



**Legislative Assembly** for the  
**Australian Capital Territory**

Standing Committee on Environment,  
and Planning

# Submission Cover Sheet

## Inquiry into the Role and Future of the Woden Town Centre in the context of a compact city

Submission number: 082

Submitter: Public Transport Association of Canberra

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# SUBMISSION TO THE INQUIRY INTO THE ROLE AND FUTURE OF THE WODEN TOWN CENTRE IN THE CONTEXT OF A COMPACT CITY



PUBLIC TRANSPORT ASSOCIATION OF CANBERRA

The Public Transport Association of Canberra (PTCBR) is pleased to provide this submission to the Inquiry into the Role and Future of the Woden Town Centre in the context of a compact city being conducted by the Standing Committee on Environment and Planning. The Woden Town Centre is a challenging environment for many reasons; poor planning decisions, a lack of pedestrian infrastructure, and clear lack of holistic vision for the area combine to make it a largely unfriendly and unattractive place. This is unacceptable for a town centre - a place that ought to be welcoming, easy to navigate, and purposefully designed.

Below we offer observations about the current state of Woden Town Centre and recommendations for its future from the perspective of public transport users.

## Access from public transport interchange into the Town Centre

Walking between the Woden Interchange and key destinations is often unfriendly and challenging, and this will continue with the eventual opening of the new Woden Interchange. Public transport users going between the new Woden Interchange and elsewhere in the Town Centre will be traversing paths that are mostly uncovered and exposed.

Additionally, public transport users will need to cross the Bowes/Bradley Street extension to access popular destination Westfield Woden. If this becomes a busy thoroughfare for vehicles, this pedestrian-vehicle clash point will be irritating, potentially dangerous, and stressful for people trying to use the area on foot. Many people do not feel comfortable asserting their priority as a pedestrian in “shared zones”, especially when vehicles are moving at speed and when drivers cannot be relied on to stop for pedestrians. We call attention to Bunda Street in Civic as a case study for poor shared zone performance and experience - pedestrians can frequently be seen standing and waiting for cars to stop or for a lull in traffic in order to cross, when they actually have priority according to the guidelines for that zone. It can't be assumed that rules printed on signage will translate into real-world behaviour.

**Recommendation 1:** PTCBR recommends an investigation of foot traffic routes between the new Woden Interchange and key Woden Town Centre destinations to assess weather protection and vehicle traffic clash points, and for fixes to the built environment and road network to provide solutions to any issues identified.

## Town Centre atmosphere and appearance

The prevalence of wide driveways, wide streets, and loading docks in Woden Town Centre makes for an unpleasant experience as a pedestrian. It's difficult to simply walk around and enjoy the environment because much of it is visually ugly, and because one needs to maintain constant vigilance for traffic. Significant gaps and opportunities with regard to placemaking in Woden Town Centre include:

- ➔ Lack of green space.
- ➔ Lack of comprehensive wayfinding signage.
- ➔ No sense of a coherent vision or character for the area.

- Poor pedestrian connectivity between key locations.
- Excessive amounts of road space and parking.
- Loading docks interfacing with pedestrian areas.
- Minimal weather protection for pedestrians.

**Recommendation 2:** PTCBR recommends that relevant ACT Government bodies produce an updated master plan for the Woden Town Centre that is intended to create a place for people that has a distinctive character.

### **No bus service to the western side of the Town Centre**

The lack of bus service to the western side of the town centre is a significant gap in service provision. This western side is where many significant destinations are located, including major supermarkets inside Westfield Woden, pharmacies inside and outside of Westfield Woden, the Woden Library, and multiple medical services. Bus services were provided to this area along Corinna St in the past, and the loss of this connectivity has been a source of great inconvenience for many community members since.

The journey from the Woden Interchange by foot to this western side of the town centre is inconvenient at best. At worst, this journey is not possible for some to make. Those with mobility issues, those travelling with small children and/or a pram, and those who don't feel confident navigating a complex route to their destination are faced with the choice of making this difficult journey or choosing another way to reach this western area - if they can. We urge the Committee to keep in mind that a lack of care and thought in planning equitable access to key community destinations has strong negative impacts on daily life for many parts of the community.

We recognise that reinstating bus service to this western area is not a simple proposition. Rerouting any Rapid bus routes to this area would present significant operational difficulties, but service from local bus routes may be feasible.

**Recommendation 3:** PTCBR recommends investigating the re-introduction of public transport service to the western side of the Woden Town Centre.

### **Reinvigoration through better planning and extension of light rail**

PTCBR is strongly supportive of the ACT Government's plans to extend Canberra's successful light rail network across Lake Burley Griffin to Woden as part of Light Rail Stage 2B (LRS2B). We believe the project will improve public transport access along this key transport corridor, connecting the growing Woden Town Centre and surrounds with key destinations in the Inner South, including the Deakin employment hub, Parliament House, the Barton office precinct, and the proposed North Curtin Residential Area. We also think that the need to connect Woden Town Centre to destinations to the south ought to be seriously considered and actioned.

Preliminary work was undertaken by Infrastructure Canberra (then Major Projects Canberra) in 2021 to investigate the feasibility of an expanded scope for LRS2B that would involve an additional 2.5 kilometres of twin track from the current proposed terminus on Callam Street in the Woden Town Centre to Beasley Street, just south

of the Mawson Group Centre.<sup>1</sup> 2021 reports confirm the viability of the proposed Mawson Extension, identifying significant potential improvements to public transport connectivity in south Woden, and better urban renewal outcomes associated with the planned redevelopment of the Athllon Drive corridor.

PTCBR believe the proposed Mawson Extension should be progressed as part of an integrated transport and land use strategy for the Woden Town Centre and surrounds, with a particular focus on the Phillip Service Trades Area and the currently undeveloped land to the east of Athllon Drive. This should involve reversing the ban on mixed-use development fronting Townshend Street, Dundas Court and Colbee Court, and a deferral of plans to duplicate Athllon Drive between Melrose Drive and Shea Street. The latter should only be undertaken as part of the Mawson Extension and be of an appropriately urban character to reflect its role as the “front door” of the Athllon Drive urban renewal precinct.

**Recommendation 4:** PTCBR recommends that the proposed Mawson light rail extension is advanced as part of an integrated transport and land use strategy for the Woden Town Centre and surrounds.

Thank you to the Standing Committee on Environment and Planning for considering PTCBR’s observations and recommendations on Woden Town Centre. I am available to provide further information on any aspect of our submission.

Kind regards,

**Amy Jelacic**

Chair

Public Transport Association of Canberra

18/09/2025

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<sup>1</sup> [act.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0006/2793291/MPCFOI2024-08-Ombudsman-Review-Release-Pack.pdf](https://act.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/2793291/MPCFOI2024-08-Ombudsman-Review-Release-Pack.pdf)