



Speech by

PHIL REEVES

MEMBER FOR MANSFIELD

Hansard 27 November 2001

TRANSPORT LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mr REEVES (Mansfield—ALP) (5.34 p.m.): It might surprise members of the parliament, but I believe that the most important part of this bill concerns the busways.

Mr Bredhauer: No. 1 ticket holder.

Mr REEVES: As the No. 1 ticket holder of the South East Busway, may I say that one of the major threats to Brisbane's liveability comes from the growth in traffic on our roads. In fact, by the year 2011 there will be another half million cars on the road. One of the key traffic reduction strategies developed by the Queensland government and the Brisbane City Council is to significantly increase the use of public transport. The busway strategy is a key element in achieving this. The overall strategy proposes a busway network stretching across Brisbane. While building on the already strong role of buses in the regions, the network will provide for fast, reliable and convenient bus services. The busway delivers a new standard in public transport service with limited traffic enabling reliable bus timetabling and integrated rail and bus services to open up cross-town access to key areas such as Griffith University.

I think it is important, in view of the work being undertaken on Coronation Drive by the Brisbane City Council, to emphasise that there is a need for a bus from the Eight Mile Plains bus station all the way to the University of Queensland. Thousands of students on the south side of Brisbane travel by car to the University of Queensland. If they were able to use the busway we would find a reduction in traffic on our freeways. It would also obviate students having to catch two buses in order to get to the university.

Other benefits of the busway include the following: access for people with disability or limited mobility; handrails, speakers, high-quality lighting and tactile pavers for people with visual impairments; strong signage for people with hearing impairments; and maximum use of transparent materials, low-level planting, high-quality lighting and video surveillance to create a safe and secure environment for commuters. One only has to go to the Garden City Busway station, both above ground and underground, to see how secure and safe a station can be. It is not possible for anyone to hide in the station. The station consists of pure glass everywhere. There are no telephones sticking out anywhere. All bus users can feel safe. Security cameras are in place. Many of our senior citizens have been impressed with the efficiency of the system and the safety which it delivers to them.

Busways increase the speed, reliability and comfort of bus services. It takes me 15 minutes to come from the Garden City bus station to Parliament House each morning. My travel involves a three-minute walk and a 12-minute ride on the 136 bus. Gold Coast members can park at Garden City rather than drive all the way to Parliament House. Express routes and fast, frequent all-day services stopping at each station get commuters to their destinations faster, even during peak traffic periods. Buses on local routes also have the ability to join the busway at on and off ramps along its length, extending the benefits to local commuters.

I have another matter that I have raised with some Brisbane City Council officers. This involves the need to look at the various bus routes in the city. I refer particularly to the express service each morning from Mansfield and Wishart. The buses leave the Garden City bus terminal and travel through Wishart and Mansfield and join the busway near the Wellers Road section of the freeway. This involves a 15-minute wait to enter the peak-hour traffic. It has been suggested that the trip be reversed and that

the buses leave Wellers Hill and go backwards to Garden City. The buses could then enter the busway, and thus reduce it to a 20-minute trip. This is information which has come to me from local residents. I have started the ball rolling in talking to various officers at the Brisbane City Council.

The opening of the South East Busway in April 2001 heralded a new era in the provision of integrated transport solutions for the people of south-east Queensland. The South East Busway is a two-lane two-way road for buses only with 10 high-quality bus stations between the central business district and Eight Mile Plains. The South East Busway is part of the \$599 million, five-year south-east transport project. The south-east transport project represents the first of a network of busways recommended in the Integrated Regional Transport Plan and includes the busway and the T2 transit lanes on the South East Freeway between Klumpp Road and the Miles Platting Road bridge. The opening of the South East Busway was the culmination of four and a half years of careful planning, design, construction and community involvement to provide a seamless, integrated transport service for the people in the south and south east of Brisbane. Whilst Queensland Transport led the design and construction team, the project was a matter of intense collaboration between Queensland Transport, the Department of Main Roads, Queensland Rail, the Brisbane City Council, Brisbane Transport, private bus operators and private sector engineering and construction companies. This collaboration enabled the delivery of a world-class busway which was completed two months ahead of schedule.

I was speaking to the director-general of the department and he spoke to people from different parts of the world at the University of Queensland last Wednesday. Those visitors regard the busway as world class. They believe it is the best busway in the world. I do not have any hesitation in backing that up. Evidently, people are coming from different countries to view the busway. I know that people from New Zealand and the United States have been here to see it because of its world-class reputation.

The busway delivers better transport for Queensland, a key strategic outcome for Queensland Transport and Main Roads. The busway is playing a key role in achieving Integrated Regional Transport Plan targets of reducing private vehicle trips and increasing the proportion of trips made by transport from seven per cent to 10.5 per cent. When the South East Busway commenced, bus patronage increased by a massive 25 per cent on core busway services. My understanding is that that is nearly up to 40 per cent now.

...

Mr REEVES: I am sure that those recipients have seen the world-class busway from South Brisbane. They can catch the bus from South Bank or the cultural centre and get to the world's greatest shopping centre at Garden City in 12 and a half minutes. It is well worth the trip. As I said, when the South East Busway commenced, bus patronage increased by a massive 25 per cent. The park-and-ride service was 60 per cent full on its first day of operation and after two months it is 90 per cent full. Demand has been so great that the frequency of service has had to increase in peak hours to handle the increased patronage.

The Inner Northern Busway is a 4.7 kilometre dedicated roadway corridor—and I have had the pleasure of seeing the planning for that—for buses from the Queen Street bus station to the Royal Brisbane Hospital. Construction of the Inner Northern Busway has commenced and the section under the Normanby intersection has been completed. The remaining sections from Roma Street to Bowen Ridge Road are expected to start in March 2002 and be completed by the end of 2003. When completed, the Inner Northern Busway will complement the South East Busway and provide improved travel from the south of the CBD to the north and vice versa.

Busway commuters will be able to access the Inner Northern Busway at key locations via purpose-built bus stations. Each one of the modern facilities has been designed with a focus on safety, convenience and accessibility for commuters. The concept and generic designs of these stations are presently in operation in the South East Busway. The South East Busway has 10 high-quality busway stations which are monitored 24 hours a day, seven days a week. This adds vitality, activity and personal security in neighbourhoods. As I said, patronage on the busway has increased by nearly 40 per cent. Bus patronage from the Logan area has increased 15 per cent. Many of my constituents from Rochedale South have been raving about the improved service they are receiving, which cuts something like 20 minutes to half an hour off their trip. That is a huge saving for them. It gives them more quality time with their family. They are getting home half an hour earlier. They are really enjoying it.

Off-peak patronage has increased, with people taking advantage of the improved access to destinations serviced by the state-of-the-art busway. While the community take-up has been impressive, the busway is a long-term piece of infrastructure. The busway achieves a highly efficient and sustainable use of new road space while contributing strongly to the management of air quality. I can hear the rain falling outside. I can just imagine what the South East Freeway looks like now. Travel on the busway would be superb, because there is nothing worse than traffic on the South East Freeway on a rainy day at 20 to six. The freeway would be jam-packed but the busway would not be. There is also plenty of cover for commuters when they get off the bus at Garden City and in the lift to get to their

car, and they might have to run a bit to get to their car. While on the subject of Garden City, it should be congratulated on its involvement in the busway and for allowing it to be developed at the world-class shopping centre. However, we need to look at the park-and-ride area and fix the paths along there to make it more accessible for people.

Members have heard me say a few times how great the South East Busway is, but I will continue to say it because it is the greatest bit of public infrastructure in my electorate and I am extremely proud of it. However, there are a couple of other matters I want to raise in relation to the bill. I had the pleasure of presenting the TravelSmart Awards at Parliament House last Thursday, TravelSmart Day, on behalf of the minister. It was great to see the young children of this state getting involved with TravelSmart. About 20 children from the Regents Park State School presented pictures and poems, et cetera. One that really stood out said, 'Forget the Fussway, go the Busway'. That is a great slogan made up by a 10-year-old student.

The winning web site was designed by a Brisbane State High student. The Christian Outreach College in my electorate of Mansfield won one of the awards. It was a great day. Two groups—one from East Brisbane State School and the other I cannot recall—made up a rap song. It was all about public transport. As a matter of interest, I took a poll of the audience and asked who caught public transport or car pooled to the event. About three-quarters of the audience did. It is encouraging. My wife and I came to Parliament House, caught the busway to the Myer Centre and went home the same way. Some of the day's participants caught the bus home with us as well.

I congratulate the minister on the announcement of the preferred consultants for the review of the Mount Gravatt-Capalaba Road. Other representatives from Canberra have tried to make this into a political issue and a political stunt. This is about long-term solutions for the people of Wishart and Upper Mount Gravatt along the Mount Gravatt-Capalaba-Kessels Road. I look forward to the study commencing. My constituents look forward to a successful outcome that will deliver long-term planning. I also congratulate the minister on a heavy focus on community consultation.

There is one issue in relation to the bill which causes me concern, and I have raised this issue with the minister. My concern relates to the inability of people who record illegal drugs in their system to apply for work licences. Like everyone in this House, I feel strongly about being tough on drug-drivers. But my concern is that there appears to be no creditable testing in Australia or overseas which can ascertain the level of drugs in a person's system. As a result, a person's livelihood may be threatened because of one small possible legal or illegal action. For example, a person may go to Amsterdam for a holiday and go to a coffee shop and consume a small amount of drugs, and it is legal in that country. Let us say that some six weeks later when they return to Queensland they get picked up by the police for one reason or another and are drug tested. The drug test will show that a small amount of drugs has been detected. The problem is that the test can only show the drug exists in the system. It cannot show the level involved. As a result, that person will not be allowed to apply for a work licence. His or her family income may be threatened because they need a licence to earn an income.

The problem in this situation is that there is no creditable testing equipment available which can work out the amount of drugs in the system. It is important that all state authorities, including our own, come up with equipment which can test the level of drugs in people, not just the fact that drugs are present. Only a test such as this would equate to the current method of testing the amount of blood alcohol in the system. It is important that we work together with the other state authorities to come up with a creditable equipment test or else we may create a situation where people's livelihoods are threatened because of a legal action which happened six weeks ago or two months ago. Once again, I emphasise that the penalties need to be strong on drug-drivers but we also need that balance.

I commend the minister for the bill. I endorse the words of the member for Gregory when he talked about the excellent work the Transport and Main Roads Department does. I also congratulate Don Steele, who was in charge of the busway and is now the South-East Division Director for Main Roads. Once again, he is still looking after my patch. I look forward to working with Don and his staff on important issues in the electorate of Mansfield. I commend the bill to the House.
