

WHAT'S WRONG WITH DEPENDING ON CARS?

The elimination of the car is both unlikely and unnecessary. No matter how good the public transport service, lots of travel will still be carried out by car. However, much car use takes place for routine trips because public transport does not cater for these trips.

Everyone knows the car can provide unsurpassed mobility and convenience - provided not too many people try to take advantage of this at the same time. What is not generally understood is that good public transport also provides the backbone for an efficient use of road systems.

All that is needed to relieve Adelaide's traffic problems is to shift a significant minority of car trips from the car to walking, cycling or public transport. In a 1997 study in Melbourne, the consultants for the Scoresby Freeway Environmental Effects Statement found that "if just 2 percent of existing car trips could be shifted to public transport, the benefit for the remaining 98% of car trips would be greater than from building the freeway."¹ Investment in public transport can forestall the need for new roads, and also reduce the use of existing roads.

Indeed, many of the trips currently made by car (such as long trips to or from the CBD, or other common destinations) can be better catered for by public transport anyway. This is because public transport, unlike cars and trucks, displays "returns to scale": although it costs a lot just to keep running, the more passengers it carries the more cost-effective it is.

Cars may be here to stay, but consider the following:

- ◇ The problem of induced traffic – the more roads, the more cars.
- ◇ Cars destroy the public life of a city.
- ◇ Cars are not efficiently used.
- ◇ Cars are dangerous to health.
- ◇ Cars are dangerous for the environment
- ◇ Cars are dangerous to the economy.

Let's examine these points in further detail.

Induced Traffic

More roads do not solve traffic congestion. We offer an explanation and examples from two sources.

Firstly, from BicycleUniverse,² quoting from the book *"Suburban Nation" The Rise of Sprawl and the Decline of the American Dream*³,

"The mechanism at work behind induced traffic is elegantly explained by an aphorism gaining popularity among traffic engineers: *"Trying to cure traffic congestion by adding more capacity is like trying to cure obesity by loosening your belt."* Increased traffic capacity makes longer commutes less burdensome, and as a result, people are willing to live farther and farther from their workplace. As increasing numbers of people make similar decisions, the

¹ Page 2, Passenger Transport Users Association, "It's Time to Move"

² BicycleUniverse website (<http://bicycleuniverse.info/transpo/roadbuilding-futility.html>)

³ *ibid*, quoting from pp. 88-94, Andres Duany, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, and Jeff Speck, North Point Press, 2000, "Suburban Nation-The Rise of Sprawl and the Decline of the American Dream"

long-distance commute grows as crowded as the inner city, commuters clamor for additional lanes, and the cycle repeats itself. This problem is compounded by the hierarchical organization of the new roadways, which concentrate through traffic on as few streets as possible.”

There is no shortage of hard data. A University of California at Berkeley study covering thirty California counties between 1973 and 1990 found that, for every 10 percent increase in roadway capacity, traffic increased 9 percent within four years' time.“

And secondly, from the Washington Post:⁴

“Congestion on Interstate 270 had grown so oppressive by the mid-1980s that Montgomery County transportation director Robert S. McGarry pressed the state to widen it six years ahead of schedule. Maryland responded with \$200 million to widen more than a dozen miles, up to 12 lanes in some stretches. But now, less than eight years after the project was finished, the highway has again been reduced to what one official called "a rolling parking lot." Traffic on some segments already has exceeded the levels projected for 2010.”

As an indication of how unnecessary some car trips appear to be, we quote again from “Suburban Nation”.

“The phenomenon of induced traffic works in reverse as well. When New York's West Side Highway collapsed in 1973, an NYDOT study showed that 93 percent of the car trips lost did not reappear elsewhere; people simply stopped driving. A similar result accompanied the destruction of San Francisco's Embarcadero Freeway in the 1989 earthquake. Citizens voted to remove the freeway entirely despite the apocalyptic warnings of traffic engineers.”

Rather than advocate natural disasters as a planning tool to repair artificial disasters such as Adelaide's Southern Expressway, we would prefer that transport planners and politicians come to see such road building as ultimately futile.

Otherwise, we can only expect that:

“.... the state of equilibrium of all busy roads is to have stop-and-go traffic. The question is not how many lanes must be built to ease congestion but how many lanes of congestion would you want? Do you favour four lanes of bumper-to-bumper traffic at rush hour, or sixteen?”⁵

We suggest that:

- a) In the case of the Southern Expressway, corrective action (by an Act of Parliament - not an Act of God) might include partly converting the Southern Expressway to a busway or rail-line. This might be better done in combination with a tramline down South Road as the latter would allow access to many community facilities already present along this corridor, whilst the absence of any facilities along the Southern Expressway best suits a high speed, limited stop system such as a rail-line.
- b) Research should be undertaken as to which major roads could be closed in part (reduced lanes), or closed entirely to single occupancy car traffic.

⁴ Washington Post, “Widen the Roads, Drivers Will Come” January 4, 1999.

⁵ BicycleUniverse, op cit

- c) Too late now – but don't build the underpasses under South Road. The current problems will simply reappear – but only after millions have been spent.

The friction of distance

In addition to the problem of induced traffic creating congestion in space, there is also congestion in time.

There is evidence that the modern city has been invaded by the car, yet little evidence is to be found that there is a net gain to society in reduced travel time. Many cities experience an increase in overall travel. Whitelegg states:

“Current levels of car dependency and car use have effectively restructured the built environment in the image of that particular technology. Distances that must be overcome in order to make contact with schools, hospitals, shops and friends are greater than 10 years ago, we can travel further in a given amount of time but we continue to allocate significant amounts of time to overcoming the friction of distance. The urban form of numerous Western cities has been constructed around the technical needs of the motor vehicle, instead of the social needs of people.”⁶

Car dependency results in the opposite – the unfriendly suburban sprawl. Because destinations are further apart than they used to be - the amount of inter-suburban travel, and the time this requires, greatly offsets any travel savings that may take place from trips within one suburb.

Public Space - A City under Threat

In his report “Public Spaces and Public Life”, ⁷Jan Gehl states that “a public space of high quality will always be recognized by people interrupting their walk or daily business so they can rest, enjoy the city, the public spaces and be together with other people.” A city's “public space” is recognition of the human and social dimension of activities carried out within the physical form of the city.

In referring to the impact of cars on public space, Jan Gehl distinguishes between the “invaded and the abandoned city”⁸, defined as:

- ❑ The invaded city
Cities being inundated with car traffic to such an extent that the pedestrians and the public life have almost been squeezed out. This has happened in many cities worldwide.
- ❑ The abandoned city
Cities where walking and public life has become completely phased out. Many cities in North America are now in a situation where public life is non-existent.

Whitelegg goes so far as to state that “in 20 years the competitive struggle [in the UK] for use of urban space and public space was over. The children lost.”⁹ He adds, “Designing a solution means restructuring space time relationships in cities so that space and time can be reallocated to uses that are benign and nurturing rather than cancerous and destructive.”¹⁰

⁶Page 3, John Whitelegg, “We can get rid of a tremendous number of the bothersome things of life if we put our minds to it”, John Moores University, Liverpool Page 3,

⁷ Page 12, Gehl, J, Public Spaces and Public Life, City of Adelaide 2002

⁸ Page 12, ibid

⁹ Page 3, Whitelegg, opcit.

¹⁰ Page 5-6, ibid

Engwicht states “cars not only take over the space they need for moving, they also have a *zone-of-influence* which expands as speed and quantity of traffic increases. This means that the car not only demands that exchange space [i.e. public space] be converted to road or parking space, it also reduces or destroys the effectiveness of exchange space.”¹¹

In his 1970 study of San Francisco, Appleyard¹² mapped the zone-of-influence in diagrams such as Figure 1 below. In comparing the street with light traffic against the street with heavy traffic, and the impact on social life, his conclusion was clear “the contrast...was striking. On the one hand alienation, on the other friendliness and involvement.”¹³

Disruption of public space clearly arises from both the number of vehicles and the speed at which they travel.

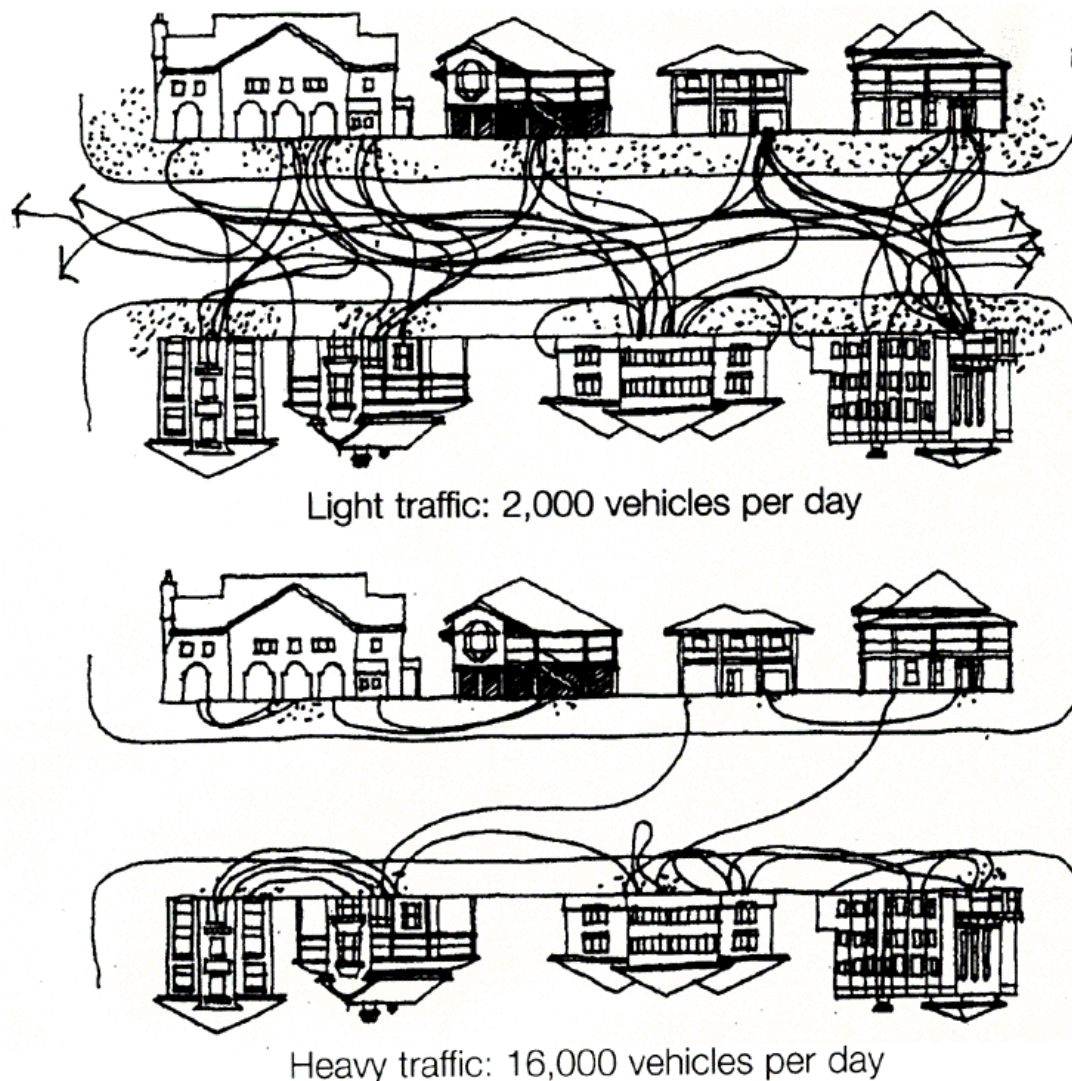


Figure 1 Neighbouring and visiting on two streets: lines show where people said they had friends or acquaintances: dots show where people are said to gather. (Adapted from D.Appleyard, *Livable Streets*)

¹¹ Page 48, Davis Engwicht, *Towards an Eco-city: Calming the Traffic*.

¹² Page 49, Engwicht, *opcit.*

¹³ Page 50, *ibid.*

A failure unique to Adelaide

Jan Gehl has identified a planning failure unique to Adelaide. We refer to the extraordinary number of car parking spaces in the City of Adelaide – an estimated 35,000 in all. This compares to 8,000 spaces for a like area in Stockholm or only 3,000 spaces in Copenhagen.¹⁴ A similar study across the whole of the Metropolitan area might show equivalent levels of over-reliance on car parking. This is a concern not only because of the capital investment involved in this facet of car dependency, but also in the amount of physical space taken up to contain car parking.

In the longer term, better planning will support public transport by ensuring that major employment and activity centres are built around public transport nodes. This will further reduce the need for people to use their cars for personal travel, and free up a substantial proportion of land for other uses.

Transit Oriented Development (TOD)

Peter Newman notes: “Transit Oriented Development is a major planning concept being worked through in every Australian city.”¹⁵ The concept requires that higher density redevelopment be undertaken around significant centres and corridors, particularly around centres for rail-based transport. Peter Newman further notes that in Perth, the rebuilt Subiaco Centre and new rail station has increased patronage by 100%. The combination of predictable rail transit services and community destinations at one location provides “a level of certainty for developers that no other infrastructure can do.” In fact, to the point that one developer was attracted to Perth “with a \$90 million fund to build Transit Oriented Development around stations as the investment in the [rail] network will guarantee higher profits within a kilometre of any station.”¹⁶

Logically, Transit Oriented Development does not only increase the use of public transport; it can simultaneously act to reduce the length of car trips - if only because more facilities are at one location instead of being scattered around several suburbs. This has implications for the desired location and hierarchy of shopping centres, and other major places of employment or business.

Peter Newman recommends the creation of a Federal funding process that can be used to build urban rail/ Transit Oriented Development projects, which may also attract the interest of superannuation funds or other private investors. Interestingly, Perth investments in rail occurred without Federal support and this suggests to PPT that a properly focused State Government can proceed on its own initiative.

“Most TOD’s require repackaging of land parcels, redesign of roads and reorientation towards the rail system. Proactive planning processes that create these land packages and do the detailed urban design are usually beyond local government resources. In the US this is usually done by private developers and in Australia by land development agencies. Both need local government involvement but the history of TOD development in Australia is such that without State Government intervention little happens. The best TOD’s in recent times came from Better Cities projects linked to state development corporations.”¹⁷

Such arguments have no doubt contributed to the Government’s announcement of up to 11 proposed TOD sites in Adelaide.

¹⁴ Page 30, Gehl, J, opcit

¹⁵ Page 32, Dissent, Autumn/Winter 2005.

¹⁶ Page 32, ibid.

¹⁷ Page 6, Newman, Peter, “Transit Oriented Development: An Australian Overview”

However many issues remain unclear. For example, it is not known what the funding mechanisms for many of the TOD sites will be. Not all will be as simple as the purchase of one large parcel of land such as the Clipsal site in Bowden. Nor is it clear who the “winners and losers” will be in the financial arrangements across all sites.

TOD's and Planning Laws

Transit Oriented Development is best undertaken within a framework of planning laws and zoning which promote a reduction in car dependency and concentrate places of interest to nodes suited to public transport.

We have yet to see the proposed changes in Planning laws which can support TOD's. Guidelines for the establishment of Transit Oriented Development (TOD) sites have not been published, nor is there a process of public consultation for the process of creating such guidelines.

- Many of the proposed options canvassed in newspaper reports appear to reflect the priorities of a number of property developers. This may not be compatible with the priorities of the affected communities or be priorities that reflect good practice.
- There is already concern over the scale of some developments that developers may desire. In particular, proposals of 10 storey buildings attract criticisms but proposals of 5-6 stories may not.
- The Report of the Planning and Development Review Steering Commitment suggests that the Government “should consider the creation of urban design panels...to ensure best practice design outcomes for TOD sites” (Recommendation 13.b). We agree.
- Furthermore, we suggest that every TOD site should be the subject of a public design competition not only at the concept stage, but also the subject of an open tender process at the development proposal stage.
- There is a recent history of some developers being inclined to run to the State Government to overturn Local Government planning requirements which prove inconvenient to the developer. There needs to be confidence that the State Government will be prepared to accept the discipline of planning and design features determined by the urban design panels.
- The combined State Government/developer collaboration at Ethelton does not currently inspire confidence of a good outcome in good urban design, or even in good building design.
- A somewhat better approach has been taken at the Islington railway station development which will consist of a large retirement village, shops and some open space. However, unlike an alternative proposal put to the Prospect Council in 2005, the density of housing in the immediate vicinity of the station is very low.
- The very minimum requirement for TOD's would be to have a kiosk/delicatessen on the platform or adjacent to the station to provide a human presence, sell tickets and enable minor purchases such as newspapers, soft drinks and coffee. Toilets should also be available. The degree of amenities provided should be determined by the access to other nearby centres with amenities.

In summary, TODs need to be part of a hierarchy of station developments. TODs can incorporate large or small retail developments, schools, kindergarten, child care centres, offices and community spaces, but not all stations marked out for dense development along a transport corridor need have all of these.

Traffic Calming

Traffic calming means improving the quality of the environment by slowing down traffic and giving more priority to walking, cycling and public transport. Streets are made safer and more enjoyable. Traffic calming is based around the principle of maximising pedestrian mobility within a liveable city by reducing the undesirable side effects of car-based mobility.

Once a first-class public transport system is in place, it becomes acceptable for the community to constrain car use, to reduce danger, pollution and congestion. However, in order to achieve the full benefits of traffic calming it is necessary to apply the principles to all roads within an area, including arterial roads. It is ultimately counterproductive to suppose that car use can be constrained in one place by increasing it in another.

PPT endorses the recommendations of "Public Spaces and Public Life" and wishes to see similar initiatives undertaken across the entire metropolitan area.

Furthermore, planning laws be adopted which promote patterns of urban use suited to public transport.

Traffic calming measures have already been undertaken by a number of local councils. However, this has been in the absence of a metropolitan wide approach which integrates such work with investment in public transport and road developments. The State Government can take the lead in developing an overall plan for traffic calming.

Cars are not efficiently used

It has been often documented that for most car journeys only one person uses the car. For example, the ABS 2003 survey of car use showed that only 17% of drivers took passengers.¹⁸

Clearly, the system is failing to use resources efficiently. It requires 4 out of 5 vehicles, each of which is a significant investment in a tonne of metal and plastic, to meet the routine travel for one person at a time.

Better efficiency can be achieved through *car-sharing* arrangements. Car-sharing gives individuals or households access to a car without having to own one. Such systems are suited to people who don't need a car everyday or want to get rid of that second car. Many companies and government agencies have access to a car fleet. Car-sharing extends the car fleet concept to communities and individuals – it separates the use of cars from the ownership of cars.

Car-sharing schemes operate in both Melbourne and Sydney¹⁹ and in over 600 cities overseas. Whitelegg notes that of the Statt Auto schemes in Germany "200,000 people now belong to organisations that provide vehicles when they are needed to those who have relinquished their own vehicle, thus reducing the pressure or desire to own a car that will most probably be parked on a street for 95% of its "useful" life."²⁰

¹⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 4602.0 Environmental Issues: People's Views and Practices Main Features, 26/11/2003.

¹⁹ Charter Drive, see "A car for when you don't have a car", Neil McMahon, Sydney Morning Herald, 13 August 2005.

²⁰ Page 6-7, Whitelegg, opcit.

Car-sharing reduce the number of car trips taken overall and it can reduce the number of cars that need to be constructed with consequent reductions in the use of resources and the pollution from manufacturing.

There are both public and private/community based variants to car-sharing.

Private/Community Car Sharing Schemes²¹

Members of a car-sharing scheme can pick up a car or van within walking distance of their home or workplace, and then pay only for the hours used and kilometres covered.

Car-sharing allows people to perform transport tasks that would be difficult by public transport or non-motorised means, eg moving people and goods to a number of dispersed locations quickly.

A share car can be in use throughout the day, not just sitting around filling up space. If each car performs more tasks for more people, then fewer cars are needed.

With a combination of car-sharing, private car ownership, and good public transport, an Adelaide community of 2000 persons might possibly only need 2-3 buses and 300 cars rather than 1-2 buses and 900 cars (current average ownership levels). In addition, there is lesser need for car parking spaces at every individual household. There is much work to be done to determine the level of savings in car ownership possible from car-sharing in South Australia.

Public Transport: Car-Sharing

In South Australia, the public transport system has car-sharing schemes for persons unable to drive themselves, most notably, the Access Cab system. As well, the State Government has established the Gawler One Hour Dial-A-Ride system that effectively substitutes a couple of cars for a larger number of bus and/or private vehicles.

Although a community car sharing scheme has recently commenced in Adelaide, it is for now a very small scale operation. PPT recommends that the State Government provide extended support to both forms of car-sharing.

Cars are Dangerous to Health

Constant reminders permeate the media of the dangers of speeding, drink-driving and other causes of the many injuries and deaths that occur on the roads. The ongoing personal, social and economic impact of injuries such as paraplegia, quadriplegia and brain injuries is substantial. We won't dwell on these matters other than to say that no public transport system has ever resulted in such sustained year-in, year-out harm.

Other than these tragic instances, there are health problems that are less remarked upon but also of consequence to individuals and society as a whole.

Noise from traffic has a number of effects. These include,²²noise induced hearing loss, annoyance, interference with speech communication, sleep disturbance effects, psychophysiological effects, mental health effects, performance effects and effects on residential behaviour (for the latter see above under *Public Space - A City under Threat*).

²¹ Refer to Urban Ecology www.urbanecology.org.au/topics/carsharing.html

²² Page 2, Whitelegg, opcit.

Using measures from the World Health Organisation, PTUA reports that “according to current medical opinion, sound sleep requires ambient noise levels no greater than 35 decibels (dBA) and intelligible conversation requires levels less than 45 decibels. These levels are routinely exceeded in the vicinity of busy roads and as far as 1km from freeways.”²³

Furthermore, “there is now a considerable body of scientific evidence that living on heavily trafficked streets is associated with an increased incidence of health problems, particularly chronic respiratory symptoms. In one study (Oosterlee, Drijver, Lebet and Brunerkeef, 1996) carried out in Haarlem in the Netherlands a sample of 673 adults and 106 children living along busy traffic streets was compared with a control sample of 812 adults and 185 children living along quiet streets. The sample on the busy streets had a statistically significant raised incidence of chronic cough, wheeze, diagnoses of asthma and allergies, and children were more likely to be on medication than those in the control sample.”²⁴

The “epidemic” of child obesity that has come to public attention in recent years is often attributed to a move to sedentary lifestyles. One factor continually mentioned is the historic move away from public transport.

“Similarly, our reliance on the motor car cannot be blamed solely on people's 'laziness'. The way our residential areas are designed often means that cars are needed to access services. The cost of public transport and its focus on suburb-to-city access results in people choosing to drive their car instead to save time and money.”²⁵

In an editorial titled “*What to do about fat children*”, The Age²⁶ suggested that:

“Where [children] used to walk or cycle to school, they are now driven because of parents' fears. Paradoxically, if more children walked to school the roads and footpaths would be safer.”

It is no paradox, that for children and adults alike, a public transport system, particularly in combination with properly aligned walking and bicycle paths, offers an opportunity for healthier access to school, work or leisure.

Cars are Dangerous to the Environment

Where do we start? One article²⁷ alone identifies the following problems from cars:

- Smog and acid rain have been shown to kill or harm agricultural crops and damage buildings.
- Asthma, lung and respiratory illnesses, and heart disease are also exacerbated by air pollution from cars.
- Some pollutants emitted by cars and trucks are known or likely to cause cancer.
- Runoff from roads, bridges, parking lots and other impervious surfaces can pollute drinking water and lead to changes in water chemistry that degrade habitat quality. This significant non-point pollution source deposits road salt, dirt and dust, fertilizers, pesticides, antifreeze, engine oil, rubber and metal

²³ Page 7, PTUA, opcit.

²⁴ Page 2, Whitelegg, opcit.

²⁵ Health Journey, Vol IV 2002, *Overweight and obesity: Growing problems*

²⁶ The Age, “What to do about fat children”, 3 July 2004.

²⁷ Surface Transportation Policy Project at www.transact.org/library/factsheets/environment.asp

deposits, litter and other pollutants into aquifers, lakes, rivers, streams and oceans.

- The necessity of moving millions of gallons of oil to serve motor vehicles has consequences for water quality: marine oil spills. The infamous Exxon Valdez spill in Alaska was only one of thousands of oil spills reported annually.
- Roadkill is just the most obvious way that an auto-oriented transportation network impacts wildlife. By altering, degrading, and destroying wildlife habitat, and by encouraging additional development, roads have helped bring dozens of species to the brink of extinction.
- Transportation contributes to Climate Change – primarily through the emission of carbon dioxide.

We won't labour the point.

Cars are Dangerous to the Economy

On an individual level it may well seem that car-ownership is a relatively inexpensive form of transport. Hence:²⁸

“...the real question is why so many drivers choose to sit for hours in bumper-to-bumper traffic without seeking alternatives. Is it a manifestation of some deep-seated self-loathing, or are people just stupid? The answer is that people are actually quite smart, and their decision to submit themselves to the misery of suburban commuting is a sophisticated response to a set of circumstances that are as troubling as their result.

Automobile use is the intelligent choice for most Americans because it is what economists refer to as a "free good": the consumer pays only a fraction of its true cost. The authors Stanley Hart and Alvin Spivak have explained that:

We learn in first-year economics what happens when products or services become "free" goods.

- *The market functions chaotically;*
- *Demand goes through the roof.*
- *In most American cities, parking spaces, roads and freeways are free goods.*
- *Local government services to the motorist and to the trucking industry--traffic engineering, traffic control, traffic lights, police and fire protection, street repair and maintenance--are all free goods."*

Yet for something that appears to be "free goods" it is considerably expensive for society as a whole. Peter Newman's work shows that:

“...car dependence is a big waste of money in a city. Car dependent cities use 10 to 17% of their city wealth just getting around...transit-oriented cities [use] just 5 to 8% of city wealth.”²⁹

On this basis the cost of car dependency equates to 2-12% of the economy of a city (although we should point out that the largest savings in such costs are to be found from rail based systems not bus based systems)³⁰.

²⁸ Bicycleworld, “*Suburban Nation-The Rise of Sprawl and the Decline of the American Dream*”, opcit.

²⁹ Page 32, Dissent, opcit

³⁰ Todd Litmann, “Rail Transit in America: A Comprehensive Evaluation of Benefits”, Victoria Transport Policy Institute at <http://www.vtpi.org/railben.pdf>

Lastly, despite the argument of road lobbies that investment in roads leads to economic benefits, the opposite argument can be made. A British Government report found that:

“...road-building had no discernable effect in stimulating economic growth, and may even have a *negative* economic impact.”³¹

To ensure the success of public transport improvements, the road system must not be allowed to undermine them. There should be no more major investment in road building in Adelaide except for safety, bike paths, traffic calming measures and prioritising public transport. The cost of new roads directs investment funds away from public transport.

PPT urges that an economic study be undertaken of the cost of car dependency in Adelaide. Potentially, savings to society in the order of many tens or hundreds of millions may be there to be found. Savings that, in the first instance, could meet the capital cost of investment in a new public transport system. Thereafter, the savings could be directed to productive investment in other areas of the economy.

Using the Tax System

Car dependency has come at a great financial cost to the community but it has done so in ways which are not always immediately evident to individual drivers, or to governments. While some costs are obvious (e.g. grief and trauma from road accidents), it has taken the work of many academics many years to establish that there are costs from induced traffic, of from the loss of public space, or the cost of emissions.

On the other hand, the cost of public transport is immediately obvious to governments that have to meet the capital cost of rail lines or trains and buses, or the cost of ongoing operation. Many governments attempted to escape such costs by either not investing in public transport, or by various forms of privatisation (see below). In general, this has not succeeded.

If good public transport can deliver savings to the community, it is less obvious as to how a government can “capture” the savings to the community and in turn, translate those savings into funds that can be invested. This difficulty is exacerbated by the Federal-State divide in revenue and expenditure.

Given this lack of tools by which savings by individuals and the community can be converted to investment funds, we can only propose that the Tax system be the main system of transferring funds to public transport.

The model of Infrastructure Australia shows how investment funds can be disbursed even though one level of government collects revenue whilst another spends it. The surplus funds available to Infrastructure Australia arise from a less than well planned but fortunate accumulation of tax revenue. This source of funds needs to be further extended and regulated so that a reliable source of investment funds continues to be available for at least the next twenty years. This may well require a defined portion of future tax revenue to go to Infrastructure Australia. It may also require a modest increase in the long term average amount of tax revenue.

Fortunately, and unlike 20 or 30 years ago, there is now a general level of understanding in the community that public transport is a necessary public

³¹ Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment, quoted page 5, in PTUA, opcit.

investment – an understanding that is often ahead of the understanding by some politicians. On this basis, taxes which are clearly used for good purposes and are “value for money” will be supported by the community. Particularly, once improvements in public transport mean that more and more persons can forgo the cost of purchasing and operating a car, and they can substitute a car loan costing many thousands of dollars for transit fares costing hundreds of dollars (including the increased tax charges noted above).

Contribution of Economic Theory

It is unfortunate that much of the attention on public transport in economic theory, as realised through the politics of the 80's and 90's, had focused on the issues of *competition* and on *private versus public ownership*. Both issues have some importance but, given the overall negative impact of a car economy, both “miss the boat”. Nonetheless, we provide some comment on both matters.

Competition

We have seen above that car dependency arises from an economic structure in which cars are seen as a “free good.” If so, then competition between cars and other modes of transport is a rigged game with considerable bias given to the most inefficient and costly mode of all. Any attempt, *under current financial and legal structures*, to promote “competition” between buses, trains, and cars can only have one outcome – and this is evident in the shape of our cities, and in the minor role taken up by public transport.

PPT takes the view that competition can only occur if public transport is equally as well funded as the car economy or if the real cost of cars is charged in full to drivers.

Cars are the dominant mode of transport in Adelaide, and public transport can only compete with cars if it provides an integrated, cheap, quality alternative - whether in public or private ownership.

Private or Public Ownership

Melbourne's Public Transport Users Association (PTUA) “maintains that there was no advantage gained by placing the assets of the [Melbourne] system in private ownership” and that “experience, here and overseas, has shown that the result of privatisation is deteriorating service, together with escalating costs for passengers and taxpayers.”³²

The PTUA asserts that, “private companies have required substantial subsidies, over and above their contracts, to run public transport services. Available information suggests that the subsidies paid to operators of already privatised services are at least comparable with those formerly paid...to run the same services under government ownership.” But the British experience showed that “privatised services...suffered patronage declines and greater fare increases than those that remained public.”

The conclusion can only be that private ownership/operation of public transport is not by itself an answer to the problems of public transport. PPT believes that control should not be handed to private operators who are not accountable to the community. We do not oppose private operators having a role in delivering public transport, provided the community retains control over timetables, fares and common infrastructure.

³² PTUA, Media Release, 4 December 2001.