

2019

**THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

**Response to Legislative Assembly Resolution – Light Rail Stage 1
Increased Demand**

Statement

**Mr Chris Steel MLA
Minister for Transport**

I am pleased to be able to report back to the Legislative Assembly on the progress of work to investigate the possibility of increasing the frequency of light rail services in peak periods between Gungahlin and the City.

As Members will know, record numbers of Canberrans are choosing to use light rail, and our public transport network more broadly, to get to work, get to school or just get around our city. I am advised that as at 30 October 2019 Transport Canberra had recorded 2,377,220 passengers using light rail services. Average daily boardings on weekdays already exceed estimates in the light rail stage 1 business case of 15,120 per day in 2021, a couple of years down the track.

Light rail is supporting our growing population, mitigating road congestion and helping to address climate change. We know that a modern integrated transport system is key to positioning Canberra within the region, in the nation and internationally as a great place to live, study, visit, invest and work. Since the commencement of the new public transport network, including light rail services, we have seen the community embracing light rail. It has been acknowledged as a major infrastructure success for the community and public transport in Canberra.

With a travel time of 24 minutes between Gungahlin and the city, the people of Canberra are taking the opportunity to use light rail, especially during peak periods, when services are running nearly full. People are saving money by not having to pay for car parking and saving time by being able to get to work quickly and efficiently. They are also responding to the great comfort of our light rail vehicles.

Transport Canberra has already responded to the increased patronage that we are seeing on light rail by putting on a range of additional services to meet the need. They include one additional service in the morning peak, commencing at the EPIC & Racecourse light rail stop and proceeding south to Alinga Street light rail stop; two additional services between 3 pm and 4 pm to help accommodate demand from school students; and one additional service between 6.00 pm and 6.30 pm, increasing the frequency from 15 minutes to 10 minutes, on average, during that period.

Transport Canberra has been working with Canberra Metro to investigate the possibility of increasing the frequency of light rail services in peak periods on a permanent basis. This work includes consideration of the technical feasibility of increasing frequency at different times, work to identify any additional drivers or vehicles that may be required to deliver more frequent services and forecasting of passenger demand over the coming years.

Further consideration also needs to be given to the impact that increasing light rail services will have on traffic movements and signalisations along the light rail track. Currently Canberra Metro Operations (CMET) operates the T-visor system, which controls the timings of the green lights on Northbourne Ave and sends the requests to the traffic lights that gives priority to light rail. Careful examination will need to be given to increasing light rail frequency and the impact that this will have on traffic flow on Northbourne Ave and the other associated roads. Providing more frequent headways for light rail will require further modelling to understand the increased impacts for conflicting traffic movements between cars, light rail and passengers to ensure that safety and traffic flow is maintained. As light rail stage one continues to increase in popularity, changes will continue to be made to finetune the system.

This work is critical to allowing Government to make an informed decision about when and how to increase the frequency of light rail services in peak periods. Investigation of these issues is ongoing and is expected to be completed later in 2019 or early 2020.

While this work is underway, the Government is getting on with the job of delivering other improvements for light rail passengers. This includes an additional light rail stop on Flemington Road in Mitchell, on which construction is expected to commence this financial year.

The new stop will support local businesses and residents of Gungahlin and north Canberra, providing improved access to public transport in Mitchell. In addition to the construction of the light rail stop, pedestrians and cyclists will find it easier to access the Mitchell business precinct, with gaps in the Flemington Road path network to be addressed. That was funded through the 2019-20 Budget.

Other light rail passengers will benefit from the park and ride facility at EPIC, which I am pleased to advise reopened in late October, after being used as a work compound during the construction of light rail.

As part of the 2019-20 ACT Budget, the Government also announced \$2.5 million for the design and construction of a new park and ride facility near the Well Station Drive light rail stop. These two park and rides will take pressure off the Gungahlin Place park and ride, and give inner north and Gungahlin residents another option to use public transport instead of having to pay for parking in the City and Dickson.

With the success of light rail stage 1, the ACT Government is also working to extend light rail to other parts of the city. This will help to further transform

our public transport system into an attractive, integrated transport network for our growing city so that even more Canberrans can benefit from light rail. The Government's Infrastructure Plan released in October 2019 clearly sets out the next several stages of the light rail network for our city, including:

- Stage 2A to Commonwealth Park;
- Stage 2B to Woden;
- Stage 3 from Belconnen to Canberra Airport; and
- Stage 4 from Woden to Tuggeranong.

With the business case for Stage 2A endorsed, work has commenced on extending light rail to Commonwealth Park. This 1.7km extension, due to commence operations in 2024, will see three new stops added to the network and will help move an extra 3,000 passengers daily within the first year of operations.

I look forward to being able to provide a further update to the Assembly next year.