



Public Transport Matters QUEENSLAND ELECTION 2015

Welcome to Public Transport Matters

Welcome to this special election edition of our newsletter

Public Transport Matters.

RAIL Back On Track publishes an occasional online newsletter to highlight public transport users opinions, experiences, suggestions for improvement of the public transport network. It is not intended to be an 'expert' level publication but reflective of actual non-expert public transport users viewpoints.

Articles suitable for publi-

cation are welcome. Please email admin@backontrack.org with your contributions.

Articles may be edited, with author's permission prior to publication.

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RAIL Back On Track backontrack.org is a web based community group that advocates for sustainable transport solutions mainly rail and advocates strongly for rail commuters, and at times other public transport commuters e.g.. bus and ferry.

We are also concerned with the interface of other modes of public transport with rail.

Robert Dow

Administration

Volume 1, Issue 1

16 January 2015

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Some mural art work at Darra Railway station

Our Campaign Priorities for the 2015 Queensland State Election

These are the major issues for public transport for SEQ that we will be looking for definite policy commitments from **all** parties and independents.

1. Failure to deliver proper bus network reform for Brisbane.

The State Government, BCC particularly and by inference TransLink have failed the community on this. It also is a factor in the fare sys-

tem unaffordability. 2. Failure to deliver proper fare reform for SEQ. A 5% cut, with fare costs frozen for 2015, is only a cut that had to happen as a consequence of the carbon tax repeal which was dressed up as a political stunt and will not do it. Far from it. Fares for urban bus (regional) Queensland are fine.

3. CRR versus BaT. We have shown conclu-

sively that the bus component of the BaT is a massive waste. Proper network reform is all that is needed for the bus network. BaT is a half baked project more a political solution than a well grounded sustainable transport solution.

4. Stage 2 of the Gold Coast Light Rail - ideally in place before the 2018 Commonwealth Games.

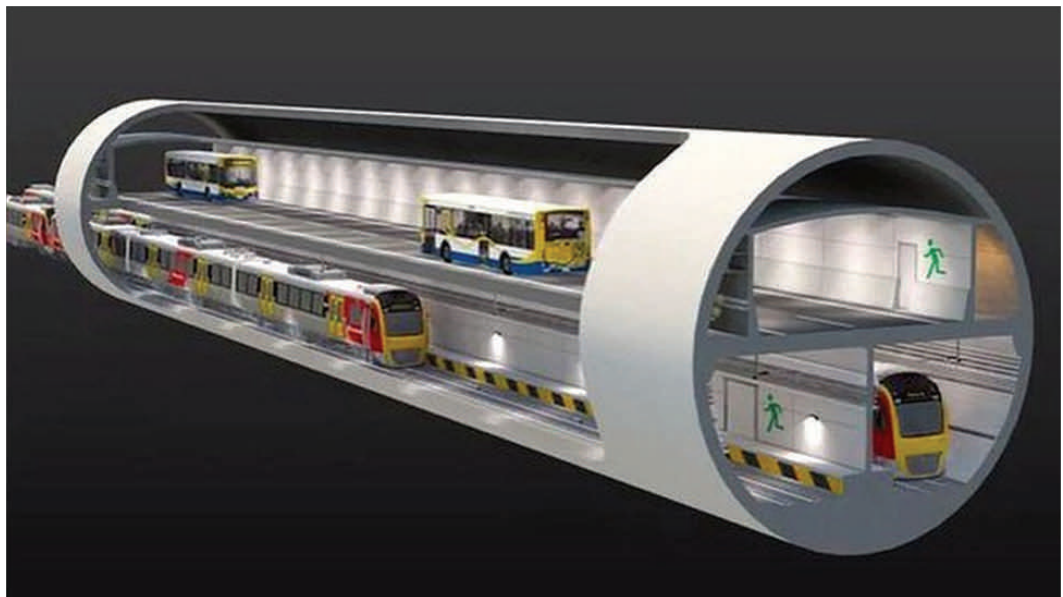
Continued .. Our Campaign Priorities for the Queensland State Election

5. Track amplification of the Sunshine Coast Line north of Beerburrum. Duplication from Beerburrum to Landsborough North is the first priority, with some additional passing arrangements put in place between Landsborough North and Gympie North.

One of our major election priorities for the election has been addressed by the LNP, viz. Track amplification of the Sunshine Coast Line north of Beerburrum.

Still more to do however. There are a myriad of local issues as well of course. But if these major issues are addressed, the rest will follow.

Proposed Bus & Train Tunnel



The proposed BaT tunnel is a first of its kind, combining rail and buses in the one tunnel

Bus & Train Tunnel - is it the right project? By Cameron Jones

The BaT is the LNP's cheaper alternative to the ALP's Cross River Rail (CRR). The need for a second river crossing is due to the fact that the Merivale Bridge at South Brisbane is almost running at capacity. As of the latest timetable update, there is only room for one or two more trains to head over the Merivale in the AM peak. Obviously as population continues to grow, so too will patronage, meaning those couple of trains will be distributed sooner rather than later.

At the most recent elections the ALP lost both the state and federal leadership. With Tony Abbott's ridiculous "roads only" infrastructure funding policy, that meant no federal funding for CRR, and Campbell Newman and co. had to head back to the drawing board to come up with an alternative that would be viable with federal funding. The result: The BaT. You see, Brisbane's busway also has its own capacity issues. The Cultural Centre station and Victoria Bridge are also approaching maximum capacity. The BaT adds additional capacity to both the rail and busway networks, so at a first glance it looks like the BaT is the best of both worlds. But when you break it down it turns out that it quite far from the truth.

The Bus Component

While it is true that the Cultural Centre is close to capacity in terms of bus movements, but not in terms of passengers. Reports suggest that on average buses travelling through the Cultural Centre in peak direction are only 27% full. This has been a

result of the flawed philosophy that most buses need to travel into the city because most passengers are destined for the city. Network reform to create a more efficient network with more feeder buses and less "O₂ Expresses" heading unnecessarily into the city would solve this issue.

The bus component of the BaT duplicates the rail component. This is wasteful, as the passengers using the bus through this corridor could instead use the train, and the buses could be rerouted to areas without rail support. So why have a bus component if there are cheaper ways to improve bus services through the CBD? It's not needed, and is only wasting money.

The Rail Component

There are many differences between rail component of the BaT and the original CRR, as highlighted in the table on page 4.

The BaT route is significantly different due to the policy of not resuming properties. Instead of beginning at Yeerongpilly, the BaT tunnel begins at Dutton Park. This is admirable, as it ideal to avoid resumptions where possible, however this should only be an aim and not a policy. As a result, capacity is only improved inbound of Dutton Park, instead of a much more influential junction at Yeerongpilly. This means that the significant increase of trains travelling from the tunnel will have to compete with freight trains out of peak, which would not have been an issue if the tunnel stretched to Yeerongpilly. It also means

there will continue to be no space for trains travelling via Tennyson, while space across the Merivale Bridge will be freed up, there will be less capacity between Dutton Park and Yeerongpilly.

Originally, Dutton Park station was to be resumed to help accommodate the dive, however after a significant public backlash this decision was reversed. This was a bold decision from the planners, and considering the station is poorly patronised, it was not well justified. Again, admirable plans, however lacking the balls to carry out the tough decisions for greater benefit.

The removal of Dutton Park station would have been further justified if there were underground platforms at Park Road, as with the CRR plans. This would add a vital connection to the Cleveland line, and buses to UQ St Lucia and buses to PA Hospital. However, without both stations, passengers will lose access to the buses without having to go directly past their destination. While the best outcome would be to include the underground platforms at Park Road, without it retaining Dutton Park is the best result.

The position of the CBD and Roma Street stations has come under much scrutiny. Under the BaT plan, the station has been moved from Albert Street to George Street. Albert St would serve more workers, while George St will serve more students and the parliamentary precinct. While it would appear that Albert St would be more useful, they are not that far apart, and

“The BaT is the LNP’s cheaper alternative to the ALP’s Cross River Rail ... “

Continued .. Bus & Train Tunnel - is it the right project?

George St would cost less as it would be easier to tunnel, so George St would perhaps be a better choice. Under the BaT plan, Roma Street's underground station will replace the current Transit Centre. While this would give it a much needed facelift, many people, myself included, feel that this is simply a gimmick to distract our attention from the fundamental flaws of the project.

The line between Roma Street Underground and the Exhibition line is possibly the best part of the BaT plan. The line is almost entirely confined to the current rail corridor, minimising impacts on Victoria Park and surrounding housing. It's positioning also opens the possibility of a station at Normanby to connect with the current busway station.

Unfortunately this section of the line won't actually

see passengers. Passenger services will terminate at Roma Street, and there are no through trains onto the Exhibition line. Not only does this mean Exhibition station will continue to lay dormant, but it also does nothing to improve capacity north of the CBD. Unfortunately, patronage on the Ferny Grove and North Coast lines is predicted to be greater than that on the Gold Coast and Beenleigh lines, there is also freight and long distance passenger trains travelling on the northside. To add to that, there are plans to construct four new lines (North West Rail Link, Moreton Bay Rail Link, CAMCOS to Maroochydore and a realigned Sunshine Coast line with significant extra services). By not allowing services to continue to the northside and providing no new track the lines north of the CBD will soon also reach capacity and we will again be facing

the exact issue we currently face on the southside. This emphasises the short-sightedness of the BaT project most of all.

While the Bus and Train tunnel will successfully address the capacity constraints of the Merivale Bridge, it also creates capacity issues between Dutton Park and Yeerongpilly, and ignores impending capacity issues north of the CBD, while wasting taxpayer funds on a bus component that aims to solve a capacity issue which could be addressed faster and cheaper with bus reform. In short, this project should not be built. As it is it will create more issues than it will solve.

“ aims to solve a capacity issue which could be addressed faster and cheaper with bus reform ... “

Highlighting the differences between the BaT and CRR

Cross River Rail	BaT Tunnel
9 Car Platforms	7 Car Platforms
Exhibition Station serviced	Exhibition Station not serviced
Services run north-south	Services run between south and Roma Street
More capacity Yeerongpilly to Bowen Hills	More capacity Park Road to Roma Street
New Stations: Boggo Road, Albert Street, Roma Street, Woolloongabba	New Stations: George Street, Roma Street, Woolloongabba
Station Upgrades: Rocklea, Moorooka, Exhibition, Yeerongpilly	Station Upgrades: Dutton Park
Bus Interchange: Boggo Road, Roma Street, Woolloongabba	Bus Interchange: Roma Street, Woolloongabba
Cavity built for spur to Trouts Rd Corridor	No cavity - spur cannot be built once tunnel is active



Election 2015:Bus Network Survey - have your say!

RAIL Back On Track (<http://backontrack.org>) invites citizens to participate in our bus network survey.

This State Election, RAIL Back on Track has released very detailed and specific proposals for more buses, more often - as part of its New Bus Network Proposal. These include major service upgrades to 'black hole' areas such as The Centenary Suburbs, Albany Creek, Bulimba and Yeronga. As our proposal recycles existing resources, it is very low cost and be rapidly implemented.

Bus Reform means more buses more often and affordable fares for all. See for yourself with our maps the improvements proposed for your area! So please take a moment to fill out our short survey. The data collected will help shape better public transport for Brisbane after the 2015 State Election.

New Bus Network Survey - <http://tiny.cc/busreform>

Current BCC Bus Network - <http://tiny.cc/checkyourbus>

New Bus Network Proposal - <http://tiny.cc/newnetwork>

The political party that offers genuine reform of rail and bus networks, together with fare reform, is the political party able to guarantee low cost and abundant public transport for all.

GOVERNMENT SILENT ON NORTH COAST LINE UPGRADE

While the Queensland Government has promoted heavily its Strong Choices Investment Program, involving the long-term lease of state assets to raise \$33.6 billion to pay down debt and spend \$8.6 billion on new infrastructure, it remains tight-lipped and secretive about an investigation into whether to lease the North Coast Line (NCL) to the Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC), a private company wholly-owned by the federal government.

The state government has been in a quandary about the long-term future of its non-suburban passenger railway lines since its freight operations, grouped under the QR National Ltd banner, were floated on the stock exchange in 2010 and later became Aurizon, Australia's largest rail freight company.

The issue is relevant to the running of Queensland Rail (QR) CityTrain passenger services beyond Nambour, in the short and long-term, but also for the operation of the Spirit of Queensland, other tilt trains and long-distance passenger trains to Cairns and Longreach. Other important freight lines in Queensland extend over the Toowoomba Range to the communities of the Surat Basin. The proposed Melbourne-Brisbane Inland Freight Corridor will run between the border and Brisbane, west of the dividing range. The ARTC al-

ready leases the 94km interstate standard gauge freight line from the Queensland-NSW border to Acacia Ridge, on the southwestern outskirts of Brisbane.

The Queensland Government benefited handsomely from QR National the sale, realising the commercial assets of the old Queensland Rail. The Aurizon takeover included the sale of an extensive Central Queensland coal network. In turn, Aurizon has contemplated selling off 49 per cent of this coal network track for a reported price of \$2 billion in order to fund new ventures in Western Australia's Pilbara, and elsewhere.

However, the new arrangements are impacting adversely on freight forwarders and companies that use the NCL for rail freight operations. At a NCL rail forum convened jointly by the Queensland Government and the Queensland Transport and Logistics Council (QTLIC) in March 2013, participants expressed frustration at passenger trains having priority over freight trains on the NCL. However, chief among their major concerns was that train control is handed from QR to the Aurizon Network for the Gladstone-Rockhampton section. "This disconnect, with control split to more than one network manager ... results in delays to NCL services relative to coal services," the forum communiqué re-

vealed. Short passing loops on a single track narrow gauge line restricts the length of NCL freight trains to half that of superfreighter trains operating interstate. This dramatically increases relative costs for freight companies and their customers. Doing business is more expensive in Queensland.

In February 2014, the Queensland Minister for Transport and Main Roads, Scott Emerson, announced a joint QR-ARTC review into the viability of integrating Queensland's regional rail network with the National Rail Network that the ARTC manages as a single unit over tracks leased from state governments. The review was to be conducted into two phases – an initial exploratory phase followed by a due diligence process. At the time, Mr Emerson said: "For almost 150 years Queensland's rail freight network has operated separately from the rest of Australia, and as a result, has missed out on a share of investments provided for the national rail freight network in other states." He warned that Queensland's Moving Freight strategy had revealed the freight task would grow by 80 per cent over the next decade, requiring an improved statewide rail network that could do the 'heavy lifting'. Clearly, the state government doesn't have the financial capacity to invest in an upgrade, and it looking to the ARTC takeover as a solution.

"The state government has been in a quandary about the long-term future of its non-suburban passenger railway lines ... "

Continued .. GOVERNMENT SILENT ON NORTH COAST LINE UPGRADE

“Clarification of the ARTC leasing of the track and an investment schedule there is needed... “

wide rail network that could do the ‘heavy lifting’. Clearly, the state government doesn’t have the financial capacity to invest in an upgrade, and it looking to the ARTC takeover as a solution.

The ARTC lease investigation process has not run smoothly.

In November 2014, frustrations were expressed internally at delays in the ARTC handover of essential information.

Meanwhile, the Queensland Department of Transport and Main Roads has commissioned a North Coast Line Capacity Investigation Project. The results were due to have been compiled in January 2015. The project was sub-divided into a number of tasks, including an assessment of the rail corridor conditions (infrastructure, traffic task and performance) and an investigation into the freight market on the NCL corridor; as well as the identification of potential policy and infrastructure options to increase the utilisation of the rail corridor. The feasibility of running longer freight trains on the NCL was a further consideration.

The capacity investigation, commissioned at the request of industry, is also a check against the ARTC work, which it would regard as ‘commercial in conference’. After all, the Queensland Government and the ARTC have yet to haggle a long-term lease of the NCL. Most likely, it would be upwards of 60 years, and probably 99 years. The possible lease of the

Queensland rail freight lines to the ARTC remain one of the least publicised aspects of the Queensland Government’s asset sales lease proposals, yet is among the most critical if the state is to maintain a strong rail freight sector. Under-investment in the NCL over many years is of concern to the QTLC. At the very least, it has called for a program of curve and grade easing to help facilitate the ability of longer trains to be deployed on the NCL. It wants certainly from government, but has not got it.

The lack of certainty plays out every day in the ‘dance of the trains’ as passenger and freight trains have to pass each other on the most congested single-line track in Australia, rail buses take the place of passenger trains during the day because there is no more capacity for steel wheels on steel track, and passengers at seven railway stations are forced to put up with temporary plywood station platforms on a scaffold base while uncertainty continues over the track alignment and oft-promised track duplication between Beerburum and Nambour. This is where congestion is the most chronic. The state government seems reluctant to reveal its planning, the ARTC more so.

The ALP, meanwhile, says a Labor-led Queensland Government would prepare a program of works for the NCL, but the electorate remains cynical, still remembering Labor’s Connecting SEQ 2031 docu-

ment that outlined desirable works on the NCL, yet failed to allocate funding that would enable the program to roll out according to schedule.

The issue is shaping up as a major election issue for a string of government-held electorates along the NCL to Gympie and in the critical Nicklin electorate, based on Nambour and held by Independent Peter Wellington, but which both major parties are eying off. In a tight race for government, the NCL upgrade, therefore, becomes a game-changer. The spoils will go to the party that promises funds (and nominates the expenditure) to duplicate the section where freight and passenger trains come into conflict most sharply, namely between Beerburum and Nambour. Further north, the NCL passes through the seat of Gympie, which the LNP hopes to retain. Curve and grade-easing, as requested by industry, is long overdue on the stretch to Maryborough West, where even the tilt trains travel at less than 70kph due to the poor track.

Clarification of the ARTC leasing of the track and an investment schedule there is needed also, if only the state and federal government can come to sensible agreement on this important asset lease.

The fare fail—a blast from the past

By [Robert Dow](#)

I wrote the article below in January 2013. We are still waiting for a new fare structure. Fare affordability has reached the lowest levels ever patronage has stalled. A 5% fare cut and freeze is not proper fare reform. The article below was submitted to the transport authorities January 2013.

They cannot say they were not warned that the fare system for public transport in south-east Queensland was off the rails.

January 2013

Why we need a fare review

We note that the recently published Six month action plan (1) makes the following point: Announce new fare structure for public transport in South East Queensland. This is a welcome development, so it would appear that is now recognised the present TransLink Five Year Fare strategy has not been successful. A fare review of the SEQ TransLink network is needed for two main reasons, falling revenue and stalling patronage. As is shown in the most recent publicly available TransLink Tracker, patronage peaked at 181.8M trips annually

in the 09/10 financial year. Prior to this patronage had been growing quite impressively, but more importantly for funding improved services, prior to the peak when patronage was still growing, the government subsidy per trip fluctuated around the \$4.75-\$5.00 mark. Since patronage has begun to decline this subsidy has blown out to \$6.72 per trip as reported in the latest TransLink Tracker. At the same time, the dollar amount contributed by the passenger has increased from around \$1.50 to \$2.08. This clearly shows that the fare increases are not having their intended effect of decreasing the amount of subsidy per trip as while they are increasing the fare paid by passengers, they are driving more away through the prohibitive costs.

As this method of decreasing the subsidy has failed, it leaves only two options to decrease the subsidy per trip: drastically reducing services, or reducing fares to get more people on services. Reducing services is a flawed notion in many cases as services are quite well used and any reduction in service would only further reduce patron-

age, although reviews to find efficiencies (such as the current SEQ Bus Network Review) are useful for reducing duplication in the network. The key to ongoing patronage growth and (more importantly for the public transport budget) and reducing the subsidy per trip is to review the current fares to reduce the cost to individual passengers. In this way more people will find travel affordable and will take more trips.

Why has the current fare scheme failed?

The current fare scheme has failed because while fares have gone up dramatically over recent years, around 70% in real terms since 2010, the average income of Queensland has not. While the 9 then free scheme has done something towards increasing patronage in overall trips, paid trips has fallen and this then has an opposite impact on the subsidy per trip, leaving a net decrease in the number of trips for which passengers contributed towards the cost of running the service. This is most likely because the 9 then free scheme was attractive for those who might already be commuting by PT most days of the week, it isn't attractive

“Fare affordability has reached the lowest levels ever patronage has stalled ... “

Continued .. **The fare fail—a blast from the past**

because the 9 then free scheme was attractive for those who might already be commuting by PT most days of the week, it isn't attractive at all for those who might only be using the network on occasion, which is where most growth in patronage would be coming from (because those who already use it 3-5 days a week have little capacity to use it more frequently).

Revised fare structure

A revised fare structure should address the fare box leakage as a result of the 9 and then free structure, provide a lower base fare cost and drive out of peak patronage. Additionally the fact that not all Health Care Card holders in Queensland are given public trans-

port concession fares needs to be addressed. Some form of family/group ticketing should be introduced to encourage people back to public transport. The present two paid journey cap, then free for Seniors and some DVA pensioners needs a review. This scheme is inequitable to those Seniors/Pensioners who don't have access to high frequency public transport services and makes their initial journey costs very expensive.

Reference:

1. <http://www.thepremier.qld.gov.au/plans-and-progress/plans/assets/6-month-action-plan-jan-jun-13.pdf> page 6

Open Letter to a Car-Addicted City

Monday, November 10, 2014 [Brent Toderian](#)

An excellent article on Brent's Toderian's blog.

Read here → <http://www.planetizen.com/node/72068/open-letter-car-addicted-city>

“ ... The good news is, when you prioritise active mobility, it makes getting around easier for everyone, INCLUDING drivers.

I know that can seem counter-intuitive, but smart cities have proven it's true.

If you design a city for cars, it fails for everyone, including drivers. If you design a multi-modal city that prioritizes walking, biking and public transport, it works for everyone, including drivers ... “

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