

View from Canberra



11 March 2020

In last month's column, I mentioned an important part of the BIC work program is to promote bus transport passenger infrastructure such as bus rapid transit, bus rapid transit lite and bus priority measures as viable transport investments that can deliver patronage outcomes equal to rail at a lower cost to build and operate. It is crazy that bus rapid transit and its other iterations have not been fully considered and we have not seen a lot more of it become a reality in Australia.

The Brisbane Busway and the O-Bahn in Adelaide are the two big examples of what these bus systems can deliver.

The Brisbane Busway is world class, one of the best. It was also one of the most expensive to build in the world and is therefore most often used as the basis for comparing rail versus BRT projects in terms of assessing cost. It carries as many passengers as heavy rail in each direction per hour, has all the characteristics of a closed rail system and offers the huge benefit of flexibility for buses to operate on and off the system. This is the fatal flaw and cost of fixed rail infrastructure and will be even more pronounced when vehicle autonomy becomes a reality.

The Brisbane Busway is a gold-plated BRT, but the reality is BRT does not have to be the gold-plated version and offers scope to be adapted easily to existing road infrastructure and PT systems. There are, of course, other Australian BRT, BRT Lite and Bus priority examples that are delivering. These are all outlined in the 2019 BIC policy paper titled, *From Workhorse to Thoroughbred* and sent to all transport and infrastructure Ministers, Infrastructure Australia and senior decision makers.

A key focus for the BIC this year and the next is to get BRT back to the top of the infrastructure agenda and it wouldn't hurt if you could mention it regularly to your state and federal Members and Senators.

To achieve this the BIC has entered a strategic advocacy partnership with Roads Australia. Members of Roads Australia are stakeholders of Australia's roads and include infrastructure government decision makers, owners and managers, designers and builders from both private and government sectors.

The BIC, with Roads Australia will host a series of workshops in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane in association with Infrastructure Australia and will involve Industry, government road authorities and major road infrastructure building companies. The aim of the workshops is to develop a strong policy focused report for all governments to implement in Australia's cities and growth centres and move on from this 'almost obsession' with light and heavy rail as the solution to all of our passenger transport challenges.

The workshops report will prepare advice to state and federal ministers on the future of successful bus services for all jurisdictions in Australia. The development of a set of principles to guide the optimum pathway will be tabled and considered at the 2020 series of Transport and Infrastructure Council (TIC) meetings.

This is a great opportunity to make bus passenger transport infrastructure a prime consideration when governments are considering bids for infrastructure funding from Infrastructure Australia and make it a much bigger consideration by Ministers and senior executives in transport and infrastructure agencies as a viable, cost effective and efficient option. There is only so much light rail and heavy rail you can build, in my view. Bus public transport network infrastructure is the future cost and patronage winner, it is simply the best value for money. We just need a plan and policy focus and investment mentality that will bring greater connectivity and



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integration with all modes of public transport at a much less cost and much greater modal flexibility to meet the challenges of a changing transport scene. The bus is that solution.

Bus Australia Network

