

Mr Andrew Barr MLA  
Treasurer  
GPO Box 1020  
CANBERRA ACT 2601

2018-19 ACT BUDGET CONSULTATION  
Public Transport Association of Canberra

Dear Treasurer

The Public Transport Association of Canberra (PTCBR) thank you for the opportunity to participate in the 2018/19 Budget Consultation Process and provide views on the development of the ACT's revenue and expenditure priorities relating to public transport and active transport provision, including how the ACT's resources are allocated, what services could be enhanced, and where possible efficiencies could be made.

We are fully supportive of the ACT Governments active transport and public transport programs, including the introduction of light rail and integrated public transport services. The continued budget focus placed by this government on these important areas will improve Canberrans lives immediately, and for decades to come.

The PTCBR submission addresses the five specific questions posed, with a distinct concentration on capital infrastructure priorities related to public transport, that the Government should consider implementing in the next three years.

PTCBR believe that a rebalancing of the transport component of the ACT Budget is crucial to achieve long-term city changing benefits. This rebalancing should take the form of a 50 percent split between new road construction and new public transport infrastructure, until all light rail routes identified in the 2016 Light Rail Network Plan have been completed.

The Committee of PTCBR is available to discuss our recommendations.

Sincerely

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# Public Transport Association of Canberra Budget Submission

## 1. What services do you believe are most important for the Territory?

The most important services for the Territory include but are not limited to:

- Quality and timely healthcare;
- Quality education;
- A safe and just community;
- Management of the natural environment to ensure its sustainability;
- Emergency management; and
- Ensuring a holistic approach to investment in, promotion and enhancement of all Territory districts.

Crucially transport services are constantly in demand by all sectors of society and require ongoing investment in new construction and maintenance:

- Timely, attractive, efficient and safe integrated public transport which caters adequately for the current and future travel needs of the public;
- High-quality, well maintained roads (including bus lanes, on road cycle lanes, footpaths and shared cycleways) which reflect current and future need;
- Adequate long-term transport infrastructure planning, with flexibility to respond to changing conditions.
- Proper focus placed on interstate public transport connections, to encourage an increase in public transport use by employees in Canberra that live across the border

## 2. How can the Government deliver current services more efficiently and productively, or to better meet the needs of Canberrans?

### Extending the peak hour for weekday bus services

The peak hour frequency of many local bus services ends too early, although enhancements to this in Network 17 have been welcome. People arrive at their town centre interchanges to discover that local services have reverted to (often) one-hour frequency. PTCBR ask that funding be made available to extend all local bus service frequencies to that of the peak hours, until at least 6.30 PM.

### Extended evening services seven days a week

Extended evening services seven days a week are urgently required. Many Sunday evening bus services cease around 7 PM. This is unacceptable in a modern city.

Later bus services are important to ensure that passengers arriving on the last scheduled train, interstate coach and aircraft are able to travel to any town centre. ACT residents returning home, and visitors who arrive on evening train, coach and plane services are often disappointed that they have arrived after the last scheduled

bus service of the day has departed, resulting in the use of informal family arrangements or more expensive ride share or taxi services.

PTCBR recommend that some of the reallocation of bus resources following the commencement of light rail be diverted to this area of need.

### **Consistent bus route numbering between weekday and weekend bus services**

Significant confusion is caused by an illogical and confusing numbering of bus services between weekdays and weekends. Many services now operate the same route seven days a week, albeit with a different weekend number, and this could easily be realised.

PTCBR also ask that funding be provided to make all weekend and weekday bus services operate on the same route and route number. We understand that frequency on weekends may need to be changed, but there is no reason that the routes and route numbers must differ.

### **Light rail stop at Mitchell**

A light rail stop at Mitchell should be funded and built as soon as practical, to meet the expectations and requirements of workers in Mitchell, and the expected increase in retail patronage that light rail can deliver.

Although construction of this stop could incur a contract variation charge during light rail stage one, this should be considered if sufficient funds are available from allocated contingency funding. If this is not practical, then funds should be made available in the 2018/19 budget specifically for this additional stop.

### **Park and Ride expansion**

The Park and Ride facilities across Canberra need to be significantly expanded, and provided with a linkage to the ACT Governments Smart Parking technology. In addition, all Park and Ride locations must be equipped with real time bus passenger information screens.

Expanding Park and Ride with connected cycle paths and secure bicycle storage would enhance the last mile aspect that is crucial to attracting and retaining new public transport patrons.

### **Improved use of data and analytics**

Adoption of advanced network planning software has created the ability of the ACT Government to bring forward the introduction of all rapid bus routes proposed at the 2016 election, several years earlier than anticipated.

PTCBR support this and recommend that other cutting edge software be acquired. Better analytics can be used to plan future services, such as Google streetlight data. Current network planning software uses existing patronage information and inputs from internal network databases. PTCBR recommend that this be expanded and include data related to commercial and residential land use.

This could enhance the ability of the network planners to anticipate future, as well as actual travel patterns within the ACT. External data is now available that illustrates all journeys, including by private motor vehicle, ride share, taxi and bus. Incorporating such data sources into the planning process would enable a better understanding of travel patterns and unmet demand. Access to this information could provide early implementation recommendations for new suburb public transport infrastructure.

### **Real- time bus passenger information system**

PTCBR recommend that TCCS complete the implementation of the 2005-06 Budget measure for a real- time bus passenger information system. The benefits of a potential 20% increased patronage cited in the information package issued with the 2005-06 ACT Budget may well be realised if the system as initially proposed was to be completed. Further investment to complete the implementation would appear to be a prudent strategy.

### **3. Are there particular services that you consider the Government should stop delivering or should deliver in a different way?**

#### **New ticketing technology**

MyWay ticketless technology has served the ACT well and we are aware that a search for replacement technology is underway. PTCBR would ask that a nationally unified electronic public transport ticketing (using the toll system as a model) with a single balance be explored.

Modern banking and credit card technology could also be trialed. Future ACT public transport services may not require a dedicated ticketing card payment system and could perhaps be linked to an account for micro transactions taken directly from an account holders credit or debit card using RFID technology.

PTCBR would also ask that while a national unified ticketing system is being explored, that in the interim, a unified ticketing and fare model be applied to bus companies in regional NSW towns with the potential to access Canberra. Addressing cross border public transport demand can only be satisfied if both jurisdictions are able to use compatible or identical technology, with the ability to access each network or companies data in real-time.

#### **Enhanced approach to cross-border public transport**

The 2016 ACT/NSW Memorandum of Understanding commits both governments to exploring cross border issues. Transport, including public transport is an important part of this. No matter how attractive the ACT makes public transport to its residents, transport options for NSW residents travelling into the ACT for work remain limited with the majority using a private car carrying a sole passenger, daily.

PTCBR request that funding for genuine cross border public transport research is made available, and that the ACT Government through TCCS actively participate in

studies or consultation performed by regional governments such as the Queanbeyan Palerang Regional Council.

We would also request that the ACT Government liaise with the NSW Government to seek ways in which both jurisdictions can leverage off the foreshadowed NSW Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) process that is expected to see significant fare reductions for people travelling from Queanbeyan and Murrumbateman to Canberra, including introduction of a daily fare cap.

It is suggested the ACT Government negotiate with NSW transport providers with a view to implementing service improvements, including compatible ticketing technology to encourage greater public transport use between NSW and the ACT.

### **Updating the Light Rail Network Plan to account for significant announcements**

The 2015 Light Rail Network Plan was completed prior to the announcement of the duplication of the Barton Highway at the Federal election, and the development of the Belconnen based CSIRO Ginninderra field site into residential housing. Both of these will add significantly to road traffic and create new transport challenges.

PTCBR request that funding be made available to update the 2015 Light Rail Network Plan to take into account these significant new events.

### **Early consultation and release of integrated transport timetables**

PTCBR are delighted that TCCS have released rapid bus network diagrams for integrated transport, well ahead of light rail services being introduced. A great deal of uncertainty around local bus services exists, especially in areas around the light rail corridor. Community consultation on enhanced local bus services must begin now, and expectations of future integrated bus and light rail services managed.

### **Consultation and reference groups for the Territory and Canberra Transport Plan**

Over the next three years, the ACT Government is scheduled to revisit the Territory Plan and the Canberra Transport Plan. It is essential that adequate funding and resources be provided for community consultation and stakeholder engagement.

Transport and planning are so closely related that serious thought should be given to running both processes concurrently and using the data collected across both studies.

Reference groups must be established as soon as practical, to determine what is expected and required from these new plans. Canberra is changing significantly and the way in which these plans have been established, prepared, and implemented could be revisited to ensure they serve future needs.

### **Workplace cultural reform**

There are several seemingly intractable issues within the ACTION workforce that can provide a negative passenger experience thus discouraging people from becoming regular passengers. Issues include the long standing voluntary weekend rostering,

poor driving practices (such as speeding, heavy braking and red light running) and refusal of a small but significant minority of drivers to facilitate rear door entry/exit in contradiction of recent Government policy.

It is suggested that significant workplace cultural reform is required, and this should be a priority in the next Enterprise Bargaining process. The recent interstate experience of franchising services may provide some leverage during these negotiations.

PTCBR request that adequate funding be provided to introduce best practice workplace training on customer relations and passenger interactions.

**4. Are there any new ways to generate revenue and/or services you consider that the community should make a direct contribution to (a fee for service)?**

**Toll roads for new parkways**

PTCBR ask that any new major roads (of parkway standard) be tolled. This would enable those who use transport infrastructure to pay properly for it. This includes roads into and out of the ACT.

**Congestion based charging**

The government should explore congestion based charging for private vehicle use. This is a mechanism that could capture revenue from locally registered private vehicles and those used by people from interstate who work in Canberra but make no contribution to the transport infrastructure they use.

This type of charging could apply in areas with significant transport and parking challenges, and apply only to private vehicles. Technology to implement this is common and available off the shelf.

**Replacing registration fees with distance based charges**

Another tax mechanism that could be explored is distance based registration scheme for private vehicles. This would be an equitable mechanism for all car users to pay their contribution to transport infrastructure, and encourage people to use active transport.

**5. What can the Government do to make Canberra even more liveable?**

PTCBR has identified the following priorities, but believe that the biggest priority is a rebalancing of the transport budget to bring about long-term benefits for Canberra.

**Light rail to Woden**

PTCBR congratulates the ACT Government for the courage it has displayed in committing to and commencing implementation of the ACT Light Rail network. The

ACT Government has a mandate to construct light rail to Woden from Civic via the Parliamentary Triangle. PTCBR urge that this construction commence as soon as practicable.

PTCBR expect that the business case for this route will be delivered in December 2017, and would encourage the government to swiftly move through the consultation, assessment, EOI and tender phase to award a contract for construction as soon as possible. Once this business case is finalised, PTCBR suggest that work commence immediately on business cases for extending light rail to Belconnen, Tuggeranong and the Canberra International Airport (and Brindabella Business park).

To ensure continuity and skills maintenance in the ACT, it would be sensible for the Woden light rail link to be commenced as construction work on light rail stage one draws to a close. Similarly, the next stages should commence as previous stages approach completion.

### **Planning for a new railway station in Central or North Canberra**

The current railway station at Kingston has reached the end of its useful life, and is poorly located to address future rail technology such as medium speed, high speed rail or a combination of both. It's continued reliance on a 19<sup>th</sup> century gradient and track design via Queanbeyan to the main line at Goulburn ensures that any upgrades to locomotive technology are unable to be fully realised.

A new station in central or north Canberra could be located to best serve the primary business and accommodation areas, and linked to light rail. This would allow visitors to access Canberra's primary business, government and tourist areas by modern public transport, and not require a car.

Whether future rail based transport is delivered by the NSW Government or a private operator, the proposed station should be located on ACT Government land to ensure that the issues related to lack of investment at Kingston, are not repeated in the future. The location should also allow future connection to the Canberra Airport.

PTCBR support the ACT government's interest in improving the Canberra to Sydney rail service, and request that a sensible short-term measure could be the identification of a suitable station location, and ensuring it is reserved solely for this future use. This could be achieved without the expenditure of significant funds, although a proper study with adequate resources would be required.

### **Rebalancing the ACT Transport budget**

There is a significant imbalance between ACT road funding and public transport infrastructure funding. PTCBR believe that a rebalancing of the ACT Budget is crucial to achieve long-term city changing benefits.

PTCBR ask that the ACT transport budget from 2018/19, and going forward, has an even split between road and public transport spending. This rebalancing of the transport budget will enable the ACT Government to build all the light rail routes identified in the 2016 Light Rail Network Plan, with an appropriate number of vehicles to service demand. It will also enable spending on cycle paths (on and off road), bus lanes and priority traffic signalisation for light rail and buses, enhance Park and Ride facilities and fund Active Travel programs in schools and workplaces.

The funding of new road infrastructure in Canberra is out of proportion for a city that has long-term ambitions to rely primarily on active transport. The political battle that has been fought for sensible investment in light rail stage one infrastructure has dominated politics, while multiples of this amount are spent on roads without any questions being asked. Fortunately, the results of two elections have shown that Canberrans are willing to fund public transport infrastructure.

One way that this rebalancing can be achieved, is to mandate that any new roads and duplications must have a bus lane, a cycle lane and enhanced pedestrian access (e.g.: an overpass) so that funding is actually being spent on all different types of road users. Making roads usable by all, not just cars, is a giant cultural leap that Canberra must embrace. It will enhance road safety, increase safe driving, decrease road deaths, increase bicycle use, decrease minor traffic accidents, increase pedestrian activity, and decrease traffic congestion. The long-term benefits of rebalancing the transport budget will be evident within a few short decades.

Rebalancing transport funding is not about punishing road users, it is about rapidly bringing about the conditions where Canberra families no longer need two or more cars per family, but can be confident that day to day commuting can be reliably carried out on public transport. The infrastructure must be in place for the one car or no car family to be the norm, rather than the exception. If Canberra's population grows inline with currently predicted trends, the present rate of private vehicle ownership is not sustainable. By providing better options (such as light rail), the trends in private car ownership will decline even as our population and densification increase.

### **Conduct a study of school holiday services to Stromlo Forest Park**

Stromlo Forest Park has been a very successful addition to the Territory's sporting infrastructure, attracting local, Australian and international visitors. The experience will be further enhanced by the relocation of some of the Westside Village facilities.

Currently visitors arrive by private car or bicycle as there are no public transport options. During school holiday times, significant numbers of school children use the park, but are reliant on families to arrange their transport. Our view is that a minor diversion of bus routes 83 and 182, utilising buses equipped with bike racks, would encourage greater access to the park.

There is also a significant community health benefit in making the park more accessible. In the absence of data on the utilisation of such services, PTCBR suggest a multi year pilot study during school holiday periods.



### **Enhanced bus loop services**

The City Loop bus service is proving very popular, PTCBR support this being a permanent service.

As the City Loop proves, a service with distinct branding and a high-frequency timetable can work. PTCBR ask that a similar loop service serving the national cultural institutions be introduced. Bus stops near national cultural institutions should also be reviewed, as often they are several hundred meters from the institutions, which annoys locals and confuses visitors.

### **On demand and last mile transport**

PTCBR ask that funding be made available to establish coordinated on-demand services for the last mile for out of hours services or for rarely used suburban routes.

The seasonal 'nightrider + uber' is an excellent model for a year round service. The last mile is the big challenge for public transport users. As local services are vastly reduced out of peak hours, other models must be trialed and encouraged. A mix of private and public options can best service this demand.

### **Active Travel only streets**

PTCBR ask that some streets around town centres be converted into public and active transport zones only. Serious work needs to be done on improving active travel facilities in town centres to increase pedestrian access. This can be achieved through the Master Plan and precinct code process, and through urban renewal programs in town centres that are struggling. We suggest cooperation with business and property owners, and extensive community consultation and stakeholder engagement.

### **Extra covered bus stops**

Many bus stops in Canberra are not covered. The aim should be for as many as possible to be covered to protect passengers in wet and sunny conditions. PTCBR ask that a long-term program be funded to eventually see all bus stops covered and provided with bicycle storage or loops for securing bicycles. Perhaps passengers could initially be asked to nominate bus stop locations to start this long-term program.

### **Installing more real time information displays**

The real time information displays at bus interchanges are very popular and improve the passenger experience. There are too few of them however, and some are placed at odd locations at interchanges and not easily accessible by passengers. PTCBR request that funding to install more of these displays be provided, and that consultation occurs about the best place to locate them at interchanges and Park and Ride sites..