**Traffic, Transport & Parking – overview 2015**

Over the past 15 years CRA has closely engaged with diverse issues associated with Traffic, Transport and Parking. The Reference Group has participated in many strategic studies regarding transport planning including Northern Central City Corridor Study (2002), Melbourne Transport Strategy (2006 & 2011), Eddington East West Needs Assessment (2008), and since 2012, the East West Link. Many submission and presentations have been generated; much of it has been regularly reported in Newsflash (see website archive). The Reference Group monitors State Government and Council transport policies and proposals, engages with the issues and promotes CRA policies; it represents CRA at meetings and addresses the media.We actively collaborate with like-minded groups including Yarra Campaign for Action on Transport (YCAT), Public Transport Users Association (PTUA) and other community groups. We continue to monitor the EW Link saga. Despite its cancellation by the Andrews Labor Government in 2014, it continues to attract significant political attention and could re-emerge in some form. We continue to advocate for a rail line to Doncaster as a sustainable ‘congestion busting’ response to current roads-centric commuter travel from the eastern suburbs to the CBD.

**Traffic, Transport & Parking Policy 2015**

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) dominates the high levels of traffic which traverse Carlton daily. Tax law favours commuter motoring and associated car parking against public transport usage.

CRA is concerned that despite many State and Council 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, given traffic congestion and impacts of rapid population growth. Triple bottom line analysis should be applied to all transport proposals, along with demand management, to control growth in traffic levels.

Cancellation of the *East West Link* by the recently elected Andrews Labor Government, in favour of public transport and rail-road grade separations, is a welcome move away from costly and unsustainable roads-centric policies which have dominated the transport agenda for decades.

**1. Specific Issues of concern to CRA**

**Cycling**: This is an important mode of transport around Carlton. *Bike Plan* was 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. Bike lanes on Lygon St. have been long lobbied for by CRA. The Council’s Bike Hire scheme has limited attraction.

**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. The Council’s Walking Plan has been strongly supported.

**Public Transport**: CRA is a strong supporter of the public transport network (trams & buses) which services Carlton. The Council Tourist Bus Service has usefully added to the transport mode mix, but at high financial cost.

We continue to lobby for an extension to the existing underground city rail loop to service hospitals, University and Museum within the Carlton area (Melbourne Metro). This proposed underground loop could terminate at Clifton Hill thence on to Doncaster and Blackburn (Doncaster Rail) via the Eastern Freeway median. This rail link together with a “congestion tax” on Eastern Freeway traffic and city car parking levies are feasible 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. However, Doncaster Rail is no longer on the transport agenda.

**Transport Policy Issues:** The feasibility of banning commuter car traffic from the CBD should be explored, along with the advantageous tax treatment of cars and parking (GST, salary packaging etc) against that available to 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 and connectivity. Planning regimes should encourage low impact transport such as walking, cycling and public transport within Carlton, with associated funding support. The introduction of free tram transport within the CBD has been a useful innovation.

**Parking**: The Council’s Carlton Parking and Access Study recommendations (2004) have been successfully implemented in Carlton. This policy 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.

Median areas, now used for car parking (much of it un-metered), in Cardigan and Faraday Streets (and elsewhere), should be reviewed for possible return to green space. This is a priority for CRA and in line with long-term *Carlton 2010* (August 2000) policies. Additional street trees have been planted but opposition from traders to streetscape greening and loss of on-street parking continues.

**Freight**: Delivery trucks and vans contribute considerably to Carlton’s traffic and parking demands. The use of B Double and B Triple delivery trucks in suburban streets is of concern. 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 demands by some businesses create an element of chaos to orderly delivery services. Such demands should attract a premium charge (congestion levy) as a disincentive.

**2. General Transport & Traffic Issues**

**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.

Traffic studies show that 70% of Eastern Freeway traffic travels north-south from Princes St. much of it through the inner northern suburbs, including Carlton to the CBD. Traffic demand management on the Freeway is critical and has become even more so since the opening of *Eastlink* (Mitcham-Frankston Tollway). The recently cancelled $18 billion *East West Link,* claimed to ease congestion. However its Business Case revealed just 13% of Freeway traffic would use it and its benefit-cost was just $0.45 for every dollar invested. The *Link* would therefore have had minimal impact on Carlton traffic levels. The long sought rail line to Doncaster should be a planning priority rather than being disbanded in current transport policies. Improved public transport options and congestion taxes are urgently needed to demand manage traffic growth on the Eastern Freeway and to ease congestion for essential roads-based traffic.

**Travel Demand Management**: CRA believes ‘demand management’ is vital to control traffic growth. Easily accessible low-cost car parking availability is often a major determinant of travel behaviour. It is unlikely commuters 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 pro-roads lobby for additional road space is short-sighted and environmentally irresponsible.

Escalating congestion is influencing travel behaviour towards greatly increased use of public transport, which is now over-crowded. 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.

**Transport and the Environment**: Vehicle exhaust emissions, global warming implications and traffic noise concern CRA. 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 (RACV data suggests that 20% of new vehicle are SUV types).

**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 Council has minimal influence on planning issues associated with large projects (>25,000 sq meters) which continues to be challenged at the State Government level. Waiving of car parking and use of relaxed student accommodation provisions has caused major problems in Carlton. The admirable decision by Council 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. The 40kmh speed limit on Lygon St. introduced in 2008, is welcome, however it must be better enforced. 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, would significantly contribute to quality of life and road safety in central Carlton, however such policy is opposed by traders.

**3. Future Directions**

CRA strongly supports the City of Melbourne landmark document *Melbourne Transport Strategy* (2006 & 2011). We believe the document has accurately captured the sea-change in public opinion on transport issues for Melbourne. An exception was Council support for the now disbanded *East West Link,* which was a regrettable response to tollroad lobbyists. It was not supported by CRA and the broader community. Long-term State and Federal Government policies of funding roads infrastructure and providing taxation support for motoring has undermined the development of public transport, cycling and walking.

Current transport policies are unsustainable in the face of traffic congestion, freight distribution needs, air pollution, global warming, peak oil production and other economic considerations. The long-held belief that roads, freeways and tunnels will solve Melbourne’s traffic congestion and associated problems is no longer tenable. The powerful roads lobby, led by *VicRoads*, has won the lion’s share (90%) of transport infrastructure funding over the past 50 years. It enjoys major political patronage and sets self-interested policy directions, often against the public interest.

The State Government ignored the *Northern Central City Corridor Study* (2002) and *Melbourne Transport Strategy* (MTS). The newly elected Andrews Labor Government has prioritised public transport and rail-road grade separations in its transport policies. The costly and controversial *East West Link* tollroad is now off the agenda.

While the challenges ahead might appear daunting, the Government and Council should embrace sustainable new and exciting directions for Melbourne’s transport policies, away from the roads-centric agenda of past decades.