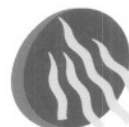




Hon. Paul Lucas MP



Queensland
Government

Our ref: MC20579

Minister for
Transport and Main Roads

11 JUL 2006

Mr Neil Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament
Legislative Assembly Offices
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane Qld 4000

Dear Mr Laurie

**Re: Petition received by the Queensland Legislative Assembly
No. 599-06 Eastern Busway**

I refer to a petition lodged with the Legislative Assembly by Mr Gary Fenlon MP, Member for Greenslopes on 15 February 2006 about the Eastern Busway.

The population of South East Queensland is growing at around 55,000 people per year. This is placing increased demand on our public infrastructure, including our transport networks. Through its recent *South East Queensland Regional Plan*, the Queensland Government reaffirmed its commitment to managing population growth and developing the regions sustainability. Accordingly, a number of public transport infrastructure projects were included in the *South East Queensland Infrastructure Plan and Program*, including further elements of the busway network such as the proposed Eastern Busway between Buranda and Capalaba.

The Eastern Busway is an integral part of the Queensland Government's long-term plan to meet the transport needs of Brisbane's growing eastern suburbs and the Redland shire by providing faster and more reliable public transport options. The Eastern Busway will directly integrate with the South East Busway, Boggo Road Busway and the Green Bridge link to the University of Queensland. It will also provide connections to the rail network at Buranda Railway Station.

Traffic congestion will worsen along Old Cleveland Road and its adjoining streets as travel demand increases with population growth. By attracting more trips onto public transport, the Eastern Busway would help manage growth in car travel along Old Cleveland Road and neighbouring streets. An Eastern Busway would have the ability to absorb travel demand growth for many years, and reduce the increase in congestion along the corridor.

Accordingly, the Queensland Government is pursuing an Eastern Busway as a means to provide fast and reliable public transport connections along this corridor in a way that is cost-effective and that can support sustained growth in public transport patronage well into the future.

Since March 2006, TransLink has been meeting regularly with the 20 local residents and business owners who make up the project's community reference group (CRG). The CRG acts in an advisory capacity and is the "voice of the community" in the project team. The group helps TransLink balance the technical side of the project with input from local residents. The CRG has members from all over the eastern suburbs and Redland Shire. This is to ensure that the project team considers a spectrum of concerns, interests and opportunities from all residents in the project corridor. While the CRG exists to provide a broad overview of community feedback, the project team will work with potentially affected property owners individually and address specific concerns on a case-by-case basis.

The draft Eastern Busway plans were released for public consultation on 21 June 2006. TransLink has worked closely with residents, community groups and businesses to understand local issues and come up with draft plans that will deliver the best outcomes for the community. The draft plans reflect the initial feedback the team has received since the project was launched late last year. The most significant change is that the old Option A - following Norman Creek and going through Langlands Park, Holdsworth Street and Kitchener Street - has been ruled out. Technical investigations showed that the environmental impacts of Option A outweighed the benefits. TransLink also took into consideration the strong community objection to Option A before deciding not to proceed with this option. Under the draft plans, the busway would run directly behind the shops on the north side of Old Cleveland Road from Norman Creek to Easts Leagues Club. This alignment will retain Stones Corner's commercial streetscape.

The draft plans show the busway will be custom-built to fit in with the eastern suburbs and Redland shire. Over the coming months, TransLink will look at how it can incorporate features into the design to make the busway as user-friendly and community-friendly as possible. This includes investigating whether noise barriers are needed, landscaping, anti-vibration measures, the latest in urban design features and public art. The project team will work with the community to design an urban busway that fits in with the look and feel of the local area and maintains local access for vehicles and pedestrians as much as possible.

It is estimated that by 2016 the Eastern Busway could cut bus travel times along the Old Cleveland Road corridor by more than half. For a commuter travelling to the City from Capalaba this could equate to travel time savings of up to 3.5 hours per week or around 150 hours per year. For a commuter travelling to Coorparoo from the City this could equate to travel time savings of over 1.5 hours per week or around 75 hours per year.

These travel time and reliability benefits are expected to attract increased bus patronage to the point where in 2016, in the peak hour Old Cleveland Road at Coorparoo could be carrying an equivalent number of people by bus as by private vehicle. To achieve the same carrying capacity using cars would require Old Cleveland Road to be widened to eight lanes (i.e. adding two separate traffic lanes in each direction).

For every full bus of commuters there are 40 fewer cars on the road and over one week this would save 400 car trips and over a year almost 20,000 fewer car trips. By enticing people out of their cars the Eastern Busway would help manage traffic congestion, pollution and traffic noise.

Planning for the Eastern Busway started in November 2005. The first stage of the process was community consultation on the draft Terms of Reference (TOR) for a Concept Design and Impact Management Plan (CDIMP). The Terms of Reference set the scope and method used for the preparation of the CDIMP. The TOR is available at www.translink.com.au/easternbusway or by contacting the project team on 1800 550 277.

The CDIMP, when finalised, will identify, investigate and evaluate potential alignment options for the Eastern Busway and recommend a preferred alignment for consideration by the Government. Part of this process will include identification of what type of bus priority infrastructure is required, as well as location and timing. Such consideration will take into account forecast growth in population and traffic congestion.

As Brisbane grows, inner-city areas such as Stones Corner and Coorparoo face increasing competition for space for infrastructure, private land uses and public spaces. The State Government recognises this conflict and has engaged with other planning agencies such as the Brisbane City Council to help achieve a balanced outcome. In particular, I have acknowledged community comments about the need to maintain green spaces for the enjoyment of local residents. I have asked the project team to ensure that, whichever option is pursued, there will be no net loss of green space within the local community and that every effort be made to integrate busway infrastructure so that it has minimal impacts on the enjoyment of parks.

It is anticipated that the draft CDIMP and preferred alignment will be put on public display in October 2006 with submissions invited from all interested parties. All feedback received will be collated and incorporated in the final CDIMP, which is expected to be presented to the Queensland Government for consideration some time in late 2006.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Lucas', followed by a long horizontal flourish.

PAUL LUCAS MP

Minister for Transport and Main Roads