



Speech by

PHIL REEVES

MEMBER FOR MANSFIELD

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TRANSPORT [BUSWAY AND LIGHT RAIL] AMENDMENT BILL

Mr REEVES (Mansfield—ALP) (12.22 p.m.): South-east Queensland is one of Australia's fast growing regions, as we all know. As such, it faces high demands on its transport system. Designing, maintaining and implementing an efficient transport system that addresses both the short and long-term goals in the face of increased congestion and a growing population poses many often-conflicting factors.

At face value, building more roads for cars is the obvious solution but one that fails to address long-term transport planning needs and the ever-increasing levels of congestion within the CBD and surrounding suburbs. Building infrastructure that encourages greater public transport usage is a far more cost-effective proposition and one that delivers environmentally sensitive results as well.

It is important to note that improved public transport is a realistic alternative to car travel and improving public transport is probably the single most important transport issue of the region. The Government is committed to a long-range plan of increased public transport of which a key component is the introduction of a network of busways throughout Brisbane's major residential corridors. I have said here and elsewhere that the busways will revolutionise public transport usage in my electorate and the surrounding electorates. We have never had public transport infrastructure that ensured people got out of their cars and onto the bus.

I will use the example of today because I caught the bus to work. As I have been a bus traveller all—

Mr Johnson: You should do it every day.

Mr REEVES: I try to. I have been a bus traveller all my life. Never in the electorate of Mansfield have we had the advantage of a reliable transport system like trains, but what occurred today occurs every day. The bus was probably about five minutes late. That was not the fault of the bus driver and it was not the fault of the bus system. It was as a result of normal traffic problems such as traffic lights and other transport problems. As a result of that, the bus ended up travelling in peak hour and everything was delayed. It probably took me about half an hour to travel from Mount Gravatt into the city.

Once the busway is finally up and running, the journey will take about 15 minutes. There will be an improved frequency of buses because obviously it takes only another 15 minutes to get back instead of an hour. So instead of having two buses an hour we can have four buses an hour and that will increase bus usage.

Mr Bredhauer: Did you catch a bus to the Olympics when the soccer was on?

Mr REEVES: I did. I did take the bus to the Olympics and I must talk about that. I went over to the Garden City bus interchange at quarter past 4 and there was a very large queue waiting for a bus. I got on the bus. After using part of the busway network I was sitting in my seat at the Gabba—

Mr Bredhauer interjected.

Mr REEVES: No, it was not a hot dog, actually. They were a bit too expensive. I was sitting in my seat at the Gabba at 5 minutes to 5. So it took me 40 minutes from queuing up at the bus station, getting on the bus, getting through the gate to sitting in my seat and that was because of the

introduction of the new busway station at the Gabba. The same thing applied on the way home when, along with 35,000 other people, I went home. Once I got on the bus, I was home within 20 minutes. It was excellent.

Busways, which have been the subject of numerous speeches in this House, are roadways aimed at increasing the speed, reliability and comfort of bus services. The dedicated two-lane roadway is for the exclusive use of buses and emergency service vehicles. In order for public transport to become more competitive with private vehicles, it needs to address the needs of the consumer, removing inconsistencies in timetabling and, as I stated before, improving the speed and frequency of bus services, increasing levels of safety and comfort and implementing guaranteed trip times, which have been identified as key components in this strategy.

While the State Government is currently involved in the construction of a state-of-the-art busway, Ottawa in Canada provides the best example of a successfully operating busway system. It is important to note that Ottawa is demographically similar to Brisbane, particularly in terms of having a strong CBD with more residential and employment growth now taking place in the suburbs at a relatively low density. Ottawa's busway carries 200,000 people each day, accounting for an amazing 70% of commuters travelling to the CBD. Compare that to the current estimates of Brisbane public transport usage to the CBD of just over 30%. It is also very interesting to note that the busiest section of the Ottawa busway carries 10,000 people during peak hour in one direction. That is equivalent to five lanes of cars on the freeway. Ottawa's system has also seen a 70% reduction in accidents in the city, further emphasising how the segregation of buses and cars not only improves travel time reliability but safety as well. This Canadian example has demonstrated the effectiveness of the public transport system specifically aimed at improving the quality and therefore the attractiveness of public transport.

The busways in Brisbane will include express routes and fast, frequent all-day services that stop at each station and provide passengers with consistent, congestion-free trips even during peak traffic periods. We really only have to look at the example of Sydney during the Olympics. During that time, many people used public transport, in particular buses, and those buses travelled in designated bus lanes. That created a situation where the roads had hardly any cars on them because people got out of their cars and onto the buses. Sydney's usual transport difficulties were lessened considerably because people were on the buses instead of in their cars.

The busway system will see increased bus frequency and guaranteed trip times, removing traffic congestion from the equation and reducing travel time. The increased reliability of the system will encourage people to further make use of the busway system and public transport. The integration of the busway with other public transport systems will see other lines feeding into the busway to ensure that the busway benefits all, not just those near the busway itself. It is expected that local routes will provide the same seat service while accessing the busway.

The introduction of special busway stations will also increase the safety, comfort and accessibility for bus patrons. I take as an example the bus station at Garden City. It would have to be one of the safest public transport stations that I have ever seen. It is possible to stand at one end and see people standing at the other end. There is no fear of people hiding behind walls and the like. The stations will feature audible announcements of arriving buses as well as real-time information displays, further adding to the convenience of patrons. Security cameras, high-quality lighting, transparent station design, a regular police presence and help points connecting directly to a central control centre will help to ensure a high level of safety.

The busways will also provide links to other existing public transport services such as ferries and rail services. This improved integration further emphasises the message that public transport works and works well. The consequent increased usage of the public transport system will also benefit the community in other ways in addition to reduced traffic congestion.

At a time when we are increasingly conscious of environmental concerns, public transport takes on far greater importance. One fully loaded bus means that there are 40 fewer cars on the road, with significant reductions in both air and noise pollution. The construction of the region's first busway in Brisbane's south-east corridor is currently under way, and I cannot wait for it to be finished. It is called the south-east busway and will run from the Brisbane CBD via South Bank and Mater Hill to Woolloongabba and then through my electorate on to Eight Mile Plains. Buses will then use the Pacific Motorway to service suburbs further south. As I said, the first stage of the busway opened in time for the Olympic football events at the Gabba. The construction will be completed by mid 2001.

Preliminary work has started on the inner-northern busway to link the CBD with the Royal Brisbane Hospital. This project will further reduce congestion in the CBD, making it easier for buses to travel to and from the city, lessening the impacts for both bus users and car drivers alike. Busways represent an opportunity to achieve a highly efficient and sustainable use of road space while contributing strongly to the management of air quality and vehicle emissions. Busways will boost the image of public transport, making it synonymous with reliable, safe and comfortable travel and

improving the quality of life of everybody in the south-east region. I am sure that the people of my electorate as well as the people in the surrounding electorates will show their support by getting on the buses. As I said, these busways will revolutionise public transport usage.

I would like to thank the Minister for his support for the busways, and his continued support, because the people in my electorate—those who commute to the city for work or for other reasons—cannot wait for the busways to be completed. I am sure that they will come into great use next year with the Goodwill Games and the events that will be held out at the ANZ stadium. So I commend the Minister for this Bill. I congratulate all his staff who worked very hard, and I wish Cathy a happy birthday as well.
