

MEDIA RELEASE

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Light rail for Canberra... Or election year time warp again?

The ACT Greens have welcomed the positive conclusions of an ACT government study on transit options for the Civic-Gungahlin corridor, but reminded the Government about its history of repeated rhetoric and inaction on the issue.

“We are hopeful once again that this study is the first step of an active, committed pathway to light rail or bus rapid transit for Canberra's growing population,” Greens transport spokesperson, Amanda Bresnan MLA, said today.

“But a Minister standing on Northbourne Avenue talking about light rail has a certain déjà vu from previous election years. Today's announcements are issues we know already because they have been assessed and announced before.

“The ACT Government has made numerous announcements about the findings of public transport studies and engaged in positive rhetoric about the opportunities, only to then take the projects nowhere.

“Post election announcements and consultants' reports have evaporated into inaction and 'business as usual' – including quietly replacing light rail with the Majura Parkway as the ACT's 'top priority' to Infrastructure Australia in 2009.

“The Greens showed last year that for less than the cost of the Majura Parkway, the Government could actually build light rail from Gungahlin to Civic.

“We need to reverse the pattern of transport funding in ACT budgets, which sees public transport receive comparatively little funding and attention. We need actual commitments from Government to progress public transport, not just talk.

“Canberra's population and density can support mass public transport, and if we want to attract investment and interest in Canberra, then we need a public transport system that moves people around the city in an efficient and fast way.

“The Greens believe light rail or bus rapid transit are realistic, viable options for Canberra that will pay off economically, socially and environmentally.

“Other cities in Australia and the world are years ahead of Canberra in making public transport a priority – it's time this commitment was made to the people of Canberra,” Ms Bresnan concluded.

Timewarp Timeline

1994: study found light rail was feasible for Canberra. (Canberra Light Rail Implementation Study)

2001: Minister Stanhope: "We will conduct a feasibility study into light rail and conduct public consultation on the findings."

2002: Minister Corbell: "this government is interested in exploring issues around light rail"

2003: Minister Corbell: "This government is not afraid to put light rail back on the agenda. This government is not afraid to consider light rail as a potential transport mode for this city."

2004: Consultant's study 'Canberra Public Transport Futures Feasibility Study' tests and assesses the introduction of light rail or bus rapid transit on the Gungahlin to Civic routes, the benefits, and the costs. Finds it is economically feasible and beneficial.

2005: Consultant's study on Northbourne Avenue recommends light rail on the median strip corridor; identifies millions of dollars of benefits to building rapid transit on the Northern corridor (SMEC Northbourne Avenue report).

2008: Minister Stanhope: "I am extremely pleased to be able to announce that the ACT government is moving ahead with its exploration of light rail ..."

2008: Consultant's study finds millions of dollars of benefits to light rail, and that light rail would maximise transport efficiency and accessibility and minimize environmental and social impacts of transport in Canberra (Price Waterhouse Coopers Light Rail Study)

2011: Simon Corbell: "we have put light rail firmly back on the agenda as an option along the Northbourne Avenue corridor"

2012: Most recent study repeats the benefits of rapid transit and light rail. Government again talks about implementation, consultation.