



Speech by

Neil Roberts

MEMBER FOR NUDGE

Hansard Thursday, 13 May 2004

TRANSPORT AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mr NEIL ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (3.00 p.m.): The provision of an efficient public transport system can provide a number of significant benefits to our community. One of those is improved safety and security. Information shows that, based on the number of trips and the kilometres travelled by the public, there are far fewer injuries and accidents on public transport than in private vehicles. Additionally, because of the presence of staff and many patrons and increased security surveillance, public transport can also be safe for students or children travelling to and from school and safe for the more vulnerable in our community as they move from place to place. I applaud Queensland Rail for the recent announcements of an increase in hours that stations in my electorate will be open. Staff will be on duty until the very last train. That is a significant issue for many patrons.

An efficient public transport system also delivers significant environmental and health benefits to our community. Fewer cars on the road, less congestion and vehicle emissions, more efficient use of our energy supplies and less energy required to transport large numbers of people are good for the environment. It will lessen the number of injuries and health conditions. Encouraging people to move from vehicles to public transport will lead to an overall reduction in asthma and other respiratory conditions. That, in itself, could make a significant contribution to reducing the pressures on our health budget and also improving the lifestyle of large numbers of people.

The economic benefits of an efficient public transport system are also well known. It would use less energy and make more efficient use of increasingly scarce fuel resources. It would have less impact on our very expensive road system. A good system which encourages people to use it can encourage a lot more people to get to their workplaces, major employment areas and retail centres in a much more efficient way, thus saving individuals, and the community generally, money. There are also social benefits, including increased and improved access to services, recreational opportunities, entertainment and employment. It also makes communities more inclusive.

I was very pleased this morning to hear the minister outline news of the increased patronage of Queensland Rail. It deserves our congratulations. The reality of it is that the majority of people—and the figure is around 60 per cent—still use the car to travel to work. For many people that will always be the case. Public transport is simply not practical for some people due to their work situation. It does show that there is significant scope for authorities and governments at all levels to encourage better and more regular use of our public transport network.

Recent Australian Bureau of Statistic's figures show that less than five per cent of people regularly travel to work on public transport, whether that is trains, buses or ferries. There is significant room for improvement in the use of public transport in our community. Given the benefits, there are significant incentives for communities and government to invest in having an efficient public transport system within our state. That presents significant challenges to government.

The reality of public transport is that it will never be a profit-making venture for governments. Subsidies will always be required and will be provided to operators in both the public and private sectors to

provide public transport initiatives. However, governments can play a key role in enhancing the efficiency and value for money it receives from the investment that it puts into the public transport network.

One of the many challenges I believe that is confronting our public transport system is getting the balance right between what could be referred to as our mass transit systems—for example, our rail network and our busways which are transporting large numbers of people from outer metropolitan areas to the cities—and connecting with the niche markets which could be anything from a heavily populated central business district of a city, a special event, a regional centre or some other high density destination. I think we are doing the mass transit part of that equation pretty well, although patronage levels need to improve. In the south-east corner, and particularly in metropolitan Brisbane, we are well serviced by railway corridors. We have been building a very effective busway network.

Through initiatives of the Brisbane City Council we have started to improve the provision of public transport within some of those niche markets such as the central business district. I acknowledge the Brisbane City Council's effort in that regard in providing the free downtown loop service that operates regularly between major destinations in the city.

I still think there is a bit of a problem in having the mass transit part of our public transport system connecting efficiently and conveniently with some of those niche market activities. There is a need to improve that connectivity between those two components of our public transport system. That is where the development of an efficient and effective public transport system can help.

The creation of TransLink presents us with a great opportunity, I believe, to start addressing issues such as the one that I have outlined. As has been indicated by other speakers, TransLink is a partnership between Queensland Transport, Brisbane City Council, Queensland Rail and private bus operators via the Queensland Bus Industry Council. That integrated network of public transport providers, covering rail, bus and ferries, will provide an integrated service between Noosa in the north, Coolangatta in the south and Helicon in the west.

One of the key initiatives of TransLink, which is one of the main provisions of this bill, is the introduction of an integrated ticketing service. This is welcome news to commuters in the south-east corner. The bill introduces a number of measures to facilitate that. In particular, there are provisions which create a more appropriate contractual relationship between TransLink and those public and private providers who will be providing the transport services.

As has been indicated by other members, an integrated public transport system is much more than just having an efficient integrated ticketing system. Some key issues that need to be addressed are things such as having almost seamless transfers between the various modes of transport. That goes to very practical issues. For example, when a bus arrives at a railway station there needs to be a covered walkway to enable people to transfer to the other mode of transport. The convenience of accessing one form of transport and then another needs to be easy and comfortable.

An integrated system is much more than ticketing. There needs to be convenience and ease of access to the various modes of transport. It needs very good timetables to ensure that people, once they arrive at a connection point, are not standing around for 10, 15 or 20 minutes waiting for the connection. Timetabling is a critical issue. Purchasing and accessing tickets needs to be easy so that people are not spending additional minutes in a journey from point A to point B engaging in those sorts of activities. The introduction of the smart card in 2005 will basically address that particular issue. That is a welcome initiative that will be implemented by TransLink.

All of these initiatives and issues will require substantial effort and resources of government at the state, federal and local level. This bill is a significant step towards providing a truly integrated public transport service in Queensland. It is an important first step, but we must acknowledge that there are many more steps that need to be taken to achieve that objective. I believe that the establishment of TransLink is well placed to deliver a system which will enhance and improve public transport opportunities for the public. Accordingly, I commend the bill to the House.