

4 December 2010

Ms Rachel Nolan
Queensland Minister for Transport
GPO Box 2644
Brisbane
Qld 4001

Dear Minister

When the state government announced its review of the South-East Queensland train timetable, the stated aims were to provide more seats for the travelling public, run trains more frequently when people needed them most and to reduce overall travel times. An important objective was to make train travel more attractive as a means of addressing urban expansion and enhancing lifestyle choices. None of these goals has been met for Sunshine Coast commuters in the current draft timetable. In fact, from 17 January 2011, when fares are set to rise by 15 percent, Sunshine Coast train travellers will pay more for a poorer service than they receive now.

How could this happen? And how could you let this happen?

The revised draft timetable reduces travel options, cuts train services for the most convenient departure and arrival times, and makes the working day longer for commuters forced to catch earlier trains in the morning and a later train in the evening. This will ensure that morning and evening peak services will be overcrowded. Already, many commuters must stand all the way to Caboolture before a seat becomes available. Also, the logic of adding further stops to an over-subscribed service on the longest route in the Citytrain network defies belief.

Your government is also exacerbating the problem into the future by approving two new housing estates for 50,000 extra people on the Sunshine Coast. Overcrowding and inconvenience will cause intending new train commuters to abandon rail. People will have no choice but to use their cars to drive to and from Brisbane for work along a congested Bruce Highway. This will add to Brisbane's traffic woes.

Minister, I respectfully request that your department, Translink and Queensland Rail reconsider the draft timetable now available for public comment. It is critical to note that the limited number of rail services north of Caboolture means those services that are available need to be timed very carefully to ensure maximum utility to commuters. The draft 2011 timetable does not do that.

First, I should acknowledge the improvements being made. Extension of the weekday Cooroy service to Gympie North means there are now two daily return services to Gympie North Mondays to Fridays, improving travel options for northern hinterland residents.

The new early morning services out of Nambour at 5:10am and 5:38am (which replace the current 5:26am) may be welcomed by some who need to arrive in the CBD early.

However, moving the morning service that currently arrives in the CBD from Nambour at 7:42am so that it will arrive at 8:02am leaves no time for an 8:00am starter to get to work in time.

The critical factors in devising a workable timetable involve delivering commuters to the Brisbane CBD at times convenient for the start of work and then taking them home again, with minimal delay after 5:00pm.

Under the proposed changes, the 6:27am service from Nambour has been pushed back to 6:40am, arriving at Central station at 8:28am rather than at 8:16am. This leaves almost no time at all for workers to walk to work in the city for an 8:30am start. Instead, those aiming for an 8:30am start in the city would be forced to catch a 6:08am service from Nambour, arriving at Central at 8:02am.

The same inconvenience is visited on Sunshine Coast commuters in the evening. Moving the 5:16pm Nambour service from Central back to 5:04pm means no 5pm office worker can catch it. Delaying the current afternoon 5:43pm service to later still (5:47pm) means this train will be overcrowded and take longer to get people home.

Reducing the express pattern from 20 stations bypassed down to 13 on most services is a further inconvenience and disincentive for Sunshine Coast people to use public transport. The proposed new timetable fails further in that it does not schedule a Nambour service from Central each weeknight between the 7:34pm and 9:34pm services. A Nambour service is needed to depart Central at 8:34pm.

Finally, all train services north of Caboolture should be equipped with a toilet. In this regard, the Sunshine Coast line should have the priority for IMU trains.

Of course, train travel to and from the Sunshine Coast would improve if your government brought forward the construction schedule for completing the track duplication between Beerburrum and Landsborough, and from there to Nambour.

I hope you will take these comments into consideration when your department and its agencies consider the final timetable configuration.

Yours faithfully

(SIGNATURE)

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