

Division 34: Public Transport Authority of Western Australia, \$118 972 000 —

Mr P. Abetz, Chairman.

Mr T.R. Buswell, Minister for Transport.

Mr R.A. Waldock, Director General, Department of Transport.

Mr M.A. Burgess, Managing Director.

Mr K. Kirk, Executive Director, Finance and Contracts.

[Witnesses introduced.]

The CHAIRMAN: Member for West Swan.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: My question relates to Perth's public transport system under "Significant Issues Impacting the Agency" on page 398 of the *Budget Statements*. I am interested in the rail line to the airport. Has any further costings been done on this rail route? Are there any issues regarding the existing capacity of the Midland line? Does the government expect to spend more money on the Midland line from Bayswater to Perth?

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: Any additional information around costings—no; not from what is confirmed in the budget papers. Will we spend any more money on the Midland line? Not that I am aware of, directly related to increased usage of the line. However, Bayswater train station has previously been identified, separate to this process, as a station on the heritage lines to be upgraded. We have decided to delay the upgrade of that station and incorporate the upgrade of that particular station into this project. My advice is that is about the extent of where we are at in relation to the Midland line.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: How many trains are expected to operate on the Bayswater–Perth train line an hour during peak times?

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: Midland–Perth headways are currently 15 minutes; peak is 10 minutes. We estimate maximum capacity of the line, within our comfort factors, is about 18 to 20.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Eighteen to 20?

Mr B.S. WYATT: Eighteen to 20 movements an hour?

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: Correct; 18 to 20 at three-minute headways. Factors can complicate that, but that is the advice we have. There are currently 10-minute peak services on the Midland line. On the airport line, we are anticipating 15 at start-up. That may change over time.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Pardon?

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: Fifteen minutes at peak. Probably 15 minutes right through. That is four plus six—so that is about 10.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The minister is confirming that the operational capacity is 18 to 20?

Mr M.A. Burgess: That is what a conventional train system in Australia could operate at the moment with upgraded signalling; so upgrades to signalling would be required.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Has the airport rail business case been finalised and has that been submitted to Infrastructure Australia?

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: About March next year.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The business case will be submitted in March next year?

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: Yes. It is about the same time as the light rail.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: I refer to "Paid Parking for Park and Ride Bays at Metropolitan Train Stations" under "Spending Changes" on page 397. How much will it cost to establish the Park 'n' Ride system across all metropolitan train stations?

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: That is still being worked through. We are still working on a couple of aspects of paid parking. From the time I was first asked about this, I said that our anticipation is to have it in place by 1 July next year. We need to make sure we have a system that is easy for our travellers to use and a system that is cost effective to install and operate. The anticipation at the moment, in terms of the technology we are looking to use, is to link it through SmartRider cards. Effectively a car, or possibly cars, will be linked to a SmartRider card. Commuters will park and as they get to a point at which they would normally tag on, either through the same machine or a different machine but in the same locality, they would also tag into the parking lot, for want of a better term. We are still looking at enforcement. The most recent briefing I had from the PTA indicated that the enforcement mechanism may well be a handheld device that current car park attendants or employers in the car

parks would utilise. Their job will change in nature in that they would not be located at one car park for the day; they would travel between car parks and use this handheld device, which takes a picture of the numberplate. It digitises that image. That is centrally compared with numberplates that have been tagged into that car park during the day. If the numberplate of the car in the car park does not correspond to one that is attached to a SmartRider user who has boarded a train at that car park, we will reasonably anticipate that that commuter has parked there but has not used the train. We are still working through that. That means that the existing car park staff will be utilised as part of the process. It means we have an enforcement mechanism that is relatively cheap and relatively low capital to install, although I do not know the exact quantum of that yet. It means, importantly, that we utilise our existing SmartRider technology, which is very, very good technology. We seem to be heading in the right direction on that front. We will see how that plays out over the next little while.

[2.40 pm]

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: Is it possible that the cost of establishing this system could exceed the revenues from the three years in the forward estimates?

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: If the costs were going to exceed the revenue, we would not do it.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: Over one year?

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: The advice I have is that that is highly unlikely. There is no doubt that there will be an up-front capital cost and a payback period. We will work through that as we develop the model or, importantly, the technology platform. A large part of the base of the technology platform is already there. The technology that sits behind SmartRider is very, very powerful. I am confident that we are progressing to the least cost capital solution. I wanted to ensure that this had minimal impact on people who use the facilities.

Mr B.S. WYATT: I want to come back to what we were discussing a minute ago. I think the minister was saying that operational capacity on the current heritage line, the Midland line, is 18 to 20.

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: The advice I have is that technically the capacity, with some upgrades to signalling and the like on the line, could get us up to 18 to 20. In its current state, the line would not be able to accommodate that level of throughput.

Mr B.S. WYATT: In that state, without the significant upgrade? Is that what the minister means?

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: In the current state, we think about 14 is comfortable. We are proposing about 10.

Mr B.S. WYATT: In respect of that 18 to 20, the minister will recall that this became a significant issue during the election campaign. In the advice from the PTA to Treasury, the PTA advised that the running of 18 trains an hour from the Midland line would significantly reduce the reliability of the service, which carries an associated safety risk. From the briefing that the PTA gave the opposition on 15 February—I am just looking at my notes from that meeting—Mr Waldock advised the opposition that the government needed to duplicate the 18 trains. Does the government no longer need to duplicate 18 trains?

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: Eighteen to 20 is what would be deemed to be the maximum with upgrades. In the current state, it is about 14. As I recall, there was a complicating factor in the circumstances of other lines merging. The advice I have just given the member is entirely consistent with that advice.

Mr B.S. WYATT: Contrary to the advice that we received from the PTA during the election that the government needed to duplicate 18 trains, that is no longer the case?

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: That is the case; 18 to 20 trains would be the maximum capacity of the line.

Mr B.S. WYATT: Without duplication or with duplication?

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: With duplication, it would be a lot more than that. Eighteen to 20 would be the maximum capacity of the line in its current state if we had the relevant investments in signalling and other upgrades needed to carry those headways.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: That is exactly what we said at the time.

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: That is entirely consistent with what the member just read out.

Mr B.S. WYATT: Duplication is the issue that I had. We were told that the government needed to duplicate once it got to 18 trains.

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: That is what I have just said. At 18 to 20, it will max out. I also said that that matter is further complicated when another railway line feeds into the existing railway line.

The appropriation was recommended.