* and *TravelSmart* initiatives are strongly supported by CRA.

- **Parking:** Carlton Parking and Access Study recommendations (April 2004) are being progressively implemented by MCC. This study was enthusiastically supported by CRA. The effective use of under utilised off-street parking facilities and a wider network of parking meters with extended hours of operation would allow much improved control over parking. Considerable local congestion and driver angst arises from motorists cruising the streets seeking *free* on-street parking, despite the wide availability of convenient low cost off-street parking. The forthcoming availability of several hundred additional off-street parking spaces from Melbourne University Eastern Precinct carpark (Cardigan St.) should allow median areas, now used for parking (much of it un-metered) in Cardigan and Faraday Streets, to be returned to green space. This is a priority for CRA and in line with *Carlton 2010* (August 2000) policies.
- **Freight:** Delivery trucks and vans contribute considerably to Carlton’s traffic and parking demands. Many competing delivery services operate randomly throughout the area. A centralised freight hub with operators servicing defined areas would substantially reduce freight traffic on Carlton streets. Just-in-time delivery demand by some businesses creates an element of chaos to orderly delivery services. Such demands should attract a premium charge (congestion levy) as a disincentive.

- **International Experience:** Melbourne is not unique in its traffic management challenges; much can be learned from cities elsewhere eg. Portland (Oregon) and London. Best international transport practice should inform transport policy directions for Melbourne, even if this is unpopular in the short-term. Cities dominated by traffic and air pollution tend to be economically stagnant with poor social outcomes. EU experience confirms that economic growth is much more dependant on traffic demand management than absolute road capacity. CRA is concerned that the pro-roads lobby (and the Committee for Melbourne) appear insulated from international experience, evidenced by their repeated proposals for yet more roads and tunnels to solve traffic congestion. Such responses have been largely rejected elsewhere in favour of public transport options. CRA believes VicRoads should be disbanded in favour of a Sustainable Transport Authority with responsibility for all transport modes.

## 2.2 Issues Papers: Round 2

- **Melbourne's Road Network:** Carlton sits between the Eastern Freeway and the CBD; it is subjected to substantial through traffic generated outside the area. To remove Lygon St. (Elgin to Queensberry Streets) from the arterial roads network (define it as a "local" road) would have major benefits for Carlton. The ultimate goal would be to turn Lygon St into a pedestrian and cycle friendly mall. Rathdowne St. traffic levels are already excessive and growing; this must be addressed in any overall traffic management plan. The NCCCS study showed that 55% of Eastern Freeway traffic travels south through the inner northern suburbs, including Carlton. Traffic demand management on the Freeway is critical and will become even more so when the Mitcham-Frankston Tollway is opened. The Committee for Melbourne has proposed a costly tunnel extension to the Freeway to ease congestion. This proposal would have minimal impact on Carlton traffic levels as only 10% of Freeway traffic is travelling west. The long sought rail line to Doncaster should be a planning priority rather than an incidental add-on (to be later deferred) as a response to community unrest over "grand" road plans. Public transport and congestion taxes are urgently needed to demand manage traffic growth on the Eastern Freeway.
- **Travel Demand Management:** CRA believes "demand management" is vital to control traffic growth. Easy car parking availability is often a major determinant of travel behaviour. It is unlikely people will modify their established travel mode choice without economic and legal incentives (carrot and stick). To continue to respond to the unfettered demands by the roads lobby for additional road space is short-sighted and environmentally irresponsible. Escalating fuel costs are already influencing travel behaviour towards increased use of public transport. Traffic calming, congestion and parking levies, changed tax laws, car free areas etc, would all serve to dampen traffic growth. Congestion is a valid component of demand management and is currently the only limiter to traffic growth on some roads eg. Eastern Freeway.

The recent introduction of *Flo Carshare* to Carlton should impact car ownership decisions into the future and local traffic congestion. The Carlton Parking and Access Strategy aims to overcome loopholes in the previous parking regime for residents and visitors. Both these demand management

initiatives have strong CRA support.

- **Transport and the Environment:** Vehicle exhaust emissions, greenhouse gas implications and traffic noise concern CRA. Present high traffic volumes degrade local air quality and negatively impact community health in Carlton. Vehicle registration and insurance fees and the tax system should better reflect preferred urban vehicle types. The increasing popularity of large 4WD vehicles (SUV) in urban areas must be discouraged (recent RACV data suggests that 20% of new vehicle are SUV types). Rising costs of fossil fuel may self-limit commuter motoring and SUV usage in urban areas.
- **Economy and Transport:** CRA offers no comment on this paper.
- **Land Use and Transport:** Although planning schemes define the boundaries on land usage, Government policies and site specific development overlays have had devastating impacts on Carlton (heritage, streetscape, traffic levels etc). The MCC has little influence on planning issues associated with large projects (>25,000 sq meters). Waiving of car parking and use of relaxed student accommodation provisions have caused major problems in Carlton. The admirable decision by MCC not to grant street parking permits to developments after July 2005 is applauded by CRA. The Council must resist pressure from developers to weaken these resident car parking provisions.
- **Taxis:** Taxis respond to significant random transport demands in Carlton, particularly for visitors, the elderly and infirm and those without cars eg. public housing tenants. Taxis and car share facilities reduce the need for car ownership in Carlton. Taxi pooling and ride sharing would improve efficiency and reduce congestion.
- **Health, Safety, Security and Transport:** Air quality in Carlton is generally poor due to vehicle exhaust emissions and dust; it impacts on community health. High traffic levels and speeding on busy streets eg. Lygon St. make for a dangerous environment for pedestrians and cyclists. Lower and enforced road speed limits (40kmh), traffic calming and separation of pedestrians and cyclists from road traffic would contribute to road safety. To remove Lygon Street from the arterial roads network, as proposed earlier in this submission, would significantly contribute to quality of life and road safety in central Carlton.