

RAIL Back on Track

Response to Draft State Infrastructure Plan
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RAIL Back on Track - Statement to Media

Sent to all outlets:

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Include Bus Reform in State Infrastructure Plan

RAIL Back On Track (<http://backontrack.org>) a web based community support group for rail and public transport and an advocate for public transport passengers calls on Deputy Premier Jackie Trad to include bus reform of the Brisbane City Council bus network in the State Infrastructure Plan.

Bus Reform must be included in the Queensland Government's final State Infrastructure Plan. Bus reform ticks all the boxes. If you read the Draft State Infrastructure Plan, there are many paragraphs which say something like this:

"Building or expanding existing infrastructure will not always be the solution, so the SIP looks at ways to use infrastructure better, smarter and differently; to reuse, refit and share infrastructure—to do more with less."

"This may include non-build solutions where these can deliver the same outcome without the need to invest in expensive building and construction."

"It represents a clear statement from the government that low-cost options, that either maintain or improve services to Queenslanders, will be considered over 'big ticket' infrastructure projects that achieve similar outcomes."

Bus Reform of Lord Mayor Graham Quirk's bus network must be top of the agenda! Bus reform can be delivered rapidly within one term of office, is effectively cost-neutral, will provide massive increases in mobility across the entire city of Brisbane, and does not require the construction of any new busways or new railway lines. It would easily fall into the 1-4 year program of works.

A number of low cost upgrades can be taken, such as upgraded bus shelters (e.g. BulimbaGlider, CentenaryGlider), superbuses capable of carrying 150 passengers (e.g. bus routes 66, 412, 333, 222), traffic light priority for buses, and modest access upgrades to some train stations to allow for direct bus access (e.g. Indooroopilly Rail, Coopers Plains Rail, Stafford City Shopping Centre).

And if the Queensland Government should ever be so inclined to change it's mind, there is even scope for private 'market-led' proposals for operating Brisbane City Council's bus fleet. We've already done the homework and our New Bus Network Proposal is public at the website <http://tiny.cc/newnetwork>. The current Brisbane City Council Bus Network is grossly outdated and is not fit for purpose, in our opinion. Go and see for yourself by clicking on to our BCC bus network service quality map at <http://tiny.cc/checkyourbus>

Public transport upgrades along these lines can also be rolled out in regional Queensland. CityGlider-style branded, Hi-frequency buses every 15 minutes, 7 days per week could be considered for Ipswich, Toowoomba, Townsville and Cairns, for example. We think Building Queensland and the Queensland Productivity Commission should jointly investigate the merits of Bus Reform, and provide a business case assessment for it that includes cost-benefit ratio and net present value appraisals.

We look forward to Bus Reform taking a centerpiece position within the State Infrastructure Plan's transport priorities. Failure is not an option!

Best wishes,
Robert

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References:

Market-Led Proposals

<https://www.treasury.qld.gov.au/projects-infrastructure/initiatives/market-led-proposals/index.php>

State Infrastructure Plan (Queensland Government)

<http://www.dilgp.qld.gov.au/infrastructure/state-infrastructure-plan.html>

Bus reform is effectively cost-neutral because it re-arranges existing service. Effectively cost-neutral bus reforms have been carried out in Houston (US) and Auckland (NZ).

1. Introduction

RAIL Back on Track is a community advocacy group for rail and public transport passengers. We are pleased to provide our feedback on the Queensland Government's *Draft State Infrastructure Plan* (SIP). We believe reform of Brisbane City Council's bus network must be included in the SIP. It is consistent with the SIP's published statements about using existing infrastructure more effectively.

In the context of our New Bus Network Proposal, and its relation to the SIP, we interpret 'existing infrastructure' to include existing road infrastructure, busways, bus interchanges at existing railway stations, and so forth. We also interpret using existing infrastructure more effectively to mean improvements to existing infrastructure such as upgrades to bus stops, new bus access portals to existing rail stations, and so forth. Please see our previous media statement for more detail. (Page 2)

1.2 Background

The Queensland Government depends heavily on Australian Government funding to deliver infrastructure. Rather than published State Government infrastructure plans, it is Australian Government priorities and the political imperatives of the Prime Minister of the day that decide what, when, and where infrastructure is built in Queensland. The Queensland Government's 3-year political cycle, and inability to raise stable or sufficient revenues introduces high levels of uncertainty and instability in project conception, financing and execution. These effects are best illustrated with concrete examples:

Moreton Bay Rail Line

The Moreton Bay Rail line had many false starts. Land for a railway was acquired in the 1980s. In 1999, a study investigated details such as station locations. In 2001, Transport and Main Roads released a Draft Impact Assessment.¹ All was looking well until 2004 when the Queensland Government announced it was shelving the project because it would cost too much to operate trains to Kippa Ring. Bus services along Anzac Avenue were improved instead. In a surprise move, Australian Government funding suddenly became available in the run up to the 2010 Federal election. Despite the project being formally shelved, the Prime

¹ <http://statements.qld.gov.au/Statement/Id/11848>

Minister had decided the project would go ahead, and thus the project was therefore able to proceed.

Cross River Rail

The Inner City Rail Capacity Study (ICRCS, 2008) established the need for another railway line into the Brisbane CBD. However, proposals for a second railway line into the Brisbane CBD date back to plans made by United States transport consultants *Wilbur Smith and Associates* in 1965 and 1970.² Exhaustive options analysis led to the creation of the Cross River Rail project with an Albert Street alignment in the Brisbane CBD. However, funding was lacking, and the Queensland Government could not afford to build the project itself. The Prime Minister at the time, Tony Abbott, had adopted a policy of not funding urban rail, and thus the project languished.

A change of Queensland Government saw the Cross River Rail project scrapped. The Lord Mayor of Brisbane Graham Quirk championed other proposals, such as the 'Cleveland Solution', in his capacity as head of the South East Queensland Council of Mayors. RAIL Back on Track strongly criticised this proposal. In our opinion, the suggested costs barely passed credibility and ignored the existence of obstructing bridges such as the Goodwill, Kurilpa and Riverside Expressway viaduct.

An alternative Bus and Train Tunnel (BaT) project was developed by the Newman administration, however our analysis indicated this project was inferior on purely financial 'business case' grounds. Critical indicators of project viability and social benefits - the net present value (NPV) and benefit-cost ratio (BCR) for the BaT project was far below that of the previous Cross River Rail project. In addition, we disagreed with the lack of a Park Road interchange. No interchange would jeopardise access to the PA Hospital and UQ campus, both which are major trip generators.

With another change of government, the BaT proposal was scrapped. However, nobody knows what the Queensland Government now wants to build. No details are available about whether the tunnel in the CBD will proceed via George or Albert Streets, where the

² Wilbur Smith Plan 1965 and 1970 <http://railbotforum.org/mbs/index.php?topic=3304.0>

location of the tunnel exits will be, or if a connection to Park Road station (and the University of Queensland) will be included. After approximately seven years, the project is effectively starting again from scratch *for the third time*.

In contrast, similar projects in NSW and Victoria are progressing well, and are well placed to receive Federal funding. In Perth, the Public Transport Authority of WA doubled the size of the Perth rail network (New MetroRail project) and funded the boring of two twin train tunnels under the Perth CBD without Federal Government financial assistance.

Sunshine Coast Line

The Sunshine Coast line is possibly Australia's worst passenger railway line. *A number of services are actually buses*, and both passengers and freight often face delays. Services are infrequent. Duplication of single track sections is necessary so that trains can pass freely. The population of the Sunshine Coast is around 300 000 people and a new development Aura is proposed in the rail line's urban catchment. There is a good case for federal funding as the line is part of the national network and it does carry interstate long distance freight.

Unfortunately, three weeks after the 2009 election, the promise to duplicate the Sunshine Coast line was withdrawn. \$500 million by the Newman administration was offered in a pre-election pledge, but a change of government occurred.³ Without Federal funding, the project remains stuck in an analysis-reanalysis cycle.

³ Queensland Election: LNP promises Sunshine Coast train line duplication
<http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/queensland/queensland-state-election-2015/queensland-election-lnp-promises-sunshine-coast-train-line-duplication-20150113-12n1l5.html>

1.3 The New Bus Network Proposal

Background

RAIL Back on Track launched the New Bus Network Proposal for Brisbane in November 2014.⁴ Our members decided to create this proposal due to complaints about unaffordable fares, poor bus service quality afflicting entire suburbs (e.g. Yeronga, Albany Creek, Bulimba, Centenary suburbs), serious problems within Brisbane City Council's bus network (poor network design, inefficient use of existing rail network), and the unwillingness of Brisbane City Council to reform its own bus network.^{5,6} Newspapers and radio covered the proposal extensively, and copies were sent to both the Queensland Government and Brisbane City Council. The Transport minister and assistant minister went into radio-silence when sent questions about their thoughts of the proposal, and Brisbane City Council issued a curt, stock-standard reply.

4 Call for CityGlider in Centenary Suburbs <http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/queensland/brisbane-buses-call-for-cityglider-in-centenary-suburbs-20141105-11gxl3.html>

5 The Lord Mayor of Brisbane, Graham Quirk, had argued that feedback to council indicated that passenger transferring was undesirable. Contrary to this, Brisbane City Council's own Lord Mayor's Mass Transit Report (2007) states "A significant number of comments indicated that direct services were not always required and that they accepted the need to transfer to reach their destination." (p.12) Interchange based bus services now also successfully operate on the Gold Coast (bus routes 704,709,745,740,750), in addition to international examples such as Vancouver and Toronto (Canada).

6 Lord Mayor's Mass Transit Report Investigation (2007) <http://wtsag.org.au/sites/default/files/2009-06-04-Lord%20Mayors%20Tasksforce%20Brisbane%20Mass%20Transit%20Investigation.pdf>

Western Suburbs

Coronation Drive Corridor, 12pm-1pm, weekday.

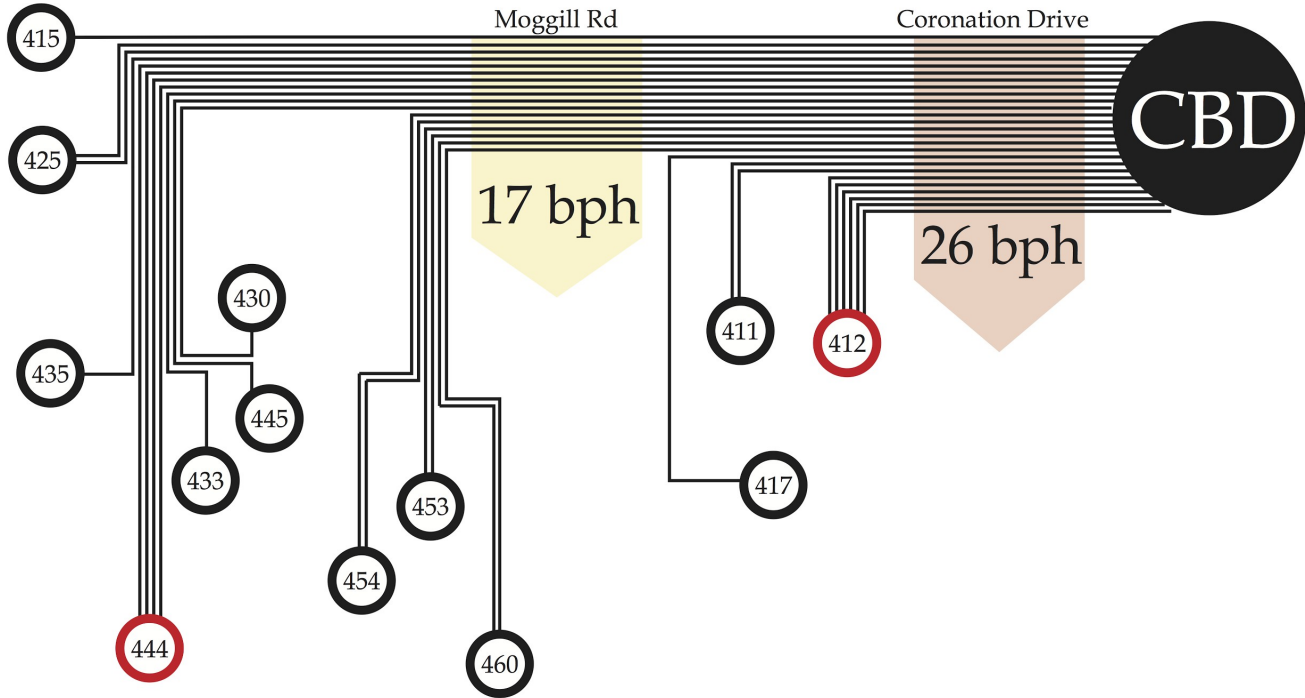


Figure 1: An example of waste and duplication within Brisbane City Council’s bus network (Coronation Drive Corridor, midday services). Each line represents one bus service per hour. Poor network design floods the Brisbane CBD with too many buses, but leaves too few in the suburbs. *bph* - buses per hour.

Source: <http://backontrack.org/docs/bus/reform/BusReformBlueprint.pdf>

Although TransLink had attempted to review Brisbane City Council’s bus network in 2013, Brisbane City Councillors railed against it, forcing the State Government to substitute a Brisbane City Council bus review for its own. In our opinion, Brisbane City Council’s review was inappropriate (it was not a transit planning agency), and materially inadequate (as it failed to properly address any of the major problems with the bus network that we raised). A right-to-information document later surfaced which revealed that Brisbane City Council staff were instructed not to co-operate with TransLink staff. Thus, TransLink’s requests for meetings with Brisbane City Council staff as part of the 2013 bus review process were denied on six separate occasions (see RTI excerpt).

Excerpt from Department of Transport and Main Roads RTI request 13501772:⁷

“Brisbane Transport were invited to participate in strategic network planning sessions on the following dates to which they declined to attend under instruction;

- 20 November 2012,*
- 21 November 2012,*
- 27 November 2012,*
- 28 November 2012,*
- 6 December 2012, and*
- 13 December 2012.”*

This behaviour is incredibly concerning as the bulk of funding given to Brisbane City Council for bus operations are Queensland Government subsidies. Indeed, the Queensland Commission of Audit found that escalating subsidies to Brisbane City Council’s bus division were a financial risk to the state.⁸ We believe this escalating subsidy is partly responsible for the very high fare levels passengers are experiencing across South East Queensland. Importantly, these increased subsidies have not increased bus patronage – on the contrary, bus patronage has fallen dramatically. In our opinion, Brisbane City Council’s bus network needs major reforms- it is outdated and does not represent value for money for passengers.

As Brisbane City Council has been unwilling to engage in a comprehensive ‘revolution’ of Brisbane’s bus network, we took on the task ourselves. Brisbane City Council’s entire bus network (c.a. 200 bus routes and timetables), along with publicly available information from TransLink were downloaded and integrated to form a single service quality map of Brisbane City Council’s entire bus network. A service quality map represents service quality (frequency) as line thicknesses and colours. Thicker lines indicate more frequent bus services, while

thinner lines indicate less frequent bus services. Colours were added to enhance legibility (red - 15 min frequency, black - 30 min, green - hourly or worse, blue - transient peak hour

⁷ Right To Information Request 13501772 www.tmr.qld.gov.au/~media/aboutus/rti/disclog/rti13501772.pdf

⁸ Queensland Commission of Audit, vol. 2 pg. 122. “Increases in the payment required to be made to operators (especially to BT) for the provision of bus services are a significant financial risk for the State.” <http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/Documents/TableOffice/TabledPapers/2013/5413T2499.pdf>

only service). Feedback from members and the general public was also sought. The resulting service quality map was published online at <http://tiny.cc/checkyourbus>

A New Bus Network for Brisbane: Design Principles

- The new bus network should be as simple as possible, so it is easy to remember and intuitive for new passengers.
- Services should be frequent. The next bus service should always be coming soon.
- Services should be direct, so that services are fast, patronage is maximised and passenger time is respected. Straightening bus routing and keeping buses on main arterial roads wherever possible achieved this goal.
- The new bus network should aim to be cost neutral. This means that a lack of money in the State Budget is not an obstacle to implementation. Existing resources should be re-organised to avoid any requirement for large funding increases that may push fares up. Such 'cost neutral' planning approaches have been achieved in recent bus network reorganisations for Houston (US) and Auckland (NZ).
- No new heavy infrastructure. This means: no new railways, no new tunnels, no new bridges, and no new busways. This means rapid implementation within a single political cycle.
- Openness. Anybody should be able to download our proposal for free, and if they didn't like something, create their own proposal by modifying a copy of our work. Our New Bus Network Proposal is published online at <http://tiny.cc/newnetwork>. (We included thick purple lines to indicate our proposed high-capacity superbuses.)

2. Our New Bus Network Proposal

We provide images of the current Brisbane City Council bus network and our New Bus Network proposal in Figure 2 and Figure 3. We focused high frequency bus service along fast main road corridors, and expanded services into 'black hole' areas such as Albany Creek (Hi 359), Yeronga (Hi 196), Bulimba (BulimbaGlider) and the Centenary Suburbs (CentenaryGlider). Although there is an increased reliance on interchange, we have used interchange judiciously so that most passengers enjoy a single seat ride to the Brisbane CBD. Superbuses on selected routes increase capacity and efficiency (150 or more passengers per bus) on high volume routes, consistent with international best practice. Superbuses use labour more efficiently, which means new high-frequency services can be created for the same fixed budget.⁹

⁹ A superbus with 1 driver carries 150 passengers. Three standard buses (65 passengers) and three drivers, at three times the cost, are required to transport the same number of people.

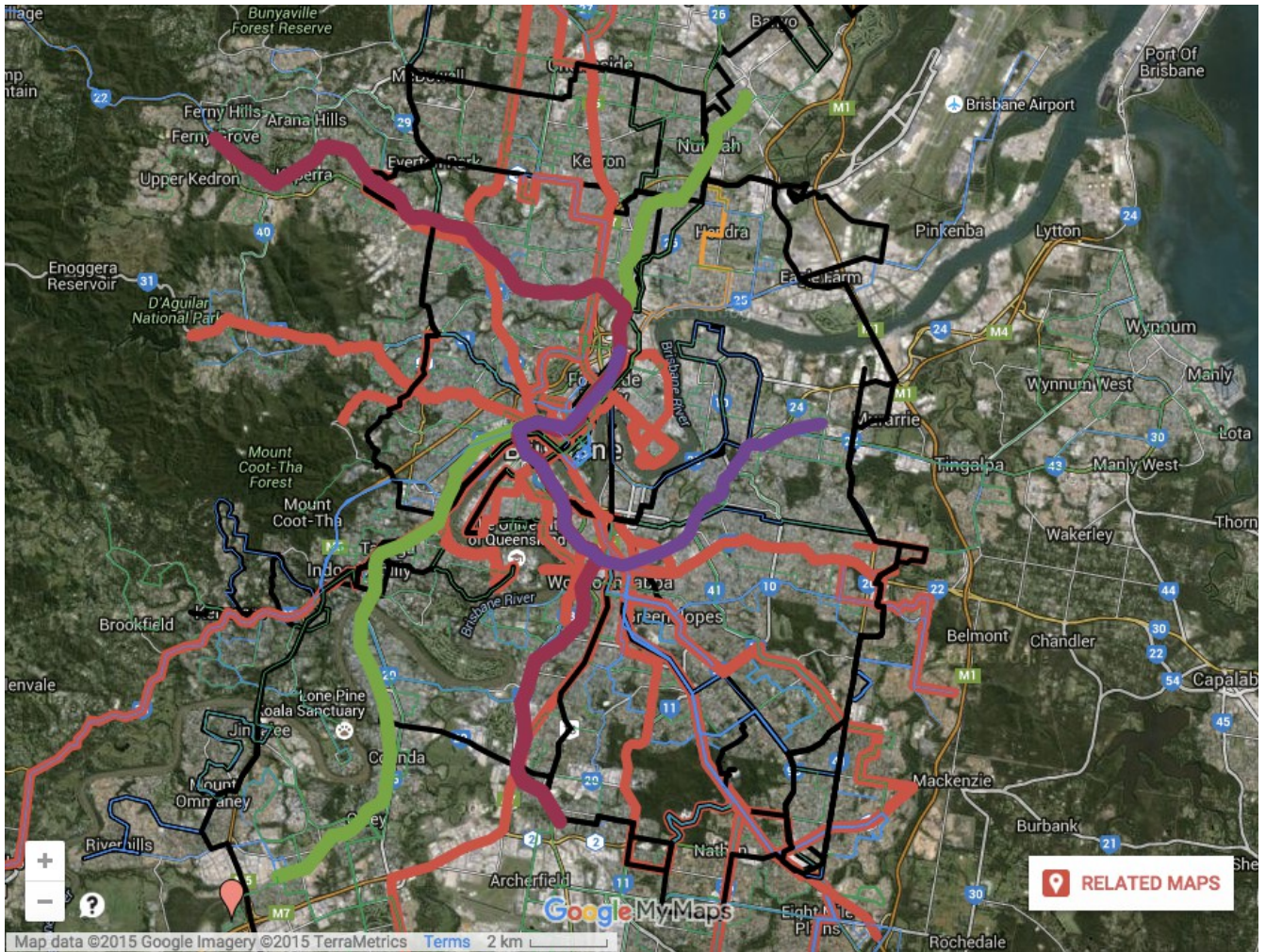


Figure 2: RAIL Back on Track's Brisbane City Council bus service quality map (excerpt). Frequent sections of the rail network (Maroon: Beenleigh-Ferry Grove line, Purple: Cleveland Line, Green: Darra-Northgate section of Ipswich/Caboolture line). Published online <http://tiny.cc/checkyourbus>

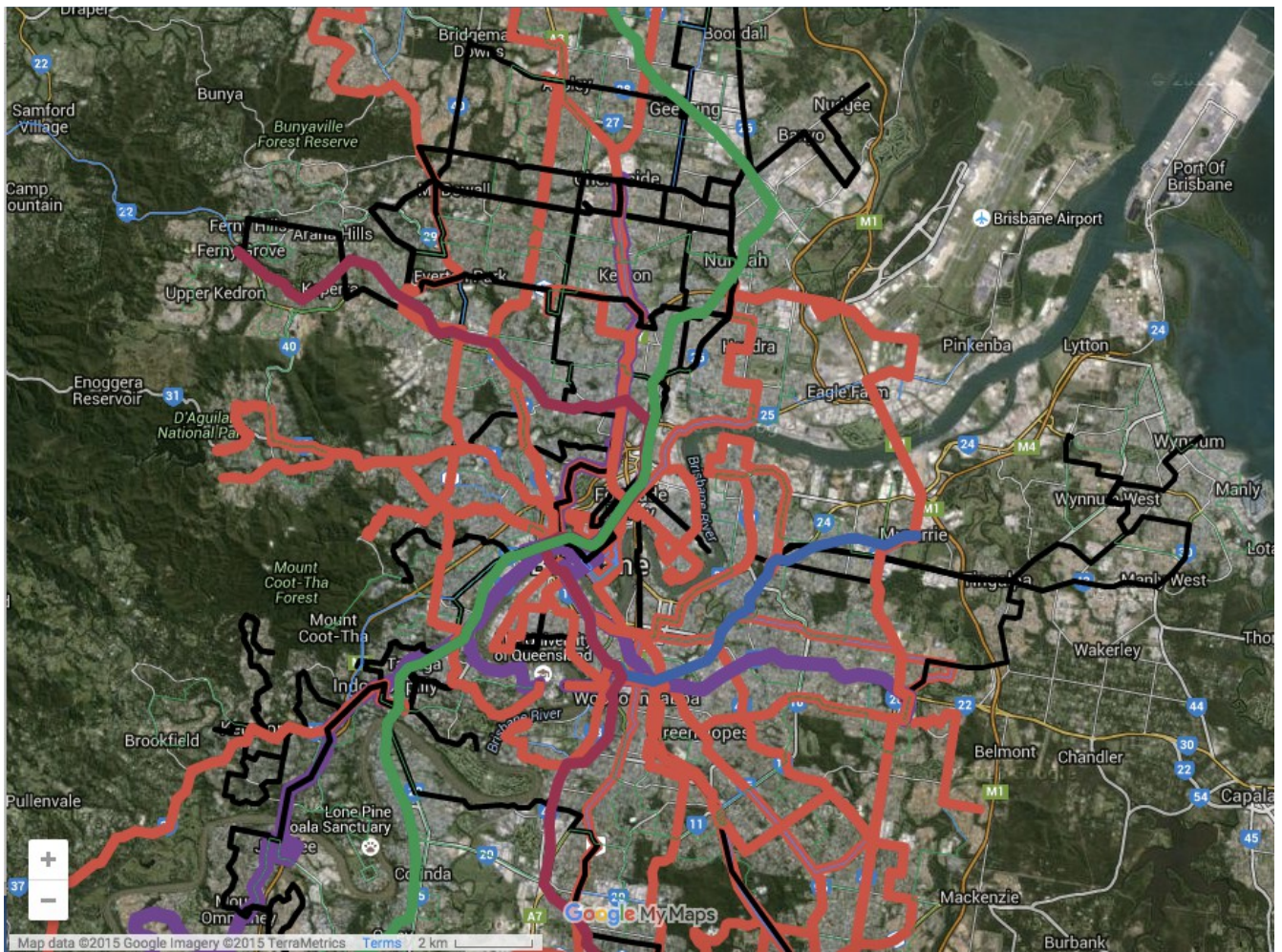


Figure 3: RAIL Back on Track's New Bus Network Proposal (excerpt). Consolidating and reorganising existing service would allow more high frequency buses into The Gap, the Centenary suburbs, Albany Creek, Yeronga and Bulimba. Simply amalgamating the GCL and 590 services between Toombul and Garden City would create 15-minute hi-frequency bus service at virtually zero additional cost. Published online <http://tiny.cc/newnetwork>

Table 2.1: New or Improved Frequent Bus Service

New CityGlider bus services	400 CentenaryGlider (Centenary suburbs to CBD) - Bus Rapid Transit, 150+ pax superbuses, every 10 minutes, 24 hour service on Friday and Saturday nights. 230 BulimbaGlider (Morningside Rail to CBD/Roma St Busway)- every 15 minutes, 24 hour service on Friday and Saturday nights.
New High Frequency BUZ routes	175 Garden City BUZ (Logan Road) (created by amalgamation of 174, 175 bus routes) 205 Carindale BUZ (Cavendish Rd) (created by reallocation of Old Cleveland Rd service) 200 Carindale BUZ (Stanley Rd) (created by reallocation of Old Cleveland Rd service) 300 Toombul BUZ (Kingsford Smith Dr) 359 Albany Creek BUZ - Feeding into Mitchelton Rail Station 380 The Gap (Payne Rd) BUZ - direct via Ashgrove to CBD
Extension of Existing BUZ routes	196 Yeronga BUZ extended into Yeronga via Kadumba St

2.1 Cross-town 900 Series CityConnector Buses

If public transport is to be abundant and low cost for everyone, bus services must become versatile to use for all of life’s activities. This versatility can be achieved by adopting a ‘connected network’ approach used in Vancouver (Canada), Toronto (Canada), or the Gold Coast (Australia).

In theory, Brisbane City Council’s Great Circle Line (GCL) serves this ‘cross-town’ demand. In practice, Brisbane City Council’s GCL suffers from reliability issues, confusion about which services are clockwise or anti-clockwise, service frequency is not tailored to local needs, and some services in the mornings or evenings complete only part of the circle. Services are infrequent, slow and lack Sunday service. The entire route takes around three hours to complete. The GCL should be scrapped entirely, replaced with a network of thirteen locally-tailored 900-series CityConnector bus services.¹⁰ This proposal is based on bus network design in Melbourne (SmartBus) and Toronto (Canada).

Table 2.2 Proposed service changes: Cross-Town Buses

¹⁰ Scrap the Great Circle Bus Line and Begin Again: Expert
<http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/queensland/scrap-the-great-circle-bus-line-and-begin-again-expert-20141105-11hi9n.html>

<p>CityConnector Cross Town Buses</p>	<p>900 CITYCONNECTOR to Indooroopilly Interchange Indooroopilly, Indooroopilly Rail, Tennyson, Tennis Centre, Moorooka, Coopers Plains Interchange, Sunnybank, Garden City Interchange</p> <p>901 CITYCONNECTOR to Mitchelton Interchange Mitchelton Interchange, Mitchelton Rail, Enoggera Interchange, Grange, Albion Interchange, Hamilton, Portside, Doomben Rail, Toombul Interchange</p> <p>902 CITYCONNECTOR to Toombul Interchange Garden City Interchange, Carindale Interchange, Cannon Hill Interchange, DFO Brisbane Airport, Toombul Interchange</p> <p>903 CITYCONNECTOR to Toombul Interchange Ferny Grove Rail, Arana Hills, Mitchelton, Stafford, Woolloowin, Toombul Interchange</p> <p>904 CITYCONNECTOR to Toombul Interchange Mitchelton Rail, Mitchelton Interchange, Hamilton Rd, Chermside Interchange, Wavell Hts, Toombul Interchange</p> <p>905 CITYCONNECTOR to Carindale Interchange Indooroopilly Interchange, Indooroopilly Rail, Rocklea, Moorooka, Holland Pk West Busway, Carindale Interchange</p> <p>906 CITYCONNECTOR to Toombul Interchange Mitchelton, Mitchelton Rail, Mitchelton Interchange, Stafford, Kedron, Nundah, Toombul Interchange</p> <p>907 CITYCONNECTOR to Toombul Interchange Mitchelton Rail, Mitchelton Interchange, Flockton St, Toombul Interchange, Nundah, Virginia</p> <p>908 CITYCONNECTOR to Nudgee Mitchelton Rail, Mitchelton Interchange, Everton Hills, PCH, Chermside Interchange, Nudgee</p> <p>909 CITYCONNECTOR to Garden City Richlands Rail, Inala Interchange, Acacia Ridge, Archerfield, Coopers Plains Interchange, Sunnybank, Garden City Interchange</p> <p>910 CITYCONNECTOR to Forest Lake Mt Ommaney Interchange, Darra Interchange, Inala Interchange, Forest Lake</p> <p>911 CITYCONNECTOR to University of Queensland UQ, Hawken Drive, Taringa, Toowong, Toowong Rail, Bardon Interchange, Ashgrove Interchange, Enoggera Interchange, Mitchelton Rail, Mitchelton Interchange.</p> <p>912 CITYCONNECTOR to Sandgate Interchange Stathpine Interchange, Bald Hills Rail, Bracken Ridge Shops, Sandgate, Shorncliffe</p>
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2.2 Other measures as part of the New Bus Network Proposal

Other supporting measures are required to maximise patronage and improve service quality- these are detailed below.

2.2.1 'Light Rail Style' High-Speed Bus Stop Spacing

The Minister for Transport should issue written directives instructing TransLink to review the location and spacing of all bus stops within Brisbane. Many stops date back to the tram era (pre-1969), and are too close together or redundant. For example, buses 402 and 412 should have a single express stop pattern. The goal should be to increase overall bus speed, particularly on main roads or high volume corridors, while maintaining a minimum acceptable walk distance for 'coverage' areas. The speed and operational cost savings can be significant. For example, when San Francisco reviewed their bus stop spacing, authorities were shocked to find that nearly 70% of the 4000 stops within the city did not adhere to the agency's own stop distance policy.¹¹

Busway services (1-2 km apart), CityGlider services (800m apart) and some other express bus services (e.g. 412 St Lucia) already employ high-speed stop spacing. If bus stops are too close, bus service speed is degraded and travel times become uncompetitive against cars. Slow services means fewer passengers, lower fare revenue and thus higher subsidy. That puts pressure on fares to go up. Stop spacing should be adjusted before upgrading bus service as it is more difficult to fix after frequency improvements have been applied. It is in the interest of the Queensland Government to make bus services fast, as this minimises operational costs, maximises patronage and thus farebox revenues.

¹¹ "Overall nearly 70 percent of the 4,000 bus and rail stops in the city don't adhere to the MTA's own distance policy, and its clear to the operator that consolidation of stops would speed service and cut costs dramatically." *Muni Bus-Stop Spacing Analysis Shows 70 Percent of Stops Too Close*, by [Matthew Roth](http://sf.streetsblog.org/2009/06/10/muni-bus-stop-spacing-analysis-shows-70-percent-of-stops-too-close/). <http://sf.streetsblog.org/2009/06/10/muni-bus-stop-spacing-analysis-shows-70-percent-of-stops-too-close/>

2.2.2 All door boarding

All door boarding should be introduced to Brisbane's buses. Single-door boarding is antiquated, inefficient and time-wasting. For example, when San Francisco ran field experiments with all door boarding, average bus dwell (delay) times fell by 38%.¹² In light of these results, San Francisco converted its entire bus network to all door boarding. In Queensland, all door boarding is already accepted on Queensland Rail trains, the Gold Coast Light Rail, and the Blue and Maroon CityGlider buses. All door boarding could be introduced to high-frequency routes, followed next by all other bus routes. **This measure would cost virtually nothing and could be adopted overnight.**

2.2.3 Bus priority measures

Buses should be given traffic light priority across the entire city, and especially so for high frequency bus routes. Simple equity arguments support this - if everyone is equal, a bus that carries 85 passengers has a 85-times higher claim on scarce road space than a single car carrying a single occupant. Bus or all-day T2 lanes should be included or returned on arterial roads within Brisbane. These include Coronation Drive, Wynnum Road (as part of any upgrade) and Kingsford Smith Drive (as part of any upgrade).

2.2.4 Minor infrastructure works

Minor infrastructure works will enable the New Bus Network to properly connect key locations across Brisbane. Buses need to stop as closely as possible to train platforms so that passengers can see the bus and make a quick connection. Easy connections mean maximised patronage and farebox revenues.

¹² Why Buses Should Let You Board Through Any Door, in 2 Charts
<http://www.citylab.com/commute/2015/03/why-buses-should-let-you-board-through-any-door-in-2-charts/387739/>

Table 2.3: Infrastructure works suggested

Location	Works
Zillmere Station	Connect Pretoria and Zillmere road for direct bus access to station; 175 m
Stafford City Shopping Centre	Construct second bus platform on eastern side to allow New Bus Network Proposal buses 903 (currently BCC 369) and 906 (currently BCC 354) to be routed properly. At the moment passengers are prevented from catching the first available bus service as the bus stops for 369 and 375 Stafford City are in separate locations.
Morningside Station	Construct bus turnaround on Richmond Rd next to QR car park. This will allow our proposed 230 BulimbaGlider to shuttle passengers into Morningside train station.
Albion Station	Consider options for cross town bus 901 access to Albion station.
Coopers Plains Station	Connect Rookwood Ave and Beaton Street; 220 m The small QR carpark here should be considered for conversion into a bus stop.
Indooroopilly Station	Consider bus interchange and layover options at Indooroopilly Rail station. The bus network is inefficient, services get caught in Coronation Drive congestion, and it costs more to operate buses simply because a bus interchange was not built when Indooroopilly Station was upgraded.
Kingsford Smith Drive	Permit right turn into Racecourse Road from Kingsford Smith Drive. This will allow future bus services to serve the Portside redevelopment and then continue to Albion rail station rather than be forced to drive the entire length of Kingsford Smith Drive, duplicating existing bus services and also being caught in Fortitude Valley congestion.

3. Recommendations

R1 Stable Government and Policy Environment

The Queensland Government must implement a four-year term of government, in line with all other Australian States and Territories. Political ‘Ping-Pong’ planning, where successive administrations cancel their predecessors’ plans but do not have enough time to execute their own plans, is an incredible waste of valuable public servant time and money. It is not consistent with good government, disadvantages Queensland relative to other Australian states and territories (which all have four-year terms), and increases risks for private sector partners, ultimately increasing project costs.¹³

RAIL Back on Track notes the Queensland Government is investigating four-year political terms. Without no upper house, proportional representation options (such as those in New Zealand) should be considered to prevent systematically disenfranchising a significant but dispersed proportion of voters.¹⁴

R2 Stable Finances and More Financial Self-Reliance

The lack of own revenue means that the Australian Government, not the Queensland Government, has *de facto* control over infrastructure project selection and timing. The Queensland Government should therefore increase the stability and independence of its revenue stream. Contrary to popular rhetoric, the Queensland Government does possess means to raise its own revenue through progressive land value taxation on currently exempt residential property, in a similar way to local government rates. This approach is particularly well suited at recapturing the value of large transport projects such as rail line extensions, bus service improvements, and light rail extensions. The ACT Government has already taken steps in this direction.^{15,16}

¹³ An ASX listed company expressed frustration at the lack of political stability in Queensland, which impaired its ability to plan with certainty. <http://railbotforum.org/mbs/index.php?topic=11752.msg164425#msg164425>

¹⁴ Queensland Government decisions bind the entire state, including a significant but dispersed proportion of voters.

¹⁵ Shock! Canberra delivers genuine tax reform <http://www.smh.com.au/business/shock-canberra-delivers-genuine-tax-reform-20120607-1zxro.html>

¹⁶ The Australian Capital Territory has adopted measures to abolish stamp duty and impose a land tax on all real property: will this approach be adopted by other states in Australia? John A. McLaren <http://ro.uow.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1543&context=buspapers>

Indeed, the highest cost infrastructure projects the Queensland Government has to pay for are all transport projects (e.g. Cross River Rail, Eastern Busway, Northern Busway). As these projects improve local land values, they are essentially a transfer of taxpayer funds *gratis* to surrounding private landholders and local government.¹⁷ Broadening the land tax base to include currently exempt landholdings would be both a fair and efficient way to recoup these funds for said projects with the minimum of impact.

Land value taxation is assessed on land values and not improvements such as buildings. Therefore it does not distort incentives to the same degree as other taxes such as payroll tax (which falls on workers), stamp duties (discourages moving) or GST (low income households hit).¹⁸ An attractive feature of land value taxation is that it puts a price on NIMBY. NIMBY forces the costs of growth on other residents of a city or displaces development to isolated 'sprawl' areas that are expensive to extend public utilities and services to. Land value tax promotes density and thus makes public transport operations more efficient and effective. In addition, people need homes - a failure to build enough in locations within a city leads directly to housing crises seen in international cities such as London or San Francisco where housing shortages exist, accelerating rents to usurious levels.

R3 Browns Plains Busway

The Queensland Government should investigate a Browns Plains Busway via the Mains Road Corridor. Unlike the nearby interstate railway line, the Mains Rd corridor has a superior geographic alignment, links multiple major shopping centres and thus maximises patronage. TOD opportunities at busway stations along the corridor should be considered to offset the

¹⁷ Local Governments can recapture some land value uplift, as local government rates are based on land values. However, local government rates do not pay for State Government services such as schools, hospitals, state-controlled roads, emergency services, and transport infrastructure, which all arguably contribute to any land parcel's market value.

¹⁸ "Stamp duties are a highly inefficient tax on land, while land tax could provide an alternative and more stable source of revenue for the States." Australia's Future Tax System, http://taxreview.treasury.gov.au/content/finalreport.aspx?doc=html/publications/papers/final_report_part_1/chapter_6.htm

cost, and the need for students to live in proximity to Griffith University. Overcrowding of houses is known in this area, with one raid finding 37 people living in a single dwelling.¹⁹

R4 Western Busway

The Queensland Government should investigate options for a Western Busway in the Centenary suburbs broadly following the alignment of the Centenary Motorway. Such a proposal could include busway stations at Darra (interchange), Sumner Park, Mt Ommaney Shopping Centre, Jindalee, Fig Tree Pocket South (Kenmore Rd), Fig Tree Pocket North (Fig Tree Pocket Rd) and Indooroopilly Shopping Centre/Indooroopilly station. 'Offline' busway stations should also be considered along Moggill Road at Kenmore. Explicitly, such a busway should not run in competition with or duplicate the rail line between Indooroopilly and the CBD. Many of the buses should feed into Indooroopilly railway station.

Alternatively, a rail option separating the Springfield line from the Ipswich line could be considered. The Springfield line would run along the Centenary Motorway alignment through the Centenary suburbs before continuing to the CBD via West End. Although such an option is unlikely to be a near-term priority, we include it here because the Inner City Rail Capacity Study (2008) did identify a need for a second Cross River Rail tunnel from around 2026, potentially approaching the CBD from underneath West End.

R5 Remove Legal Barriers to Efficient Bus Network Operations

The Queensland Government should lobby the Australian Government to reform bus vehicle standards. Superbuses could then be legally introduced on Queensland roads (150+ passengers or higher), simplifying busway operations and cutting public transport operational costs. Superbuses (150+ pax or more) already operate in mixed surface traffic in many European cities such as Stockholm, Sweden and Hamburg, Germany.²⁰ Indeed, the Hamburg MetroLine 5 bus service carries around 60 000 passenger trips per day on surface streets, a number of passengers equal or greater than many Australian heavy rail lines.

R6 Return Public Transport to The Queensland Government

¹⁹ Raid finds 37 people living in a single house, <http://www.smh.com.au/national/raid-finds-37-people-living-in-single-brisbane-house-20090915-fq6h.html>

²⁰ Bus of the year 2015, Man Lion's City (150 pax) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y19ZhML1kuw>

In all other Australian jurisdictions public transport is a state level activity. It is a historical accident that the Queensland Government transferred public transport responsibilities to Brisbane City Council in 1925. It was not important that tram and bus services ran independent of rail operations because trains were (and on some lines still are) infrequent. However, there are now large gains from bus network reorganisation to be realised. This comes from changes in city density, the spread of Brisbane into neighbouring local government areas, congestion on arterial roads (such as Coronation Drive), improvements to train services such as 'clock-face' timetabling (enabling regular bus connections to be made), and more frequent trains.

The Peter Beattie administration recognised the value of integrating multiple modes into a single network. TransLink was thus created in 2004 so that passengers could travel across disparate systems (rail, bus, ferry) and local government areas as if they were a single system. Unfortunately, this vision has never been fully realised. Brisbane City Council invents its own bus services (the Blue and Maroon CityGlider buses), substitutes its own bus review over that of the Queensland Government's (2013), and instructed its own staff not to attend meetings with the public transport planning agency TransLink on six occasions. This poses a question: *Who is actually in control of Brisbane's bus network?*

With Brisbane City Council's preferred bus 'review' implemented, it is easy to see the results - patronage has now plunged considerably.²¹ Perhaps the lesson here is that infrastructure alone will do little to improve the prosperity and wellbeing of Queenslanders if clear lines of responsibility and a sound policy environment is lacking.

The return of public transport to the Queensland Government could be effected by having the Queensland Parliament pass legislation altering *The City of Brisbane Act* (2010) transferring Brisbane City Council's bus operations and all staff to the Queensland Government. A

²¹ Blame game as Brisbane commuters abandon buses <http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/queensland/blame-game-as-brisbane-commuters-abandon-buses-20150907-gjh4tf.html>

precedent already exists in NSW for state run bus operations, through state-owned operator *State Transit*.²²

R7 Implement Bus Reform within Brisbane

The Queensland Government should reform the Brisbane City Council bus network in its entirety. Contrary to Brisbane City Council's claims, major problems exist within the Brisbane City Council bus network.^{23,24} RAIL Back on Track has done what it can by developing the New Bus Network Proposal and releasing it online for free (<http://tiny.cc/newnetwork>), along with a service quality map of the current Brisbane City Council bus network (<http://tiny.cc/checkyourbus>) for comparison purposes.

International cities such as Houston (US), Toronto (Canada) and Vancouver (Canada) and to a lesser extent Perth (Western Australia) have adopted bus networks that are fast, efficient and better connect with trains.²⁵ More recently, this 'connected network' style of bus planning was introduced to the Gold Coast, where buses now feed light rail stations and passengers make a short transfer at stations. Although passengers spend a few minutes transferring, this is outweighed by time savings that have become possible by using those efficiencies to cut waiting time at bus stops by boosting bus frequency. Significant gains in patronage on these feeder buses have occurred in the same high-fares environment that Brisbane City Council claims is responsible for the extensive loss of passengers on its own bus network.²⁶

22 State Transit Authority of NSW <http://www.statetransit.info/>

23 Lord Mayor Graham Quirk claimed that the network was 'not broken' however, major problems have been detailed by TransLink (2003), ourselves and the Brizcommuter Blog. <http://brizcommuter.blogspot.com.au/2013/03/more-of-brisbane-city-councils-not.html>

24 See the 'Frequency is Freedom' report <http://backontrack.org/docs/bus/reform/BusReformBlueprint.pdf>

25 Why Transferring can be good for you and your city. *Human Transit Blog* <http://www.humantransit.org/2009/04/why-transferring-is-good-for-you-and-good-for-your-city.html>

26 Brisbane bus passenger numbers plunge due to 'high prices, poor service', Daryl Passmore <http://www.couriermail.com.au/news/queensland/brisbane-bus-passenger-numbers-plunge-due-to-high-prices-poor-service/story-fnihsrf2-1227518437010>

Bus reform is not a cost cutting or profit making exercise. The bus network will not be cheaper for the Queensland Government to run after bus reform and subsidies for running services in unprofitable ‘coverage’ areas will still be necessary. However, bus reform will mean more buses more often for people across the entire city of Brisbane, for the same or similar fixed budget. Bus reform will give Brisbane Australia’s best bus network within 2 years using existing road, rail and busway infrastructure. It will do so at a fraction of the cost of ‘pour concrete over everything’ or ‘ build Paris-style metro on every street corner’ engineering approaches to city problems. Indeed the new bus networks for Houston (US) and Auckland (NZ) were effectively cost-neutral.

Interestingly, the Auckland bus review is being guided by the consultancy firm MRCagney. This firm is located on Coronation Drive and is chaired by Mr Neil Cagney, a former head of Brisbane Transport (the bus operations division of Brisbane City Council).²⁷ In our independent view, this firm's recent activity reforming the Auckland bus network and previous experience with Brisbane City Council’s bus network mark would place it in good stead for any competitive tender for reforming Brisbane’s bus network.²⁸

R8 Prepare Queensland Rail for Driver Only Operation (DOO) or full automation

The Queensland Government should modernise the rail network, enabling future driver-only or fully automatic train operation. Train platforms should be brought up to height as stations are renovated. Automatic train protection (ATP) should be installed across the rail network.

Compared against other passenger railways in Australia, or internationally, Queensland Rail’s cost per passenger is very high. This high cost per passenger can be explained by the overall configuration of the public transport network and the way Queensland Rail operates.

Firstly, Brisbane City Council’s bus network is configured to compete for passengers against the rail network. Rail network costs are large and mostly fixed. If the bus network is siphoning passengers away from the train network, then the cost per passenger will be higher because

27 New directions at MRCagney <http://mrcagney.com/news/item/28-leadership>

28 Rail Back on Track has no affiliation with this firm. Administration has no formal transport qualifications or commercial connections with rail or transport.

fewer passengers are on the rail network. It would be more efficient to concentrate passengers on the rail network and use the savings to increase the frequency of buses, particularly in Brisbane's western suburbs.

Secondly, unlike rail networks in Perth or Melbourne, Brisbane's rail network uses both guards and drivers. Double the staff means double the operating costs compared against comparable interstate operators using the same model of train (i.e. Perth).²⁹ Guards are required on the QR network because automatic train protection (ATP) has not been installed, and many stations feature legacy platforms of a low height. Until these two issues are resolved, Queensland Rail will continue to use guards and thus be expensive to operate.

R9 Buy more trains, train up more train drivers

Compared to other cities such as Vancouver or Toronto, Brisbane is well endowed with rail stations. The issue is that passengers cannot access their local train station (bus reform of Brisbane City Council's bus network will fix this), or the train service is not frequent. For example, the Moreton Bay rail line cost more than \$1 BN to construct but will only run a train every half hour during the day - a modest improvement over the previous bus services it replaces. Similar issues exist on the new Springfield Line which also makes passengers wait up to 30 minutes for a train *before* they embark on their journey. A 'more infrastructure will solve it' mindset is likely to overlook the fact that *unlike roads which are built, public transport is operated* - the benefits of expensive infrastructure will not be fully realised if frequent services are not also put on for passengers.

Paying billions of dollars to replace an infrequent bus with an infrequent train is a gross underutilisation of incredibly expensive infrastructure for minimal community benefit. Services must be frequent, bottom line. The Queensland Government should buy more trains and train up more drivers so that the Moreton Bay, Shorncliffe and Springfield lines - existing, underutilised and expensive infrastructure - run decent service (at least every 15 minutes until 9pm, 7 days a week). It is simply not true that Brisbane is not large or dense enough to do

²⁹ See Table 5 in Hale and Charles (2010) Rail patronage management – effectiveness in practice, and new theoretical frames

<http://www.wctrs-society.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/abstracts/lisbon/selected/01584.pdf>

this - Perth already achieves 15 minute train frequency on all lines to all stations during weekdays.

4. Conclusion

RAIL Back on Track again welcomes the opportunity to give feedback on the Queensland Government's SIP. Bus reform should be included in any such plan as it is consistent with the statements of intent within the draft SIP. Our members will be disappointed should bus reforms be excluded from the final SIP simply because it was politically 'too hot to handle'. Other cities have managed to competently and successfully navigate the process, and the local expertise already exists to perform this task. Our recommendations outline a path for the Queensland Government to stabilise its policy environment (four-year terms) and raise revenue to fund its project pipeline (land tax reform).

We caution that any policy direction set by the SIP is likely to be secondary to that set by the Australian Government. Australian Government and Prime Ministerial priorities, combined with whatever lucky projects manage to survive multiple changes of Queensland Government, determine what is ultimately built. This situation exists because the Queensland Government has chosen not to reform the serious structural problems related to (a) the short 3-year political cycle and (b) inability to raise sufficient own-source revenue.

Ultimately, Queensland Governments are judged by voters on what they deliver, not what they plan for.

(End of Submission)