

AITPM Technical Forum – SA Branch

28 April 2005

The SA Branch was particularly fortunate to secure the time of Dick Flemming, a past National President of AITPM, to give a presentation on Bus Rapid Transport Systems, while he was on a visit to South Australia.

Approximately 30 people turned up to hear Dick's presentation.

Dick gave an overview of the history of Bus Rapid Transport (BRT) in Australia and finished off with a look at what is happening elsewhere in the world.

The challenge is to change the car orientated system that we have developed over the past 50 or more years, which has resulted from the low density residential expansion that has occurred – on the outer fringes of our major cities.

The first Bus Rapid Transit System in Australia was the O-Bahn in South Australia, which was completed in 1989. At the time (and it still is), it was one of the leading transit systems in the world, and drew many international visitors to examine the concept with a view to implementing similar systems elsewhere. It is still the only operational guided rail system on its own right-of-way.

Since that time, other transit systems have been established in Brisbane (the South East Busway in 2001 and the Inner Northern Busway in 2004) and Sydney (the Western Sydney Transitway). The Brisbane system is similar to Adelaide, in that they are both trunk feeder / express systems to the city centre, while the Sydney system addresses transportation issues on the outer fringe of that city.

A feature of all three systems is that the development of the stations have utilised a high level of architectural input and aesthetic appeal, which creates an inviting and attractive facility that has received a positive response from the public. This, together with a fast, reliable and frequent service has seen patronage grow steadily since their introduction. In Brisbane for example, it was noted that a commuter journey that previously took half an hour to an hour (depending on traffic conditions) was reduced to 18 minutes on the Busway. Little wonder that there has been a significant transfer to the Busway system! The success of the Brisbane Busway is such that adjacent land values have soared by up to 20% compared with much lower rates for the rest of the city.

Sydney has utilised Transit Lanes with T3 lanes introduced in the 1970's, and later followed by T2 lanes, and an extensive rail network services the major part of Sydney. However, Western Sydney was not well served by public transport and the challenge was to retro-fit a system into the existing transport network (road and rail) in a way that would serve up to 1.5 million people. The Transitway Network of some 90km integrates with and compliments the existing rail system.

Other international systems that Dick presented included

- ? Bogota in Columbia, which has the Trans Milenio System. This is a network of BRT corridors extending over 38km and with 54 platform stations, catering for over 600,000 passengers per day. It is planned to be fully developed by 2016.
- ? Curitiba, Brazil, which was built in the 1960's. This system has resulted in a reduction of 27 million car trips and uses 30% less fuel overall.

- ? Rouen, France, where buses use a clever guidance system to bring them in to the platforms, and
- ? Kuming, China, where they have implemented ideas from other areas of the world, but adapted them to their own conditions. The result is that they have produced an extremely cost effective and efficient Bus Rapid Transit system that suits their particular needs and conditions.

Dick's presentation was both entertaining and informative, and was an excellent summary of significant transportation trends that are occurring not only in Australia, but also around the world.