

# INTEGRATED TRANSPORT OPTIONS

A submission to The Legislative Council Government Administration Committee 'B' on options for an integrated sustainable public transport system in Southern Tasmania with particular reference to

- (1) the public bus transport system currently operated by Metro Tasmania; and
- (2) any other appropriate and innovative transport systems

## **Summary**

*Public transport is a vital aspect of city life. Its impact on outer-urban and country life is currently limited by its low or non-existent availability. Decentralising of business, food, education and health services would reduce travel needs. Practical options for public transport include buses, trolley buses, light rail, trains and ferries. Car pooling and a system of public bicycle hire are further options. Planning for transport needs in southern Tasmania must keep in mind the likelihood of rapidly increasing fuel costs due to the impact of Peak Oil and to changing conditions globally that affect liquid fuel supply.*

## **Peak Oil**

*Peak oil* is the point in time when the maximum rate of petroleum extraction is reached, after which the rate of production is expected to enter terminal decline.(Wikipedia) The quality of oil available declines e.g . tar sand, and it takes increasingly more energy to extract the oil that is available

The world oil supply is a finite one. Australia will be forced to rely on huge quantities of imported oil unless it radically overhauls its transport and urban policies, according to a study by the Planning Institute of Australia, reported in the Sydney Morning Herald of December 28, 2010. The article predicts that car dependent outer suburbs will rapidly become slums as fuel prices rise.

The Tasmanian Government has, to its credit, undertaken an 'Oil Price Vulnerability Study' which is overdue for release . It would be a useful tool to have when planning future public transport in the state as its purpose was to find out:

- 1) what sectors of the Tasmanian community will be affected by rising fuel prices and
- 2) the best ways to minimize such negative impacts on Tasmanian citizens, communities and the economy.

## **Public transport**

Public transport fulfils a social role as well as a practical one. Not all have access to cars. An effective public transport system improves social inclusion and cohesion.

The degree to which a public transport system is used by Tasmanians will depend on pricing and convenience. Convenience depends on ease of access to board and to carry belongings, the routing and the frequency of services. The ideal time table is one where there is little need to check it because services are so frequent. The author has experience of such a system in Montreal where living car-less for a year was a pleasant experience despite the weather extremes.

### **Forms of Public transport**

Currently southern Tasmania has only liquid-fuelled buses for public land transport. It has previously been serviced by trains, trams and trolley buses. Reintroduction of trolley buses should be considered for a state with its own source of green electricity. Battery operated vehicles are another possibility as is light rail but with a higher infrastructure cost. All are non-polluting and quiet forms of transport. Seattle has a system of trolley buses that run on a dual system utilising diesel in the outer suburbs and electricity on main roads and the city centre. They are also able to lower the step height for passengers with difficulty boarding.

Trains once serviced Hobart's northern suburbs and passengers travelling between Hobart and Launceston and the north west coast. The tracks have been allowed to deteriorate such that I understand passengers can no longer be carried. It is probable that rail travel for both passengers and freight will become an increasingly attractive option as liquid fuel prices rise. It would be a short sighted move to have the railway now terminate at Brighton and also to abandon all rail yards and port facilities and the possibility of a passenger station in Hobart. Sea transport is likely to become a major force again for the same reason of rising liquid fuel costs.

Public bicycle hire systems are working well overseas and in other Australian states. Tasmania is not well supplied with either bike tracks or bike friendly roads. Both should be aimed for in the future.

Ferries have plied the Derwent for many years and could have an increased role in public transport. Their usefulness would be enhanced if they were co-ordinated with a convenient link up to land transport as occurs in Sydney.

### **A decentralised island**

In a village system, all the immediate needs of the inhabitants are met within the village and it is possible to live with little reliance on public transport. Cuba during the 1990's reverted to a decentralised system to cope with a prolonged fuel shortage and consequent impacts on food production and transport. A highly centralised system, such as we currently have in Tasmania will only work if there are economic transport options to service it.

### **Cost effectiveness of public transport**

When considering the cost effectiveness of public transport, costs should be offset by the decrease in costs of road infrastructure, traffic congestion and city parking. Public transport results in less

pollution, a smaller carbon footprint and improved health of the population including decreased obesity levels.

A further important result of a good transport system which should be included in measuring cost effectiveness, even though difficult to assess, is the improvement in social cohesion and the sense of community.

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