

Division 39: Commissioner of Main Roads —

Mr P. Lilburne, Chair.

Ms R. Saffioti, Minister for Transport.

Mr P. Woronzow, Director General, Transport Portfolio.

Mr J. Erceg, Managing Director.

Mr D. Snook, Chief Operating Officer.

Mr M. Cammack, Director Budget and Investment Planning.

Mr P. D'Souza, Executive Director Finance and Commercial Services.

Mr L. Coci, Managing Director, Office of Major Transport Infrastructure Delivery.

Mr P. Laing, Senior Policy Adviser.

[Witnesses introduced.]

The CHAIR: The estimates committees will be reported by Hansard and the daily proof will be available online as soon as possible within two business days. The chair will allow as many questions as possible. Questions and answers should be short and to the point. Consideration is restricted to items for which a vote of money is proposed in the consolidated account. Questions must relate to a page number, item or amount related to the current division, and members should preface their questions with those details. Some divisions are the responsibility of more than one minister. Ministers shall be examined only in relation to their portfolio responsibilities.

A minister may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee. I will ask the minister to clearly indicate what information they agree to provide and will then allocate a reference number. Supplementary information should be provided to the principal clerk by noon on Friday, 31 May 2024. If a minister suggests that a matter be put on notice, members should use the online questions on notice system to submit their questions.

I give the call to the member for Moore.

Mr R.S. LOVE: We will start with the line item “Bridges Renewal Program” under “Spending Changes”, “Ongoing Initiatives” on page 593 of the *Budget statements*. I wonder whether the minister could give a breakdown of the works planned under that program.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I will give a brief update of what the program is. It is an Australian government initiative, with up to \$85 million a year provided to fund the upgrade and replacement of bridges to enhance access for local communities and facilitate high-productivity vehicles. The Australian government contributes 50 per cent of costs for successful projects in urban areas and 80 per cent for successful projects located in regional WA. There is a total of \$24 million in the bridges renewal program—I will just make sure I have the right number. That was approved last year and includes \$10 million for the Eric Street Bridge refurbishment in Cottesloe, which is projected to commence in July. There has been some discussion about that more generally. There are also the York–Williams Road Bridge replacement in Beverley and the Milo Road river crossing bridge renewal in the Shire of Irwin. They are the three projects.

Mr R.S. LOVE: Is the program itself the funding that comes from the Commonwealth Grants Commission through the local government funding or is that a different stream?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: As I said, the bridges renewal program is a separate program by which the Australian government has allocations in its budget and it opens up rounds and we bid and secure projects.

Mr R.S. LOVE: How is the priority determined?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Main Roads has a very long list of timber bridges both throughout the metropolitan area and in regional WA. Ongoing assessment is undertaken on the quality of the bridges. Hundreds of timber bridges remain out there in regional WA. Main Roads has a list of existing bridges and it provides proposals and submissions to the federal government to get funding for those bridges.

Mr R.S. LOVE: Is this specifically for timber bridges?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Yes, because that is the majority of the bridges. I will refer to John Erceg.

Mr J. Erceg: The program is not specifically for timber bridges, it is just that we have an extensive stock of timber bridges so they tend to attract most of the funding.

Mr R.S. LOVE: Has there been any consideration of funding for the convict bridge at Greenough, which has been damaged for many years?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: We can provide the answer about that bridge by way of supplementary information. Like I said, Main Roads undertakes a comprehensive maintenance and inspection program, and the results are what drive our

submissions. They are based on the engineering assessments about the quality of those bridges. We can provide supplementary information on the convict bridge.

The CHAIR: The minister agrees to provide the supplementary information and what exactly will be provided for that particular bridge.

[*Supplementary Information No A13.*]

Mr R.S. LOVE: On that same page 593 of the *Budget statements* there is the spending change for “Oakajee Strategic Industrial Area Access Road”, which now has \$17 million attached to it. I think there was a lesser amount attached last year for the building of that road. What is that program and when will it be delivered? Can the minister give us a description of exactly what will be achieved there?

[10.10 am]

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I understood this to be a \$20 million project. It was initially not within the Main Roads’ budget, as I recall, because it related to the Oakajee industrial estate and was in a different budget. I will confirm that I am absolutely correct on that. The initial allocation was in the Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation budget. It has now been transferred to Main Roads for it to be the deliverer of the project. I will get the member some more information on that. It is new because it is a grant that has been received by Main Roads from the Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation to progress the design and delivery of the Oakajee road, in particular its intersection with North West Coastal Highway.

Mr R.S. LOVE: The minister says that the project was transferred from JTSI’s budget. Was it also at the total cost as outlined in the budget? I am assuming that it has already had \$2 million spent on it, so what has that money actually achieved? The total budget is \$19 150 000. Is that the same amount that JTSI had on its books when the money was transferred across?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Yes. This is from my recollection. I am sorry that I do not have the information that was in JTSI, but, as I recall, it was a \$20 million commitment, so we have transferred those funds over.

Ms L. METTAM: My question relates to page 600 and road efficiency improvements. It states —

The objective of this service is to improve the efficiency, capacity and utilisation of the existing road network.

This includes our intersection improvements. I am really asking this question on behalf of the member for Central Wheatbelt, who has raised a matter about the Leeming Road–Great Eastern Highway intersection at the entrance of Avon Industrial Park. Is there any funding in the budget for this project?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Sorry; we do not have any information on hand, but we can provide it by way of supplementary information.

[*Supplementary Information No A14.*]

Ms L. METTAM: Thank you, minister, for the provision of the supplementary information, as the member had raised this matter already. As part of the supplementary information, can the minister provide an understanding of not only whether funding was attached, but also the progress of that project and when the community can expect construction to commence?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Sure. We can provide the status of the project. We may have that information here, but it may be called something else, so we can flick through our files for a few minutes. But I will say that we will provide a status update of that project by way of supplementary information.

Mr R.S. LOVE: On page 594, in the spending changes table, there is “Ongoing Initiatives: Morrison Road Planning Update”. Some money was spent in this current year on that planning update. There is no money allocated in the forward estimates. Does that mean that there is no money for the Morrison Road improvements?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: No. We have dedicated funding for that project; it is just not in the forward estimates. We have a big program, so we have allocated funds—both federal and state government money—towards the project, but it is just not allocated across the forward estimates.

Mr R.S. LOVE: Can the minister give me a timeline of how much money will be spent in each of the years it is allocated? When will it be allocated to a project?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: We are working through that project, but we have a number of other projects that we are delivering, as the member would be aware, including the Tonkin Highway and Reid Highway grade separations and major roads in regional WA. We are working through that with further planning, but we have not yet determined the actual start date for that project.

Mr R.S. LOVE: So there is no money for planning in the budget. I assume that planning has actually been done. What further planning needs to be done for the project?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: We have spent \$1.4 million on planning for the area. Early design and investigations are underway. We continue to look at options and assessments and also what would be the preferred solution. We are continuing to determine what would be the best option. As I said, it is something that we are working on, but we have other projects that will be delivered before that one.

Mr R.S. LOVE: Is it not possible to give an approximate timeline for when this project will be delivered, if it will indeed be delivered?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Not yet, because we have not made that final decision on the timeline of delivery.

Mr R.S. LOVE: I turn to page 603 of the budget documents and refer to “Works in Progress”. There are quite a few works in there that I would like to ask about, but we will work through them one by one. “Bindoon Bypass—Construct New Alignment” has the same allocation of \$275 million that it has had since its inception. It is one of those projects that was smoothed by the former Treasurer a number of years ago and has not progressed to its full extent. The estimated expenditure until the end of this year is \$106 million of that, so probably 40 per cent of the money has already been spent, but the major part of the work has not even commenced.

Is the \$275 million still a realistic assessment of the cost to build the Bindoon bypass? When can we expect to see that project completed?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: We are delivering this project through different stages—to support local Aboriginal employment, in particular. I have been out onsite on this project, and it has been quite incredible to see the number of Aboriginal people engaged on this project. Stage 1 of the Bindoon bypass was north of Calingiri Road to Seven Mile Hill. It was delivered through a partnership between Aboriginal construction contractor Garli and Service Stream and was opened in May 2022. Stage 3 of the Bindoon bypass is 11 kilometres long. Construction of the initial seven kilometres commenced in March 2023, and that is scheduled to be completed mid this year. Again, we went through a directly engaged contractor, Garli—through a sole-supplier arrangement. Again, that was to ensure that local Aboriginal people, and Aboriginal people from both the area and other parts of WA, were directly employed.

That work will continue until 2025, with the construction of a further four kilometres of highway between the New Norcia bypass and the current section. Planning and procurement are underway for the next stage, and we are working on that. We expect to go to market early next year for the procurement of the final stage.

[10.20 am]

Mr R.S. LOVE: If, as I suspect, the cost to build that final section, which is the major element of the project, is much more than the \$160-odd million that is left in the kitty, what will be the situation then? Will the government seek further funding from either the commonwealth or the state? How does the minister see that progressing?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: We have had cost challenges with all projects. Once we go through a more detailed procurement process, we will get a better estimated total cost, and then we will work with the commonwealth to fund those increased costs. It has happened for a lot of our projects around the state because of the incredibly hot construction market and the increase in prices as a result of COVID and international global supply shocks. It will be dealt with like other projects; we will get a clearer indication of costs and then work with the commonwealth as partners in delivering that project.

Mr R.S. LOVE: Has the government had any preliminary discussions with the commonwealth around that project or is there simply a hope that it will come to the party?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The commonwealth is a partner with us in the majority of our projects. We work constructively with the commonwealth to understand the delivery challenges and have it work with us. This is a delivery challenge that every state is encountering. More recently, the Victorian government had to defer its rail link by four years. The estimated cost of its nine-kilometre rail link was \$13 billion. We understand that it is potentially now beyond \$20 million. Every state has the same challenges. Every state is working with the commonwealth on the cost pressures and challenges in delivering our major infrastructure programs.

Mr R.S. LOVE: As I recall—I could be wrong—the original allocation of money was 80 per cent from the commonwealth government and 20 per cent from the state government. Since then, the commonwealth government has indicated that it is willing to put forward only 50 per cent for future projects on the national highway network. What is the minister’s expectation for a commonwealth contribution to any shortfall? Would she seek an 80 per cent level, or a 50 per cent level?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: We are seeking 80 per cent, but this is part of discussions on the future partnership agreement with the commonwealth for land transport. Similar to every other state, we are at the end stage of renegotiating the land transport funding agreement with the federal government. Our aspiration is that we have 80 per cent funding for regional road projects, and we will continue to hold that aspiration. The commonwealth has employed a changed methodology going to 50 per cent, but we will continue to aspire to 80 per cent.

I have some information about the Leeming Road–Great Eastern Highway intersection that refers to a previous question. Design is being completed for the intersection upgrade. This is a DevelopmentWA project because it will link the industrial park to the area. Environmental and heritage approvals are being sought. We are waiting to go through that approvals process.

Ms L. METTAM: Is funding allocated to that, or is it just going through an approvals process at this stage?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: It is going through the approvals process. It is a DevelopmentWA project, so I cannot clarify exactly whether funding has been allocated through DevWA, but I think the actual approvals process has been worked through, which will help determine the scope of the project and, therefore, the funding subsequent to that. I cannot guarantee that 100 per cent because I am not across DevWA's internals.

The CHAIR: Leader of the Liberal Party, are you still seeking to have supplementary information A14 allocated in writing, or is that information sufficient?

Ms L. METTAM: No, that information is sufficient.

Mr R.S. LOVE: Page 602 of budget paper No 2 contains points on Indian Ocean Drive. Paragraph 11 refers to stage 2 of the Indian Ocean Drive project from Leeman to Brand Highway. This is the upgrade of the section north of the Eneabba–Coolimba Road. Are any upgrades being considered for the Leeman town site as part of that project or any future project?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The work is being undertaken in two stages. Stage 1 is the widening between Jurien Bay and Greenhead, which is completed. Stage 2 is the widening and realignment of 33 kilometres between Leeman and Brand Highway along the construction of two overtaking lanes. We are doing further work on the Leeman town centre and hope to secure funding once that final planning work has been done.

Mr R.S. LOVE: Can the minister give me some idea of the maturity of the planning that is being conducted in the Leeman town site and with whom the government is consulting?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I think Main Roads would be consulting with engineers, local government and the community on the planning for that work.

Mr R.S. LOVE: Community representatives expressed to me their concern that they are not being listened to about what is required in Leeman. Can the minister outline, by supplementary information if not now, exactly what consultations have taken place and with whom?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: My reading is that there has been community consultation plus direct communications with the shire about the concept. I can provide further information about the local level of engagement by Main Roads on this issue.

[*Supplementary Information No A15.*]

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to page 594 and paragraph 5 of the significant issues impacting the agency. Reference is made to congestion and the use of the intelligent transport system technology. I imagine the Smart Freeways program is a key part of the ITS program. Where is that program at and what is the measure of its effectiveness in addressing the congestion on the freeway? Has it been effective and are we winning the battle?

[10.30 am]

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: A couple of things. First of all, in relation to technology on the network, we now have a central system—the Road Network Operations Centre, or RNOC, which monitors 28 routes of our metropolitan highway network. It is constantly looking at CCTV vision to understand what is happening in relation to incidents that occur across the network. We are deploying more and more technology across the network, including CCTV and Bluetooth monitors, to understand congestion and efficiency of traffic flow. Main Roads then monitors the efficiency of movement and it is constantly monitoring that movement to ensure that when we put budget proposals forward, we can back them up with evidence of what any proposed spending would do to improve efficiency. That technology, of course, has worked very effectively with the Armadale line replacement. We have rolled out variable message signs, Bluetooth monitors and CCTV. The Public Transport Authority and Main Roads work together in RNOC to monitor the whole Armadale line corridor. There is also a dedicated incident response team at Victoria Park ready to move any vehicles that block our buses. That whole set of technologies is improving performance.

Smart Freeways is another element of the way in which we are using technology, and we rolled it out for Kwinana Freeway northbound between Roe Highway and Narrows Bridge. Some of the information so far includes road safety improvements along the main Kwinana Freeway carriageway between Farrington Road and Narrows Bridge. In the first year of operation on that section, including on-ramps, the statistics for deaths and serious injuries reduced by 16 per cent. That means there has been a significant reduction in serious incidents. With regard to network efficiency, there has been a six-minute reduction in travel times, whilst accommodating an additional

16 per cent of traffic. There has been some positive feedback on that section of Smart Freeway across all indicators and anecdotally.

With regard to Mitchell Freeway southbound, we are hoping to see similar numbers. Ramp metering helps existing traffic volumes flow better. There is also the ability to monitor different speeds, depending on the volume of traffic, which I think is a big gamechanger. If there is a lot of traffic ahead, the speed limit is brought down so that people are not driving at 110 kilometres an hour, then stopping and starting again. People get very irritated with that type of stop-start driving. Having that constant information—including estimated travel times and speed limits for particular lanes, and how people are entering the freeway—helps create better traffic flow on the freeway.

Ms L. METTAM: Just to clarify the figures the minister provided, a 16 per cent reduction in incidents and six-minute reduction in travel times, are we talking about Kwinana Freeway northbound?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Yes, Kwinana Freeway, because that is the one that has been rolled out. There has been a six-minute reduction, whilst accommodating an additional 16 per cent increase in traffic.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I refer to page 603 of budget paper No 2, volume 2, and the line item “Regional Level Crossing Upgrade”. I wonder whether the minister can enlighten us about the locations of those upgrades and what will actually be done?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: As we can see, there will be a significant increase in spending over the next four years on regional level crossings. We are upgrading seven give-way-controlled crossings to active flashing-light-controlled crossings and upgrading seven stop-sign-controlled crossings to active flashing-light-controlled crossings. This complements our existing program, which is outlined on page 323. The state government-funded program is underway. We want to remove all give-way-controlled level crossings and upgrade them to stop-sign-controlled crossings. That work is underway; it is expected to be completed by the end of this month. There is the state government program and there is also the new program for which the state government will partner with the commonwealth government. The state government program is already underway, and, as I said, is removing all Give Way signs at level crossings and replacing them with Stop signs. As part of the partnership with the federal government, we are upgrading Give Way crossings and flashing light crossings to Stop sign crossings.

There are 14 priority projects—the ones we have agreed to—and they include Crampton Road, South Greenough with Stop signs to flashing lights. I will not go through all the details, because that would take a while. There is also Short Road in Georgina; Burakin–Wialki Road, Cleary; Jaurdi Hills Road, Mt Burgess; Telegraph Road, Culham; Wyening East Road, Wyening; Wongan Hills–Calingiri West Road, Calingiri; Moulyerup Road, Broomehill; Robert Road, Ucarty West; Koorda–Kulja Road, Kulja; Rabbit Proof Fence Road, Moulyinning; Kukerin Road, North Kukerin; North Lake Grace–Karlgarin Road, Kuender; and Geraldton–Mount Magnet Road, Mullewa.

We are also preparing our next list for the second round of funding. With regard to the commonwealth funding, we are doing it in rounds. We apply for that and then match it with our own money. We have also been successful in getting \$490 000 to undertake a trial of a wireless level crossing system that utilises low-power, high-security radio technology with indicative wheel sensors to detect trains approaching at a level crossing. That trial is underway in the midwest and is scheduled to be completed later this year.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: What is the power source for the wireless unit?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I thought it was renewable, but I could be wrong. I do not have that information. I know our team has been working on this, but I am not sure about the power source—sorry; I do not have it here.

The CHAIR: Does the minister agree to provide supplementary information; and, if so, can she please state exactly what information will be provided?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Sure. I will provide information about the power source for the wireless level crossing system.

[*Supplementary Information No A16.*]

[10.40 am]

Mr R.S. LOVE: I turn to page 603 of the budget papers. I remember there was a question from the local member around the line item “Pinjarra Heavy Haulage Deviation—Stage One and Stage Two”. This is a \$250 million project. I can see that there is some money to be spent in the budget—\$3 million this year, \$10 million in the following two years and \$17 million in 2027–28. How long is it going to take to deliver that project at that rate? Is this project being entirely funded by the state government because it has been unable to attract federal government funding? Can the minister explain what is happening with the ability to attract funding towards this project?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Sure. There is some big history with this one. I think it was in 2017 that we made a state election commitment to start planning for the project. When the project was initially devised, it was a two-stage project. It was thought that we could do stage 1 and then do stage 2. In working on that, it became clear that a lot of the local sensitivities about the Pinjarra massacre site were creating a lot of concern for the whole community about how

stage 1 could be completed in any shape or form. As a result, we went back and planned for stages 1 and 2 to be delivered in one project.

Significant environmental and heritage approvals are being worked on. We are working with a local Noongar community group. Following a recommendation from a community meeting in September last year, a working group has undertaken to co-design the route and the alignment. It is a very tricky road because no one really knows the scope of the entire area that was impacted by the Pinjarra massacre. There has not been a lot of work to document the extent of that site. As a result, it is a very tricky and sensitive project. We are working with the local community to determine a route alignment that will not impact the site.

As I said, one of the issues is that there has not been a lot of mapping or surveying of that area in the past. The example I gave for the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Bill was that, in many instances, we do not have a lot of existing information. That is one of the reasons why Main Roads Western Australia is working with the local Noongar community to help map that. We are working through that. We want to deliver this project. It has been a big priority of ours. We got into government and undertook the planning for stage 1. It was clear that we had to do both stages 1 and 2 in one project. The local member has been very involved every step of the way. As a result, we have funding allocated. Once we work through the route alignment and get the appropriate approvals, we will be ready to go.

Mr R.S. LOVE: Has any of the funding for the project come from the commonwealth?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: No. We injected all the money. It is entirely funded by the state government, but we will continue to work with the federal government. As it goes through its forward estimates, it may identify an opportunity to partner with us on that project, particularly when we look at how it will assist Pinjarra to continue to grow as a great community to live in and as a tourist town. I was in Albany on Saturday and we saw the completion of the Albany ring-road and what that will do for the Albany town centre. Similarly, this will support efficient freight movements and the growth of Pinjarra, which is a dynamic town. It is a great place to live, and we are seeing more tourism opportunities that we are partnering with the council on.

Like I said, we are 100 per cent committed to this project. I remember standing on the side of the road and making the commitment to deliver this project. We will deliver this project, but we have to work through very sensitive issues. There are far greater hurdles than we initially imagined when we first committed to the project. In particular, there have been issues with the identification of the massacre site as, apparently, the impacted area is a lot greater than initially thought. I will ask whether John wants to make some comments on that about the sensitivities.

Mr J. Erceg: As the minister was commenting, it is an area of great sensitivity to the local Noongar community. We are proceeding very cautiously to make sure that we are including the right representation and are going through the correct process of consultation. We are also finding that there is quite a broad spread of interest amongst the Aboriginal community. I think the significance of the massacre that occurred there is something that the broader Aboriginal community has a real interest in. On that basis, we are proceeding very cautiously. It is going to take more time, but we think it is really important that we do that. As the minister alluded to, trying to define the exact area of impact is difficult. There is not a great deal of evidence there. We are relying on information that is available through storytelling and the physical survey work that we are proceeding with. I think the key message is that it is a very sensitive area and we are proceeding cautiously and methodically to make sure we get a good shared outcome with the community.

Mr R.S. LOVE: Did the minister approach the commonwealth government for funding and what was the result of that?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: We made it clear that we had federal funding, but as part of the initial review undertaken by the federal government of its infrastructure pipeline, it, in a sense, pulled the funding for three projects. We outlined that at the time. The three main projects it pulled funding for were the Covalent Lithium mine road, the Marble Bar Road upgrade and this road. We made a decision that the state government would go in and inject funding. We did that particularly for the two mining roads, because either those contracts had been let or the project was underway. We were not going to leave those projects stranded.

We have always made this project a big priority. It is one of our commitments. We put the money in. Once we get through the sensitivities and get a route alignment that everyone agrees on, I am sure the commonwealth will be interested again. However, we are currently going through that route alignment. That is why we will approach the commonwealth when we have far more definition of the route alignment and how we will deliver the project. It is probably a project that, similar to the Bunbury Outer Ring Road, can get good local Aboriginal employment and training opportunities. We are 100 per cent committed to the project.

Like I said, I have heard a lot of criticism, but those people who criticise are not out there trying to deliver those projects. I know that there are enormous challenges, particularly when we are dealing with a very sensitive site that we do not have a lot of information on. In a sense, we are starting with mapping and surveying with the local

Aboriginal people. It is very sensitive. Members know me; I would like to start every project tomorrow. We have to get it right; otherwise, we risk losing the project altogether because we just will not get community support or the heritage approvals.

[10.50 am]

Mr R.S. LOVE: Does the minister expect to see the construction of this road begin in the forward estimates period?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I do, but we have to go through the approvals. Each year, the next year of the forward estimates comes into our budget, so we move cash flows around according to our approvals and what we can deliver. I expect us to start construction in the next four years, but it is subject to the approvals. We hope to get through that and start as soon as possible.

Mr R.S. LOVE: The table on page 605 shows that some projects are funded by the royalties for regions fund. I am trying to find the appropriate authority to ask about this. If we look at the royalties for regions expenditure table on page 222 of budget paper No 3, we see a total allocation for the “Mid West and Great Southern Secondary Freight Network Program” of \$4.8 million. Is that program being administered by Main Roads? Is this the appropriate place to ask about that program?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: We are trying to get some more detailed information, but my understanding is that it is administered through Main Roads, with the oversight of the Department of Transport. It funds local governments for road upgrades through that region. We negotiated the program probably about five or six years ago, similar to the wheatbelt secondary road network. Under this program, we fund local government roads to support the safer and more efficient movement of freight throughout those regions.

Mr R.S. LOVE: The wheatbelt secondary freight network was largely funded by the commonwealth. Is there a commonwealth fund for the midwest and great southern secondary freight network program?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The midwest network is 80 per cent funded by the commonwealth and 20 per cent funded by the state. The great southern network is 100 per cent funded by the state. As I outlined, the federal government pulled funding from a number of projects. The top three were the ones I mentioned, plus a couple of minor ones—not minor in importance but minor in size—including the great southern road network. As a result, that is 100 per cent funded by the state.

Mr R.S. LOVE: Is it possible to provide by way of supplementary information the full details of the program? At the moment all I can find in the documents is the royalties for regions component.

The CHAIR: Does the minister agree to provide the supplementary information; and, if so, will she please state exactly what supplementary information will be provided?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I will provide the full program for the secondary road upgrades in the midwest and also the great southern, and the source of funding.

[*Supplementary Information No A17.*]

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to page 602 of budget paper No 2, and the line item “Causeway Precinct Works and Activation”. The total funding is \$84.1 million. Is this new funding for works associated with the new Causeway bridge?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: This is for works to help activate and futureproof the entire area. I will go through a bit of detail. One of the issues we contend with when we do projects—we found this across our Metronet sites—is that in many instances we are dealing with water pipes that are very old, so we take the opportunity to work with Water Corp to upgrade the infrastructure. We are upgrading the infrastructure for the future. It is futureproofing the state so that we do not have to go back and dig it up again and renew that infrastructure.

We have also worked really well with local councils, and we are bringing in some new initiatives—in particular, things such as landscaping and amenities to support the activation of the entire area. I can go through what we are doing in a bit of detail. It includes tree planting and work on the water main. As part of this funding, we are also looking at how we can support a future ferry stop in the area, in particular around Point Fraser, as part of our planning for the ferry extension. We want to take the opportunity to support the infrastructure in that area. It includes things such as ablution blocks and toilet facilities to support a better usage of the area. We have negotiated with the Town of Victoria Park to support a new toilet facility. We are still in negotiations with the City of Perth on toilet facilities in the City of Perth area, because it does not want to maintain them. We are trying to negotiate an outcome whereby it could possibly maintain a toilet block for us for the community. We are working on that.

A lot of activation is happening. We are doing that as part of the wider precinct. For example, we have enhanced landscaping design and other components. Another key point is that we want to make sure the entire principal shared paths network in that area works well, because we expect those people currently using the existing, very narrow, bridge to use the new Causeway bridge and for it to become a major piece of tourism and community infrastructure. As a result, we are also making sure we upgrade the local PSPs in that area to support the wider movement of people.

Ms L. METTAM: Are the additional works fully state funded or will there be commonwealth contributions to those works?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: We engage with the commonwealth across all our projects, and we will continue to engage on those projects. It is similar in concept to what happened with Matagarup Bridge, although, of course, there was no federal funding for Matagarup Bridge. As part of our wider works, we expended money on riverbanks and other activations that were not included directly in the bridge contract.

We will negotiate with the commonwealth and potentially secure more funding for those activations. I suspect the commonwealth will be really keen on the PSPs. If we can get the commonwealth to support us on the ferry expansion too, that would be great. Once it sees what we are proposing, I am sure it will want to get onboard.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Just on the discussion about ferries, I understand that the minister said the government is doing a feasibility study. How is that progressing and how many stops is the minister talking about? Obviously, the minister spoke about Point Fraser a minute ago and I know Optus Stadium is on the list. How is the feasibility study going and how many stops is the government looking at?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: That work is ongoing, and we will soon be going out to market to identify who will deliver the ferries. We have seen a lot of interest from Western Australian manufacturers in our ferry expansion project. To be honest, having locally made ferries with up-to-date technology will be very exciting for the state.

In relation to the stops, as we noted, there is the existing Elizabeth Quay and Mends Street stops. Then there is, of course, what can happen in the Canning Bridge precinct, in particular around the Raffles Hotel and the Como side of the Canning Bridge precinct, and the University of Western Australia and Point Fraser. Thousands of people will use the new Causeway bridge and Point Fraser will become a destination in its own right. We are very keen to support a ferry stop there for tourists to get to Optus Stadium and the Burswood precinct, as a major tourism hotspot, and, in the future, the redeveloped Belmont Park.

Those are the types of ideas that we are working through. With our expression of interest process for the ferries, we will be able to determine the estimated travel time. That will determine the operating model and the proposed routes and scheduling. It is very important to get an early indication of ferry design, estimated speed and some of the requirements for accommodating them. It will be driven by the expected ferry design, but it has been great to see there has been a lot of interest from Western Australian manufacturers of boats, ships and ferries even before we go out to the market. They are very interested in coming on board. It is great.

[11.00 am]

[Ms M. Quirk took the chair.]

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I saw a letter in the paper from someone who did a study 30 years ago and said it was not feasible; however, it appears the minister is very supportive of the idea. From the minister's perspective, she will push on—I would not say regardless, but she seems to be enthusiastic about this particular subject.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: There are a couple of things.

Mr R.S. LOVE: I have a point of order. We are not discussing the Public Transport Authority, so I am not quite sure why we are talking about ferries with Main Roads.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: The minister introduced it as part of the Causeway Bridge discussion.

The CHAIR: I am sorry. I just got in here and I do not know the flow. Are we still on Main Roads?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I am happy to talk about it under the PTA.

Mr R.S. LOVE: It is the PTA.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: The minister is happy to talk about it.

The CHAIR: The more you protest, the fewer opportunities you will have for questions. Thank you, minister.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I do not mind when we talk about it, so if the member does not want me to talk about it, I will not talk about it.

Mr R.S. LOVE: We have the PTA coming.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I will not talk about it. There you go, member for Roe. I will not talk about it.

Mr R.S. LOVE: I would take it up with the PTA.

The CHAIR: Get on with it. Member for Roe, you have had your further question.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: No. It was cut off by the member for Moore.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: He is not allowed.

The CHAIR: The next question goes to the Leader of the Opposition. It will be highly relevant.

Mr R.S. LOVE: I am conscious of the time. I refer to the table of outcomes and key effectiveness indicators on page 597. I am looking at the proportion of road network permitted for use by heavy freight vehicles. There is a list from B-doubles down to triple road trains, which have 45 per cent of the road network. A significant number of quad trains now run on the road network. Does Main Roads have a target or view on how much of the network is suitable for quad road trains?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I refer that question to Mr Erceg.

Mr J. Erceg: The quad road trains are triggered by a mechanism that is in place. There are performance-based standards that applicants can submit, which is a different mechanism or standard for managing access for heavy vehicles. Traditionally, it has been on length and there is a relationship between performance and swept paths et cetera. There is progress with technology around road trains and other vehicles. We can use a process in which an applicant submits the performance characteristics. Main Roads has used that in a number of instances to work with proponents regarding quad road trains. A number of them operate in the Pilbara. In fact, their performance is improved through the technology that they use in their design. They can be up to 60 metres long. They have very good performance in tracking, braking and performance characteristics. They can perform as well as, or even better than, the 53.5-metre road trains. I do not have information with me about the length of the network upon which those quad road trains are operating, but it is dealt with on a case-by-case basis. It is not a designated restricted access vehicle network.

Mr R.S. LOVE: Mr Erceg mentioned the Pilbara; there is also a significant number of those road trains operating on Geraldton–Mt Magnet Road. That is causing considerable concern for people there. Are there any differences in road design that we would ideally have between a road that is capable of carrying triple road trains and one for quad road trains? Does Geraldton–Mt Magnet Road meet that specification?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I can provide some insight into that. I was in Geraldton recently and that question was asked. We are doing further planning and work on upgrades to Geraldton–Mt Magnet Road and planning a business case for future funding, given the amount of traffic travelling from east to west. That work is being undertaken to, hopefully, have a business case ready to go to secure federal funding.

Mr R.S. LOVE: The minister mentioned the amount of traffic on the road. There are forecasts from the port authority and others that lead us to believe that that will triple in coming years. What is the timeline for the development of the business case and when can we expect to see improvements to the road?

The CHAIR: That was two questions, member.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The business case is nearing completion, or is completed, and we will go through a process of submitting to Infrastructure Western Australia and Infrastructure Australia. We see it as a priority and we will seek commonwealth funding for the project. Again, it needs to be approved by Infrastructure Western Australia and Infrastructure Australia.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to the construction of the new bridge on Queen Victoria Street outlined under “Works in Progress” on page 603. I note the estimated cost of \$430 million, which is up from what I understand was the original cost of \$280 million. Can the minister confirm that the budget has blown out by \$150 million? Can she explain what contributed to that cost increase?

[11.10 am]

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: That bridge, similar to other projects around the nation, has been subject to increases in the cost of key components, including structural steel and concrete, which have seen a significant increase in cost. I have some figures that help support that. There has been a cumulative increase in the cost of reinforced steel of over 60 per cent. Bitumen is up by 60 per cent, diesel fuel is up by 156 per cent and plant and equipment is up by 70 per cent. We have seen similar increases in construction costs across the nation. The cumulative increase around the nation is comparable. We are not the highest. South Australia has seen the biggest increase in some of its costs. Number one, there has been an increase in the component costs, with, as I said, the cost of reinforced steel up by over 60 per cent, bitumen up 60 by per cent, plant and equipment up 60 by per cent and diesel fuel by 150 per cent, and then there has been an enhanced design again. One of the key pieces of feedback that we get from the community is that when we build these new structures, people want something that provides a legacy to the community, so we have enhanced things like the principal shared path and connectivity, making sure the paths work well with the existing PSP network, and the design has been changed to extradosed cable-stayed bridge, which are interesting words. Originally, it was a simpler design, but now it will be an extradosed cable-stayed bridge and in generations’ time people will look back and say it is an incredible structure, and it will support the activation of Fremantle and tourism elements.

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A — Wednesday, 22 May 2024]

p176b-185a

Chair; Mr Shane Love; Ms Rita Saffioti; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle

We negotiated with the council and the community on a number of designs. I understand that. We wanted to reconfigure some of the road network, but no-one else did, so we went with the existing alignment and pulling down the existing bridge and replacing it with an architecturally better bridge.

Ms L. METTAM: What is the timeframe for completion? Has the timeframe been extended?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: We have had to change a lot of things because of the alignment. Originally, the intention was to keep the existing bridge open while we did the work. We tried two alignments. One was to the east of the bridge, and that very much upset everyone in North Fremantle and East Fremantle. Then we went to the west of the bridge, and that very much upset everyone in Fremantle more generally. We managed to upset everybody with the alignment! That probably would have seen the works commence earlier but take longer to deliver because we would be operating in a very constrained site trying to manage the existing road. Now we will have to shut the road and hopefully get in and out and build very quickly so a lot more work can be done offsite. The aim is similar to the Fitzroy River Bridge for which a lot of work was done offsite, as with all of our projects now. We try to keep the impact of closures on a community to a minimum. We are doing all the early works on both banks, and some work has already been done. The geotech surveys are currently happening along Beach Road, which is why that road is currently shut. A lot of early works are happening. When we shut the bridge, we will be in there building the bridge as quickly as possible. I do not have exact timeframes yet because they will be subject to further information from the contractor.

Ms L. METTAM: What is the estimated completion time?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: We hope to be finished by late 2026.

Ms L. METTAM: Are there any contributions from the commonwealth to this project?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Yes; it is 50–50.

Ms L. METTAM: Does that 50–50 take into account the uplift in costs?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Yes. Our understanding is that the commonwealth has contributed to fund this whole project 50–50.

The appropriation was recommended.

Meeting suspended from 11.14 to 11.20 am