



Meegan Fitzharris MLA

Minister for Health and Wellbeing
Minister for Higher Education
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Mr Tom Duncan
Clerk
ACT Legislative Assembly
London Circuit
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Mr Duncan

Tom

Thank you for your letters of 12 and 13 February 2019 regarding petition 3-19 and 13-18 lodged by Ms Caroline Le Couteur MLA about the alignment of Light Rail Stage 2. In response to these petitions, I offer the following information.

Canberra's light rail network is a transformational city-shaping project for the Territory, providing an attractive, reliable and convenient public transport choice that connects families, students, communities and cultures.

The initial corridor between Gungahlin and Woden via the City and the Parliamentary Zone will form the backbone of the network, linking activity centres north and south of Lake Burley Griffin. Light rail is part of an integrated transport network linking to rapid bus services and active travel options like cycling, park and ride and walking.

A growing population with increasing road congestion is a key rationale for the development of a reliable and frequent light rail network. Today's public transport times, which are road based, would be influenced by growing road congestion, particularly as Woden experiences renewal over the next decade.

As part of this integrated network, light rail will provide an attractive alternative to the car for the 195,000 people who will work and nearly 75,000 who will live or study within 800 metres of the City to Woden corridor by 2036. The route will support the 16,000 people who currently work in the Parliamentary Zone while connecting over 50 hotels, five educational institutions, 10 retail and entertainment precincts and 20 employment centres.

Since the publication of the network in 2016, the City to Woden alignment has been further refined, considering connectivity within the integrated transport network and progressed to detail review of feasible alignments. Consideration of each alternative route option requires modelling for traffic, engineering, patronage, stop access, future connectivity as well as investigations regarding heritage,

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sensitive landscapes and biodiversity before a decision can be made. The ACT Government is progressing these investigations on the refined options for City to Woden and preparing a detailed business case to consider all aspects of the project.

The government will also focus our efforts on a route via State Circle. The government notes feedback from the NCA and last year's Parliamentary inquiry clearly pointed to the State Circle route as an alternative which aligns with the original National Capital Plan and has the best chance of bi-partisan parliamentary support. The Government will soon finalise a referral for approval of the State Circle route under the Commonwealth's Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act and we are optimistic that this change will mean we can get on with delivering Stage 2 of light rail sooner.

An alignment on the west side of State Circle passes Parliament House and various embassies, but it does not allow for a stop or connection to Parliament House or key employment centres. We are building a light rail network over 20 years. We are focused on connecting the main activity centres of Canberra – first with a north-south alignment and then with an east-west alignment – we will, in time, make further connections from these main town centres.

Overwhelming community and stakeholder feedback in 2017 reinforced the decision for light rail to connect Canberra's north and Woden via the employment hubs, institutional and recreational facilities of Parkes and Barton. The ACT Government is considering all options to ensure we can deliver light rail to Woden as soon as possible and optimise the benefit to the Canberra community clearly.

In the meantime, 2019-20 ACT Budget investments include funding for work to begin on improving the Woden Bus Interchange and layover facilities to integrate with a new stage two light rail terminus, key early works to further support the delivery of Light Rail Stage 2.

The ACT Government is working to ensure we have sufficient transport infrastructure in place before increasing congestion impacts upon travel time and urban amenity. Light rail is providing a frequent and reliable public transport journey that can be maintained. Light rail will function as part of the broader transport network and this will consider the range of journeys that support the community to get around the city.

The government has committed to deliver light rail to connect to the Woden Town Centre as a major interchange point within the public transport network. Future extensions to the network are identified that may connect to Mawson, however there are a number of potential technical constraints on southern expansion of the network that will need to be explored before the government commits to a precise alignment. The Mawson Group Centre will be serviced in the immediate term by the Rapid bus network, providing direct and frequent public transport.

Transport Canberra advise that a future 'third track' is not an appropriate additional design requirement for the City to Woden alignment. Providing space for a future third track would significantly restrict the design outcome for some parts of the alignment and increase the cost of infrastructure.

Our integrated transport network will connect fixed and flexible transport modes, and an express bus service may better provide a connection, should patronage modelling indicate this is needed for

the integrated transport network. A decision on the bus network will be made closer to the opening date of light rail to Woden, to take account of changing travel patterns across Canberra at this time.

For residents in some southern suburbs that are not currently able to connect to Rapids along Adelaide Avenue, there may be a balance to consider to allow for more patronage for inner south suburbs and travel time direct from Woden.

Thank you for raising this matter. I trust the information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely



Meegan Fitzharris MLA
Minister for Transport

19/6/2019

