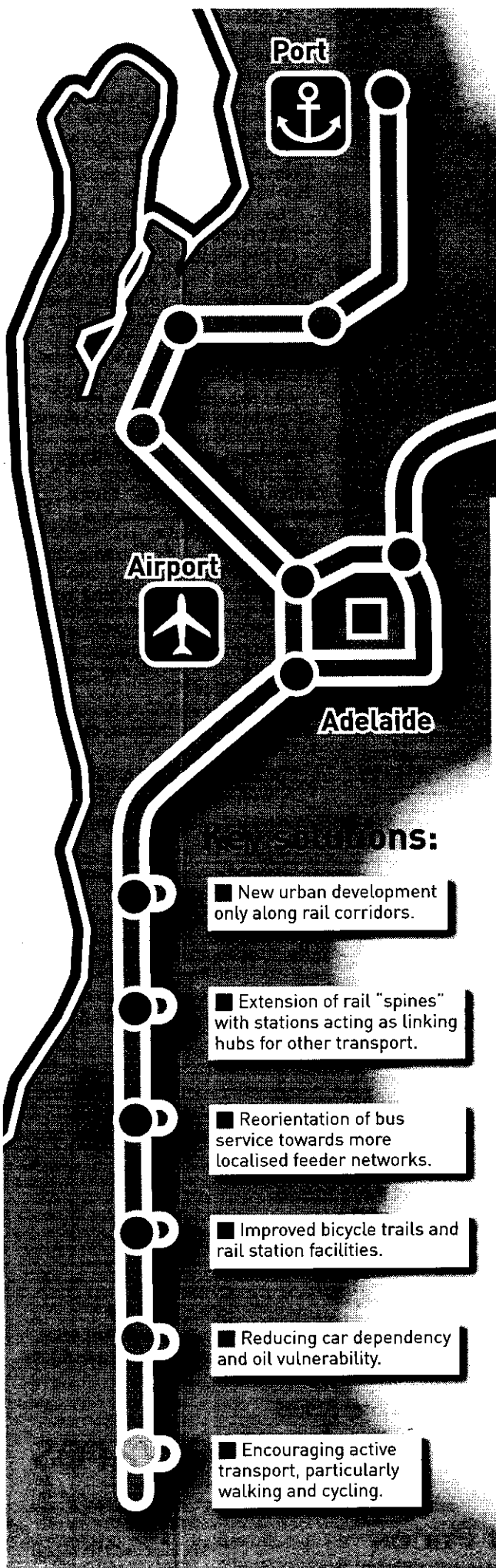


Perth has shown the way forward, but can Adelaide follow its lead, asks **SAM POWRIE**.

Total transport revolution can get city moving



- Greater Adelaide's huge urban sprawl footprint: 90km x 30km.
- Culture of car dependency.
- Looming oil crunch and fossil fuel costs spiral.
- Vast areas - particularly north and south - devoid of effective or affordable public transport.
- A lack of vision for the evolution of public transport.
- No co-ordinated effort to build an integrated, sustainable transport network.



THE tidal wave of transport-related comment and correspondence in *The Advertiser* suggests a growing public concern with the challenges facing our transport systems.

Despite the focus on day-to-day inconvenience, it is interesting to see that more fundamental issues are also receiving some attention – such as the electrification and extension of our railway system, the reorientation of our bus network and improved provisions for bicycle use.

Adelaide is burdened by a “footprint” size that rivals many of the world’s most populous cities and it is this that underlies our transport system’s greatest challenge. While many complain about inadequate bus services, I doubt we will ever afford the sort of bus system required to entirely serve distances over this 90km by 30km area.

Indeed many planners believe that what cities such as Adelaide really need are rail-based “spines” with localised bus networks servicing them.

This has proved extremely successful in many cities around the world, including Perth with an elongated form comparable to Adelaide’s and where the State Government has pursued a deliberate policy of reducing “car dependency”.

Coined by Curtin University’s Professor Peter Newman, car dependency can now be seen as the major challenge facing Adelaide’s transport system.

Car dependency, of course, also implies oil dependency or oil vulnerability. With world conven-

tional oil production falling at about 2 per cent a year, by about 2040 the world will have access to half the transport fuel available today.

Long before then, perhaps by 2012, the world will encounter an oil crunch as demand outstrips supply and prices start a runaway upward spiral.

These issues were discussed at length by Professor Newman at a recent seminar hosted by the Adelaide City Council. His central message was the value of Transit Oriented Development, or TOD – the effective management of urban sprawl by ensuring new development only occurs along existing or newly developed rail corridors.

The TOD approach simply balances provision for car use with viable options for daily use of public transport, especially trains, and for use of “active transport” such as walking and cycling. All of Perth’s suburban rail routes have new stations that act as hubs for local bike networks and, in many cases, have long-distance cycle paths running along the rail corridors.

Unfortunately, while Perth has been building for the future, Adelaide has been running its rail systems down, closing some lines and drip-feeding those residents wanting a more active approach to the daily commute with a bike network that lacks continuity or real provision for more vulnerable bicycle users.

As a result, Adelaide now has vast urban areas, particularly to its north and south, that are devoid of effective transport services and where residents are almost entirely dependent

on the private car. The creation of TODs has become best-practice in major cities the world over, yet the State Government appears curiously averse to the strategy. TOD-based urban development is very clearly recommended in the State’s Greenhouse Gas strategy and was a major platform of our Sustainable Transport Plan, produced in 2005 and scrapped shortly thereafter by minister of the day Trish White.

In 2006, Adelaide was set to embark on a program as ambitious as Perth’s. With the plan’s scrapping, the public has now been left with no vision for where transport is heading, with a public transport system that seems to please few who use it, a road network generating daily public anger and a cycling network that exists more on paper than on the ground.

The provision of a comprehensive vision such as we had in the 2005 Transport Plan, is crucially important if we are to meet the converging threats of climate change, rising fuel prices, the negative health outcomes of car dependency and the social, economic and environmental consequences of an unrestricted suburbia.

It is pointless investing vast sums in new routes for freight movement at the expense of daily transport of the city’s commuters.

Only an overall and integrated vision can get all arms of government working together for more balanced transport outcomes.

Perth’s commuters now enjoy large suburban rail stations, each providing thousands of daily passengers with reliable electrified

train services running twice as often as Adelaide’s, with secure facilities including locked parking cages for their bikes and with attendants on hand to assist.

Commuters have multiple options in getting to these rail stations, including feeder bus services and high-quality walking and cycling facilities. And most importantly, new houses in these Transit Oriented Developments are gaining in value because they are close to rail lines and service centres and not isolated in urban ghettos.

While Perth’s integrated approach has been able to produce a massive \$6 billion investment in new train services together with integrated bus and cycling networks, Adelaide’s transport systems have muddled along with little obvious progress in the daily movement of the city’s population on a healthy and sustainable basis. South Australia could learn a few lessons from WA and it needs to learn them fast.

We need massive re-appraisal of the role of rail systems and investment in the city’s Green Travel Corridors – running from Grange, Port Adelaide, Gawler and Noarlunga.

Major bicycle routes, localised “feeder” bicycle paths and improved bike parking at stations will all encourage many thousands of Adelaide residents to forsake their cars and take up more active and far healthier lifestyles.

What Adelaide needs is a transport revolution.

□ Sam Powrie is the deputy chair of the Bicycle Institute of SA.