

People for Public Transport Conference – October 2003

'Missed Opportunities - New Possibilities' in Adelaide

1. Overview

Adelaide's transport action group People for Public Transport held its annual conference 'Missed Opportunities - New Possibilities' on Saturday 25 October 2003 at Balyana Conference Centre, Clapham, attracting some notable speakers and considerable interest. The next three pages present a brief overview of the event and highlights of the speakers' comments.

The keynote speaker was **Dr Paul Mees**, a well known public transport advocate from Melbourne, where he teaches transport and land use planning in the urban planning program at the University of Melbourne. He was President of the Public Transport Users Association (Vic) from 1992 to 2001. (See separate panel page 42.)

Dr Alan Perkins talked about the benefits of making railway stations centres for the community, with commercial and medium density housing clustered around the stations and noted places where this had not happened. He stressed the importance of urban design and security at stations. Dr Perkins' work has focused on the nexus of urban planning, transport, greenhouse impacts and sustainability, through research and policy development. He is Senior Transport Policy Analyst with the SA Department of Transport and Urban Planning. See below.

Mr Roy Arnold, General Manager of TransAdelaide' talked about his vision for the future of Adelaide's suburban rail, including the new trams, to be introduced in 2005. This is summarised on page 42.

Mr Nell Smith, General Manager of Swan Transit (Perth) and a director of Torrens Transit in Adelaide, has been deeply involved in the service reviews that have led to the reversal of long term patronage decline in both cities. He talked about the importance of getting the best value for the dollar, especially where funds were limited, and used the examples of the bus systems of Bogota, Columbia, and Curitiba, Brazil. These third world cities decided to invest in buses, rather than spending their money on metro systems which would only serve a few people. They succeeded spectacularly, not only in getting people on public transport, but in transforming their cities and communities. He questioned the value of 'icon' projects, which benefit only a few commuters. For Mr Smith, the important thing was to define what kind of city you wanted and then to achieve this result by the most effective use of available funds.

Mr Nikolaos Vogiatzsis gave a presentation on the benefits to public transport of Information Technology, including information about train arrival times to connecting buses. He is employed in Computer and Information Systems at the University of SA.

2. Transit-Oriented Development

Alan Perkins talked about the benefits of making railway stations centres for the community, with commercial and medium density housing clustered around the stations. He stressed the importance of urban design and security at stations.

When Adelaide's major centres are plotted on a metrosize map, he noted that the city centre, the five designated regional centres, some other significant centres, and some of the major industrial areas are located adjacent to the spinal fixed rail system or dedicated public transport corridors. In addition, the corridors pass through many residential areas. This is clearly a positive for Adelaide that can and should be exploited in future planning. However, on closer examination, the actual relationships between major centres and the stations on these lines are much less ideal. He attributed this to the fact that for 50 years development has 'turned its back' on public transport in favour of serving private car travel which accounts for a staggering 81 % of all metropolitan person trips (averaged over the whole week).

He quoted details of this 'desertion' of the rail corridors:

- "There are more people living within 5km of the site we have chosen than within 5km of the site that is much better served by public transport -it happened at Marion (the worst case);
- If we insist that the developer places a higher priority on public transport access then they will simply say that they will take their money to another State" (it happened at Elizabeth);
- "Land is always cheaper further away from the old station that has developments already established around it" (it happened at Salisbury);
- "We can't get the developer to place the centre at the station because they want exposure to a main road, not a railway station" (it happened at Munno Para);
- "Developers want some population close by from the beginning - hence the centre will be located close to where the people are, not at a railway station" (it happened at Mawson Lakes);
- "The only reason public transport users come into our centre is so they can use the toilets" (it happened at Tea Tree Plaza - O-Bahn station);
- In Port Adelaide, the opposite happened - the railway went through the middle of the centre in its heyday but was rerouted away from the centre in 1917 [1916] because the steam trains caused problems in St Vincent Street. In Semaphore, the train down the main street was removed [1978];
- And the worst of all -Adelaide Station was supposed to be on the corner of King William Road and North Terrace until someone decided to put Parliament House there.

These days the term 'Integrated Land Use and Transport' is widely used in the planning fraternity. What we are actually talking about is reintegrating land use and public transport. Perkins went on to explain what constitutes Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) and what opportunities existed for TOD 10 years ago, and what opportunities exist now. There have been some changes in the 'policy environment' since then.

One is the commitment in the draft SA Transport Plan to a public transport patronage 'target'- increase the use of public transport to 10% of passenger travel by 2018. It is currently at 4.6% of weekday trips (3.9% on the seven day weighted average). The other significant one has been the introduction of the urban growth boundary.

There are still some significant development opportunities around some stations within the growth boundary. The redevelopment of Adelaide has so far been closely linked to amenity – within the square mile. the eastern suburbs. the coast, along the Torrens Linear Park. Railway lines are riot usually associated with high amenity - however, that is what will be needed. State and Local Government should invest in urban amenity around TODs with good urban design standards, investment in the public realm by quality stations, paving, lighting and landscaping. Possible mechanisms to boost use of stations as TODs include:

- All station environs with TOD potential to be within a special policy area - overlaying the zoning - that encourages new development to occur, but only in accordance with TOD principles;
- Developer fees be levied to support public transport service provision - some could be directed into TOD development; Car parking levy - if applied to major region al/district centres, could be levied on area of land devoted to car parking, rather than car parking spaces - to encourage more intensive use of land.

Perkins concluded by saying that there is a need to set t ground rules - Local Government and/or developers find the TOD potential. This is a long-term strategy none of the excuses alluded to before should ever be accepted again.

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3. Speaker 'Keswicked'

Dr Paul Mees, keynote speaker at the recent People for Public Transport conference, missed the train at Keswick through no fault of his own. Ironically the title of his speech was 'Has Adelaide Missed the Train?' But the experience indicates some of the problems facing commuters especially strangers - wanting to use Adelaide's trains.

Dr Mees had travelled from Melbourne on the Overland, due at Keswick at 8.00am on Saturday 25 October. He had made arrangements to board the 8.51 train to Belair, due at Keswick at 9.00am and was informed that people travelling to the conference would be in the second carriage. The Belair train stopped at Keswick at 9.00am. Anxious committee members could see no sign of Dr Mees boarding. The Overland pulled in at 9.00am. On the other side of a chain wire fence the Belair train also stopped. But to get from one train to the other required a trek of several hundred metres up onto the railway bridge, then a descent onto the correct platform via a flight of steps. A somewhat inconspicuous brownish orange box boasted a button which could be pressed to indicate when the train would leave and from which platform. A wrong choice of platform of course involves climbing the stairs again and going back down another flight. (Negotiating the stairs must be arduous for someone with a heavy suitcase and impossible for anyone in a wheelchair. Not much fun with a baby in one arm and a folded pram in the other, either.) Eventually Dr Mees found the button - 57 minutes till the next train to Belair. He caught a taxi to the conference.

In recounting his experiences, Dr Mees noted that there was no information at Keswick Interstate Terminal on how to get to the metropolitan line railway station. (1 might add that there is no mention either of the bus that goes along nearby Richmond Road at half hourly frequencies interpeak on weekdays and on Saturdays, and hourly on Sundays).



ABOVE. Keswick Station on 26 April 2000 with 3121 on a Down Noarlunga service departing under the footbridge and Anzac Highway overpass. The only information available at this station is an audio announcement of when the next train to each destination is due and on which platform. (The photographer this day had to write down the information for a profoundly deaf interstate visitor). The interstate rail terminal is several hundred metres to the right. Anzac Highway buses are accessed at a stop to the left of the footbridge. - **Ian Hammond**

Studies had shown that public transport was an important factor in economic development. Adelaide did not score well on this indicator. Dr Mees conceded that some improvements had been made of late and that a small increase in patronage had occurred. However, he criticised the policy of moving forward in little steps. Transport planning should be undertaken by looking at the desired outcome, and planning how to get there from the present situation. He noted that trends in public transport use in Adelaide were dissimilar to those in other Australian cities. In the 1970s public transport use increased in Adelaide, in sharp contrast to declines in other Australian cities. But in the 1990s public transport patronage increased in all Australian capital cities except Adelaide and Canberra. Since leading in the 1970s, Adelaide had not caught up on its decline per capita of the 1980s.

Dr Mees contrasted the patronage on Perth's rail system with that on the Adelaide metro (in the early 90s, patronage levels were similar; now Perth's is three times as high, with plans to increase patronage to six times current Adelaide numbers by 2011). The burgeoning of patronage was due to a decision to invest in electrifying and upgrading the lines, and establishing a co-ordinated network of feeder buses. In Toronto feeder buses are even more frequent and 27 times as many people take the bus to the station as do in Melbourne. Dr Mees concluded that the fundamental blockage to good public transport was the mindset of politicians and bureaucrats. - Margaret Dingle.

4. Looking forward to 2018 - TransAdelaide's Strategy

At a People For Public Transport conference in Adelaide in November, Mr Roy Arnold, general manager of TransAdelaide, outlined the organisation's strategy for development over the next 15 years. This overview concentrates on infrastructure-related and service improvement proposals. Mr Arnold made it clear that the growth strategy outlined is that of TransAdelaide and not necessarily that of the State Government. However, he says that it is consistent with the major thrusts of the Government's Draft Transport Plan.

TransAdelaide is responsible for provision of Adelaide's passenger rail systems, both light and heavy rail. The network incorporates 120km of train track with 84 stations and 11km of tramway with 21 tram stops. The fleet comprises 93 operational railcars and 21 trams carrying 12 million passengers per annum.

The Draft Transport Plan targets doubling public transport share of passenger travel from 5% to 10%. TransAdelaide's target is for rail to at least hold its passenger modal share. To achieve this a quantum leap and considerable investment is required. Mr Arnold notes that marginal incremental improvement will not achieve TransAdelaide's long term objectives.

TransAdelaide will be working to influence transport policy through the Transport Plan.

Initiatives already under way include:

- Glenelg Light Rail Project (approved and proceeding); Investigation of an on-board entertainment system on a pilot basis. This system will not only entertain, it will provide a basis for passenger information and security systems;
- investigation of the feasibility of a limited Barossa rail service;
- New Central Train Control System by 2005.

Elements of the growth strategy include:

- An alliance with freight;
- Standardisation of TransAdelaide lines which will give connectivity with the national network, enabling extensions to the Barossa Valley and Mount Barker
- Connectivity between light and heavy rail;
- Concrete-sleepered track;
- Electrification of the network;
- New modern LRVs;
- Refurbished, improved railcars;
- Faster and more frequent services, peak and off peak, with a 30 minute service to all stations at night/weekends;

- Smarter timetabling with passenger information systems on and off board;
- Establishment of super-stations/interchanges;
- Development of areas around rail stations with encouraging retail activities.
- Optimise bus-rail connections and eliminate duplication of services;
- Extend Glenelg tram line to Adelaide Railway Station and City West; Corridor development linkage with major urban renewal

projects;

- Corridor development linkage with major urban renewal projects;
- Disability Discrimination Act compliance across network;
- Investigate feasibility of the following projects:
 - light rail network in Port Adelaide connecting to heavy rail at Glanville and Alberton;
 - Light rail/heavy interchanges Goodwood and Adelaide Station;
 - Interchange of interstate trains with TransAdelaide railcars at Keswick ;
 - Line extension Noarlunga to Seaford;
 - Services to Barossa Valley and Mount Barker.

The 2018 Vision

The Vision for TransAdelaide in 2018 is that it operates passenger rail services for greater metropolitan Adelaide. 25m passengers a year are carried in its fleet of electric light and heavy rail vehicles running on concrete sleepers for speed, comfort and safety. The standardised track allows the network to be accessed for intra- and interstate freight and its state-of-the-art control system ensures that is done safely and swiftly. Urban regeneration and infill programs have increased its catchment areas, and well planned interchanges provide secure and ready access for all members of the community. Light and heavy rail, and buses, all connect for seamless modal change. Electronic passenger information, entertainment and protection systems make passenger journeys pleasant and secure, and the broader community has a less congested road system. Substantial investment is required but is not much more than twice the 'stay-as-we-are' costs. Recurrent costs not significantly more than now allowing for increased revenue and improved overhead recovery.

Editor's Notes

1. Introduction of the standard gauge network into Adelaide between 1982 and 1995 virtually segregated the local passenger broad gauge network from the standard gauge freight network, the main exceptions being the Islington-Gawler Central line and the short dual gauge section Rosewater-Glanville. Thus standard gauge freight access is barred from the Noarlunga, Tonsley and Port lines. The standard gauge Glenelg tramway also is segregated from the broad gauge suburban service. So the TransAdelaide policy of concrete resleepering with gauge convertible sleepers will ultimately allow the whole network to be standardised if desired and allow much more flexibility in future passenger and freight planning.

2. The present arrangements require a lengthy walk, as explained on p.42