MITCHELL FREEWAY — EXTENSION — BUS ROUTE IMPACTS

Grievance

MR J.R. QUIGLEY (Butler) [9.13 am]: I wish to grieve to the Minister for Transport about changes to bus routes on Hester Avenue occasioned by the extension of the freeway, and the government’s total failure to supply a set of traffic lights at the intersection of Baltimore Parade. When the freeway extension opens it will terminate at Hester Avenue, meaning masses of cars will pour onto Hester Avenue. At the moment that happens at Burns Beach Road, but there are not a lot of residences where the freeway ends at Burns Beach Road. Transperth has advised that there will be a temporary deviation of the route 484 bus stops on Walyunga Boulevard, Hidden Valley Retreat and Ridgewood Boulevard. Those stops will be withdrawn until a roundabout goes in at Ridgewood Boulevard, after which time route 484 will be reinstated with some different stops. However, of more concern is what is happening to route 483, which uses Hester Avenue to turn right and left into and out of Baltimore Parade. The Public Transport Authority has advised that buses that have to make a right-hand turn from Hester Avenue into Baltimore Parade will be permanently cancelled until a set of traffic lights is built. The Public Transport Authority recognises that without a set of traffic lights at Baltimore Parade, it is far too dangerous for buses to turn from Hester Avenue into Baltimore Parade. What is the significance of that? Baltimore Parade is one of the main distributor roads through the southern part of my electorate, servicing Merriwa Plaza shopping centre, Merriwa Primary School and high schools situated further up my electorate. This is a very important and heavily used road. What did the Public Transport Authority say? It said that it is far too dangerous to turn from Hester Avenue into Baltimore Parade. It said, in inverted commas, that although it regrets the changes, they are necessary to continue to operate buses safely and that the route will be reinstated only after traffic lights are installed. It is not part of this mean government’s program to install traffic lights there. Residents from that area will have to do what Transperth is not prepared to let its bus drivers do; that is, turn right into Baltimore Parade through the masses of cars that will be moving up and down Hester Avenue. That is the reason it has given. It will not have its buses turn right into Baltimore Parade until the installation of traffic lights. Hang the rest of the public that has to use this road! Might I add that on the corner of Baltimore Parade and Hester Avenue is the Dunbar residence, where Nate Dunbar was killed in his bedroom after a car careered into his bedroom. This government used Mrs Dunbar to promote road safety and the like, but now she is living on the corner of “death intersection”. It is absolutely disgraceful.

I will read some comments contributed to the North Coast Times by local constituents. The first reads —

This is ridiculous as I don’t have a car either and am an emergency contact for my dad who lives in Merriwa off Baltimore how am I supposed to get to him via bus if he needs me. Such a stupid idea, Merriwa has ALWAYS had a bus route going through it for the last 13 years since I’ve been back in the area. Shame on you Transperth this is going to disadvantage so many people especially the elderly and families that use the service to get to IGA and Merriwa primary school etc. And not to mention the 484 with High School through Ridgewood too. Not happy Jan. Pull your head in and fix the issue with the intersections before the freeway meets Hester.

The second comment reads —

Well gee thanks for the short notice and just where will people be catching public transport from then. The Journey planner isn’t up to date yet either big help. Why weren’t people advised earlier and why weren’t closest stop flyers handed out with the stoppage flyers? BTW my daughter uses the bus everyday to get to Joondalup Tafe and has only today been given notice of this.

Another comment reads —

Great stop we have to go to now in the middle of nowhere near the Clarkson high school. Poor lighting and isolated. Criminals dream. If your going to take safe stops away at least make the other one safe. It might be OK during the day but at night its pretty isolated. Think about the safety of your passengers.

Those comments refer to changes to the positioning of bus stops along route 484, but let us not forget the most important one, route 483, which will not go along Baltimore Parade until the government installs traffic lights at the intersection of Baltimore Parade and Hester Avenue.

We all know why the government has brought this freeway extension so far in under budget—I think it was $164 million under budget—because government members are cheapskates. This community needs and deserves traffic lights. Down south in the Minister for Transport’s electorate, so that the government can protect the community from traffic, it proposed to tunnel four kilometres under the residents’ homes. We would only be so lucky to have a tunnel under Hester Avenue to take the freeway traffic. The government will spend $1.9 billion building a tunnel to make the minister’s constituents safe. All we are asking for is a lousy set of traffic lights on the corner of Baltimore Parade and Hester Avenue, on the very corner where young Nate Dunbar was killed in
his bed. This is a critically dangerous intersection and deserves traffic lights. This government should be condemned for planning this freeway and denying the many requests for traffic lights. There is also Cambrai Village with all the elderly living there who also have to negotiate this intersection. The government is creating a deathtrap by not installing traffic lights at that corner.

MR D.C. NALDER (Alfred Cove — Minister for Transport) [9.21 am]: I thank the member and I admire his passion about the services in the area. I acknowledge that some members of the community may have been concerned about proposed bus route changes, but firstly I would like to correct a couple of things. I know the member for Butler would like to see a tunnel in his area. The tunnel is not under my constituency. It is actually under the member’s colleagues’ constituency, so he needs to check with the member for Fremantle and the member for Willagee, but they are actually protesting about that, so I am a bit confused now! I would also like to acknowledge that the issues the member raised were raised with my office over a month ago by the member for Wanneroo, Mr Paul Miles, MLA, on behalf of concerned residents.

As part of the Mitchell Freeway extension in the north of Perth, changes were made to route 484 bus services in the area. To update the member on the other affected bus route in his electorate, the route 484 bus service has been removed from Hidden Valley Retreat and Walyunga Boulevard, and is unable to return to these streets due to the freeway extension until such time that the roundabout is complete at Ridgewood Boulevard and Hester Avenue.

Point of Order

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: The minister is just reading word for word drivel that has been given to him by the Public Transport Authority.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Butler; there is no point of order.

Grievance Resumed

Mr D.C. NALDER: I do not have anything written about the tunnel and I was just responding to it, but the member complained that he would like a tunnel up there and he was saying that it was under my constituency and I shared with the member that it is actually under his colleagues’ constituencies. We are doing some great things for the constituents of Labor members of Parliament.

I want to ensure that I get right exactly what is happening with the routes, so I am referring to notes that have been provided to me by the department. I believe that is the appropriate thing to do, to ensure that I provide the member with an accurate update of exactly what is going on, on the basis that we are extending the freeway for the people of that community up there. The Mitchell Freeway extensions are for the communities in the member for Butler’s electorate and I believe that a lot of people are extremely pleased.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, members!

Mr D.C. NALDER: I just want to say that the safety of bus passengers is of the highest priority. With the crossing of multiple lanes of traffic until the roundabout is established, it is not appropriate, hence we have this diversion going on at this time.

The route 483 bus service remains unchanged. In fact, at this stage no decision has been made and the advice on the Transperth website has been updated to reflect this. The Public Transport Authority and Main Roads Western Australia have had a number of meetings regarding forecast traffic volumes and traffic pattern changes that inevitably accompany a major change in the road network, such as a freeway extension. The two agencies are working together to assess the impact on the bus route when the freeway extension opens.

Following the opening, the intersection of Baltimore Parade and Hester Avenue will be reviewed to see whether there is a need to install traffic lights. This is something that traffic modelling can determine. One of the issues under discussion has been the potential need for traffic signals to be installed at the intersection of Hester Avenue and Baltimore Parade. At the time, modelling completed by the City of Wanneroo suggested that once the freeway was opened, increased traffic on Hester Avenue would result in significant delays for traffic on Baltimore Parade and, subsequently, delays to the PTA service from Baltimore Parade, Hester Avenue and Renshaw Boulevard. However, Main Roads’ modelling suggested that the queuing and delay on Baltimore Parade would not be as significant as suggested by the City of Wanneroo’s analysis and therefore traffic signals may not be required.

Obviously, we want to reduce the impact on passengers and keep safety at the forefront of our service. The route 483 bus service is one of the most successful routes in the northern suburbs and we want to ensure that those using it are not inconvenienced by any changes. As such, PTA and Main Roads have agreed to maintain the
existing route 483 service on Baltimore Parade until the impact of the freeway extension can be further assessed and the need for traffic signals confirmed. When the freeway extension is opened, we will know the full extent of the traffic in the area and we can make a judgement on the future of the bus service.