

CHINA



BRT Advances in China

In more than a dozen Chinese cities, efforts are underway to develop Bus Rapid Transit Systems as a competitive travel option. BRT systems give buses priority on the streets, making them speedier and more attractive travel options. The Beijing BRT was launched in December 2004 as a test BRT corridor. It was the first closed BRT system (stations requiring fare collection before boarding) in China and the second outside Latin America after Indonesia's TransJakarta Busway. The first line was a 3.4 mile segment of a planned 10 mile corridor, from Qianmen in the city center southward.

Hangzhou will open the first 6.2 miles of its 17.3 mile east-west BRT line after in April 2006. Construction of the first of six planned transfer terminals started in September.

In Chengdu, BRT is being planned on

the 17.3 mile second ring road. This proposed system, which would feature 30 stations, was designed by mid-2004, but officials are re-assessing the design and planning options.

itdp.org

UK

Tfl Helps Disabled Travelers in London

London has one of the most accessible public transport systems in the world, and Transport for London (TfL) is keen for as many people as possible to use and benefit from it. To this end, TfL has developed the Travel Assistance Scheme and the Disability Equality Scheme.

The Travel Assistance Scheme offers the services of a travel "buddy," who accompanies disabled travelers for a series of times to a regular destination, with the aim of helping them gradually build up the confidence and skills to make the journey on their own. Since September, 45 people have been helped by the scheme. "For a very low cost," says James Meagan, head of the Travel Assistance Scheme, "[TfL] should be able to assist around 2,000 people [in] 2006."



Through the Disability Equality Scheme, TfL aims to understand the needs of disabled travelers living in all parts of London. The agency will be consulting disability groups and disabled passengers in all boroughs. The comments provided during the consultations will be used to guide the organization's action plan for improving the accessibility of their transportation services for all. The consultations began mid-December and will last for a total of three months.

tfl.gov.uk

AUSTRALIA

Melbourne Welcomes Next Step on Way to Reducing Congestion

Acting Lord Mayor Gary Singer revealed the details of the State Government's new parking fees aimed at reducing congestion in Melbourne's Central Business District (CBD). In the State Government's plan, long-term parking spaces in the CBD will cost \$400 AUD (\$300 USD) a year in 2006, rising to \$800 AUD a year in 2007.

"What business recognizes is that there is a need to look at a whole range of different measures to reduce congestion which is esti-

mated to cost our city's economy around \$4 billion a year," the acting Lord Mayor said. "By reducing the number of motor vehicle commuters, parking in the city should be freed up for [others] in the city who need only short term parking."

The Council will use the estimated five million raised in the scheme to introduce a package of measures that will make it easier to get around the city without a car, says the Acting Lord Mayor, which include improvements to the quality and size of footpaths and extending the bicycle network.

Melbourne.vic.gov.au



CANADA

Tax Relief for Canadian Public Transit Users

Canadians should use buses and commuter trains more often because fewer cars on the road means cleaner air, the Conservative Leader Stephan Harper said. In his third announcement in three days, Harper said he would bring in a 16% federal tax credit for transit users who buy monthly or annual passes. The tax credit would apply to all transit passes, including those for connecting systems, such as combination commuter trains and buses. Parents could also claim the tax credit on behalf of their chil-



dren. The average savings per person would be \$153 CAD (\$131 USD) annually, Harper said. TTC Metropass holders in Toronto would save \$190 while Greater Vancouver transit users would save \$132 to \$250 yearly. In Montreal, commuters could save up to \$386. The total value of the credit is estimated at \$4.78-billion annually and would be funded from the current \$4.78-million earmarked for preventing climate change in the 2005 budget.

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