

*On the Right Track...*

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*Freeways or Better Public Transport  
for Melbourne's East?*



*Report to the Victorian Minister of Transport, Hon Peter Spyker, M.P.,  
of the Eastern Corridor Transport Options Study by Professor E W Russell  
MELBOURNE, JULY 1991*

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# Preface

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Proposals currently advanced for transport improvements for the Eastern Corridor amount to projects valued at hundreds of millions of dollars. While the economic activity generated by the implementation of one or other of the suggested projects will be valuable for the community, and while it is apparent that Federal funding may be available to support some combination of transport investments for the corridor, the community is justified in proceeding cautiously in reviewing the proposals before it. The whole of what has been proposed cannot conceivably be carried out within funding likely to become available for Eastern Corridor transport projects in the foreseeable future. In this context the government's decision to seek the present report on public transport options and related issues in the context of the current freeway proposal seems prudent.

I was asked by the Minister of Transport to conduct this review within a period of three months. Such a review cannot have the scope of some previous studies, but must depend largely on argument and evidence advanced by representative and expert groups during an open process. This process was provided, and the current report has the strengths and weaknesses that might be expected from such a process. It has the strengths, I hope, of capturing current views and proposals as their supporters summarise them; it has the deficiency of being prepared with limited opportunity to undertake fundamental new research, in an area where there are limitations as to the completeness and recency of some information. Nonetheless, I believe the study does broaden the focus of discussion on the Corridor's transport needs, and the consequences of addressing those needs through different forms of investment.

I reside in the Eastern suburbs and there are three cars in my household. I have commuted regularly within the Eastern Corridor, by car and by train, for many years. I have indulged in "rat-running" to avoid the frustration of congestion on arterial roads. I belong to three motoring organisations, including the RACV, of which I have been a service member for 24 years. When my teenage son goes out on Saturday night, I prefer he returns by taxi rather than on the Ringwood line train. In short, I believe I share many of the transport perspectives and concerns of Eastern Corridor residents.

In the course of this study, however, I have been forced to think about the implications of using a private car for commuting when public transport is available. Instead of using my car each day to make the "cross-town" trip to Monash University, I have started to use a train/bus combination two or three days a week. It is feasible, it reduces the contribution I make to congestion and pollution, and it is a journey which would be a lot quicker, more comfortable and attractive if sensible improvements were made to our public transport system.

# 1. Project Brief

My fundamental conclusion from this study, whatever decisions governments may make about providing transport infrastructure, is that we who live in Melbourne need more often to make the choice to leave our cars at home when there is a reasonable public transport alternative. This study considers some of those alternatives.

(i). A list of the consultancy studies appears in section 12 below.

I would like to acknowledge the work of the five consultants who prepared papers in association with this study - Professors Peter Newman and Ken Ogden, Dr John Roberts and Messrs Graeme Hodge and Peter Atkins.<sup>(i)</sup> The process benefited greatly from the papers prepared by the consultants, however the consultants operated at arms length from the review, and do not necessarily share all or any of the views I have expressed in this report.

I am particularly indebted to Project Manager Rob Lawrence and to Carol Harry of L.G. Promotions Pty Ltd for their assistance in completing this difficult task in a timely manner.

In February 1991, I was requested by the Victorian Minister for Transport, the Honourable Peter Spyker, M.P., to prepare a report for consideration by the government responding to the following question:

In light of recent Federal Government policy and funding changes, and the overall metropolitan transport network and land use strategies, what is the optimum transport network for the Eastern Corridor ?

In connection with this, I was requested to include consideration of public transport options, demand management concepts, traffic calming, environmental considerations and freight issues, and to engage sub-consultants on those matters.

The brief required a report within three months, and a process of consultation with a number of key municipalities, public authorities, unions and community groups.

This report is my response to that brief.