

Transport Affordability Amendment Bill 2026

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Transport Affordability Amendment Bill 2026

From: Get Around Caboolture

Authors: Wendy Nash (Founder), Mark Watson (Policy Advisor)

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Introduction

Get Around Caboolture is a grassroots NFP organisation advocating for improved transport choice in Caboolture and Morayfield. Ours is a typical outer suburban community characterised by high levels of car dependency and limited transport alternatives.

We strongly support investment in public and active transport. In our community, access to affordable, reliable transport is not an abstract policy issue. It directly shapes people's ability to access employment, education, healthcare, and social connection.

The introduction of 50-cent fares has had a significant and positive impact locally. We commend successive Queensland Governments for implementing this initiative and making public transport meaningfully more accessible.

This submission supports the intent of the *Transport Affordability Amendment Bill 2026* and provides recommendations to strengthen its long-term effectiveness and sustainability.

Community Impact of 50-Cent Fares

Feedback from our community has been consistent and strongly positive. We are observing a shift in travel behaviour, not just cost savings:

- Increased use of public transport for everyday trips, including shopping, education, and social activities
- Older residents choosing to use trains for longer journeys
- Reduced reliance on expensive CBD parking
- Safer social travel, with less need to drive after events
- Reduced traffic congestion in peak periods

Importantly, the low fare has encouraged first-time users to try public transport. Many continue using it after their initial experience. This demonstrates that fare policy can play a critical role in shaping long-term transport habits.

Sustainability of Fare Settings

While the benefits of low fares are clear, the Bill introduces a risk by requiring Legislative Assembly approval for fare changes without providing a mechanism for routine, incremental adjustments.

Vienna Case Study: Benefits and Structural Risks

Vienna provides a well-documented example of both the success and limitations of low-fare policy. In 2012, Vienna introduced a heavily subsidised annual public transport pass priced at €365 (equivalent to €1 per day). The policy achieved:

- significant and sustained patronage growth
- reduced car use
- strong public support for public transport investment

However, fares were not indexed to inflation or operating costs. Between 2012 and 2025:

- the fare remained unchanged for approximately 13 years
- cumulative inflation exceeded 35%
- operating costs increased significantly (including labour, energy, and network expansion)

As a result, the real value of fare revenue declined substantially over time. By the mid-2020s, maintaining the system at existing service levels required increasing public subsidy. In 2026, Vienna implemented a large, one-off fare increase:

- annual pass increased from €365 to approximately €465
- representing an increase of around 30%

This was the first increase in over a decade.

Policy Implications

The Vienna experience highlights a key structural issue:

- fare freezes create hidden funding gaps
- necessary adjustments are delayed
- eventual increases are larger and more disruptive

Following this adjustment, Vienna has moved toward regular indexed fare increases, recognising the need for gradual change.

Relevance to Queensland

The proposed section 145 requires Parliamentary approval for fare changes. While this strengthens oversight, it may:

- discourage minor, necessary adjustments
- increase the likelihood of larger future increases
- create political pressure to delay decisions

A more balanced framework is required.

Legislative Recommendations: Fare Adjustment Framework

Introduce CPI-Linked Indexation

We recommend inserting provisions to allow small, annual fare adjustments.

Suggested legislative wording:

145(4) Annual indexation of fares

Despite subsection (2), the chief executive may adjust the fare for a 50c service once per financial year by no more than the percentage change in the Consumer Price Index (Brisbane) for the preceding year.

145(5) Conditions

The adjustment must be publicly notified at least 28 days prior to commencement.

145(6) Exemption

An adjustment under subsection (4) does not require approval under subsection (2).

Define “Significant Fare Change”

145(7) Significant fare change

A fare increase exceeding CPI, or any structural change to fares, must be approved by the Legislative Assembly.

Reporting and Transparency

145(8) Annual reporting

The chief executive must publish an annual report detailing fare revenue, expenditure, and any fare adjustments.

Integration of eCar Charging Infrastructure

While public transport is critical, it does not meet all travel needs, particularly in outer suburban areas. Electric vehicles (eCars) can provide another means to limit suburban residents’ exposure to unaffordable fuel price fluctuations. eCars will become increasingly essential for:

- tradies and mobile workers
- shift workers with limited service coverage
- families managing complex travel patterns

Current Gap

Queensland currently lacks a coordinated legislative or funding framework for public charging infrastructure, particularly in outer suburban and regional areas.

This contrasts with other jurisdictions, which have adopted incentive-based models.

Policy Rationale

Supporting eCar infrastructure alongside public transport:

- improves equity for those who cannot rely solely on public transport
- accelerates emissions reduction
- supports a multi-modal transport system

Legislative Recommendations: eCar Infrastructure

Integration at Transport Hubs

The Act should require consideration of EV charging infrastructure in the planning and upgrade of public transport interchanges.

Funding and Incentives

The Minister should be empowered to establish grant programs supporting installation of public charging infrastructure by councils and private providers.

Local Government Alignment

Local governments should be required to consider EV charging in transport and infrastructure planning.

Future Regulatory Power

Provision should be made for future regulations setting minimum standards where appropriate.

Conclusion

The Bill represents a strong commitment to transport affordability.

It can be strengthened by:

1. Introducing CPI-linked fare adjustments
2. Maintaining transparency and public trust
3. Supporting complementary investment in eCar infrastructure

These measures will ensure Queensland's transport system remains:

- affordable
- sustainable
- equitable
- future-ready

Closing

We welcome the opportunity to provide further information or appear before the Committee.