



Government of Western Australia  
Public Transport Authority

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Your Ref: A240031

13 August 2010

Dr Loraine Abernethie  
Principal Research Officer  
Public Accounts Committee  
Parliament House  
PERTH WA 6000

Dear Dr Abernethie

**Inquiry Into Project Planning and funding Applications for Major Western Australian Infrastructure Projects**

Thank you for the letter of 28 July 2010, requesting further information on aspects of the Perth City Link (PCL) project relating to the Wellington Street Bus Station.

I refer to the comments regarding the Western Australian Government's submission to Infrastructure in November 2008 and to the attached letter from the Premier to the Prime Minister which included a brief description of the Northbridge Link Project (now re-named PCL). This letter was a review by the State of the projects that were identified as priorities for the purposes of the national Infrastructure Audit and indicated that further justification and analysis of the projects would be made. The review was not a funding application but rather, a review of the State's priorities.

At the time of the funding application, the PCL Project involved lowering part of the Fremantle line and the opportunity was taken to inform the Commonwealth that another element could be included which would involve the removal of the Wellington Street Bus Station as a barrier to access between the CBD and Northbridge. Accordingly the construction of an underground bus station was mentioned. This is therefore one of the options that have been considered over time.

Across all of Perth, buses account for around 57 per cent of passenger boardings; however in terms of public transport trips into the CBD, rail dominates accounting for 62 per cent of passenger trips. Bus services therefore account for around 38 per cent of public transport trips into the CBD and more than half of these movements are through the Wellington Street Bus Station (WSBS). The WSBS is therefore the second busiest public transport facility in Perth. This is not surprising given this bus station is the City hub for bus services from the north east quadrant of Perth which has no train line.

I will now respond to the questions in the sequential order outlined in the correspondence.

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### Response to Question 1

The role of buses with the public transport system of Perth, the relationship between rail and bus services and the specific location, nature and form of a bus station in or near Wellington Street has been examined at a number of levels going back over many years. The WSBS was built in 1973 as a short term facility at a time when public transport services were in decline and in need of review.

At that time, there was a new focus on public transport due to the Oil Crisis in the early/mid 1970's and a view in parts of Government that inefficient or underperforming services such as the public transport services provided on the Fremantle line should be closed down and the services replaced by a busway.

The Fremantle line was shut down in 1979 and reopened in 1983. During this time, services were provided by buses running between WSBS and Fremantle. At that time, there was a focus on renewal of services which saw the electrification of the suburban railway system, then the construction of a railway to the north-west corridor and most recently the construction of the railway and associated bus feeder services to the south-west corridor.

In terms of the WSBS, the options considered by the Public Transport Authority (PTA) and its predecessors going back over about 20 years include:

- Do nothing other than cosmetic improvements to the existing facility
- Removal of the bus station and reorganisation of bus services in the city to the Esplanade Busport and at kerbside bus stops on various city streets.
- Construct a new bus facility at one of a number of near-central locations including: just east of Barrack Street; west of Milligan Street and at the existing site just to the east of the Entertainment Centre site. This analysis included broad consideration of both at-grade and underground forms of a bus station.

The future lowering of the Fremantle line to achieve broad planning objectives was included in the selection criteria established by the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure when the Perth City Rail Advisory Committee (PCRAC) was established in 2001 to determine the final alignment of the Mandurah line into the city. The recommended route for the railway through the city permitted the future lowering of the Fremantle line west of the Horseshoe Bridge as far as Lake Street.

Based on this outcome, the Perth Urban Rail Development (PURD) Supplementary Master Plan in 2002 showed the development potential of the land west of William Street with the physical barrier of the railway line removed. An obvious additional requirement to the achievement of this planning objective was the removal or undergrounding of the WSBS.

More recently in 2004, the East Perth Redevelopment Authority (EPRA) engaged consultants SKM to review patronage and operational options for a number of bus station scenarios that could replace the existing WSBS. The conclusions drawn from this analysis based on significant input from the PTA was for a major bus station to be retained within the city at the current location and that it be closely integrated with rail facilities. It was determined that an underground facility was both feasible and the preferred option given the objectives of the land use planners for the land just west of the Horseshoe Bridge.

A study carried out for the PTA in 2006 by consultants Parsons Brinckerhoff examined spatial requirements for an underground facility in the current location with estimates of bus stand and layover capacity to meet anticipated future growth.

Another study in 2007 assessed the option of operating the WSBS as an on-street facility. This study identified that an on-street facility would require a higher number of bus stands than the underground alternative (resulting in an interchange spread out over a wider area), and would have significantly higher operating costs and fleet procurement costs over a 30 year period and result in a major increase in bus movements along Wellington Street and side streets, significantly impacting on traffic circulating in the CBD.

From this work and as a result of internal analysis undertaken by EPRA, the underground option was embedded within EPRA's Link Master Plan in 2008. The PTA and EPRA have since worked to refine and develop the concept to a high level of reliability. The design of the urban spaces in the EPRA development area is being progressed on the clear understanding that the bus station will be underground. The final agreed concept is included in the Perth City Link Bus Master Plan dated March 2010.

**Response to Question 2**

The submission to Infrastructure Australia in November 2008 included only limited information about the bus station because the commitment by the Commonwealth for funding was only in respect to the railway works, not the bus station.

**Response to Question 3**

Not applicable.

**Response to Question 4**

Yes. For the reasons given in response to Question 1, the achievement of planning objectives to remove the physical barrier between the CBD and Northbridge required the removal of both the railway infrastructure and the removal or relocation of the bus station immediately west of the Horseshoe Bridge.

**Response to Question 5**

Not applicable.

**Response to Question 6**

No. The figure of \$205 million was a very early preliminary cost for an underground bus station. This cost included a component for the infrastructure and systems that would be required for operation of the new bus station. The cost did not include any component for fitting real-time tracking or vehicle management systems on the existing bus fleet.

The PTA has separately been examining this issue for some time and has developed a broad concept for trialling real time tracking on buses. The PTA will be undertaking a trial of real-time tracking to assess its suitability and confirm application requirements. Costs for any subsequent application onto existing buses will be subject to separate funding applications after approval of the appropriate Business case.

Yours sincerely



Reece Waldock  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER