Question on Notice

No. 40

Asked on 23 February 2021

MR S MINNIKIN ASKED MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT AND MAIN ROADS (HON M BAILEY)—

QUESTION:

Will the Minister provide a current list of Department of Transport and Main Roads structures that have either a reduced load limit, limits on the use of certain lanes or any other limits?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for Chatsworth for the question.

The Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR) manages 33,367 kilometres of state-controlled roads and 3108 bridges. I am pleased to advise there are rarely any restrictions applied on general traffic to cross most of these bridges. It is difficult to provide an exact number, however there will be a small number of examples where single lane travel is required due to the width of some bridges, particularly some of the earlier-built timber bridges.

The state-controlled road network also provides critical links for the heavy vehicle fleet which supports all Queenslanders and industry sectors, such as mining and resources, agricultural and construction which are major contributors to the Queensland economy. As a result, many heavy vehicles need to transport oversized and heavy loads and require support services from large cranes for loading and unloading. These heavy vehicles are called 'Restricted Access Vehicles' (RAV) and can only operate on the network under an authorisation, such as a permit. Safety controls are stipulated in a permit document for each specific RAV, as well as the route they are to travel along. For example, the requirement to travel over certain bridges at a speed no greater than 10 km/hr along the centreline of the bridge.

TMR receives approximately 24,000 permit applications per year for engineering assessment and, if consent is provided to the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator to issue a permit, travel conditions or restrictions are required to ensure the safety of road users and assets, such as bridges. My department will always ensure that safety is not compromised by intervening and imposing restrictions, if required.

For example, large cranes are tracked through telematics, and a condition of access to the network is not to travel across restricted bridges—these are known as 'cannot cross structures'. There are currently 259 cannot cross structures (eight per cent of the network) for large crane operations which are published on TMR's website via an interactive mapping solution. This mapping solution can be found on TMR's website at www.tmr.qld.gov.au by clicking on: (1) 'Business and industry', (2) 'Heavy vehicles', and (3) 'Heavy vehicle route maps and restrictions'.

There is also a mapping layer of restrictions, including bridge restrictions, for heavy vehicles transporting oversized and heavy loads. There are 95 cannot cross structures (three per cent of the network) and an additional 100 bridges (three per cent of the network) with load restrictions for heavy vehicles transporting oversized and heavy loads.

To support economic activity, and consistent with competing priorities and available statewide funds, my department balances the competing needs of supporting economic activity, while facilitating increased efficiency and productivity and ensuring the safe operation of bridges.

TMR, through the *Queensland Transport and Roads Investment Program* (QTRIP) *2020–21 to 2023–24,* is strengthening, rehabilitating and replacing bridges on a priority basis. That program represents a record investment in road and transport infrastructure for the fifth year in a row, with $26.9 billion in works committed over the next four years, supporting an average of approximately 23,600 direct jobs over the life of the program.

In the lead up to the 2020 State Election, the Palaszczuk Government's election commitment *A Real Bruce Plan* confirmed $200 million towards a $1 billion commitment, with an Australian Government contribution of $800 million being sought, to 'build a Second Bruce' by activating an improved Inland Freight Route from Charters Towers to the New South Wales border. This $200 million commitment is outlined in the current QTRIP and is enabling TMR to commence the necessary planning across the full length of the Inland Freight Route, which is a nationally-accredited Key Freight Route providing an inland alternative to the Bruce Highway, to identify deficiencies and inform a program of works to be delivered over the life of the upgrade program.

Further, *A Real Bruce Plan* outlined $109.71 million of projects already funded on the Inland Freight Route and key feeder roads, as part of $1 billion in joint funding by the Australian and Queensland governments contained within *Unite and Recover: Queensland's Economic Recovery Plan*. Overall, the jointly funded road economic stimulus packages included an extra $72.9 million for replacement of eight bridges across Queensland. This funding injection will deliver freight efficiency benefits, improve road safety, sustain local jobs and lift the State's economy in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Inland Freight Route will provide for a safer overall network outcome catering for heavy vehicle movements which would otherwise have to use the Bruce Highway.

The QTRIP 2020–21 to 2023–24 includes continued delivery of the $12.6 billion, 15-year jointly funded program to upgrade the Bruce Highway, the continued delivery of more than $3.4 billion in upgrades on the M1 Pacific Motorway, the commencement of the $1.53 billion Coomera Connector (Stage 1) project between Nerang and Coomera, over $1 billion for dedicated and targeted initiatives to bolster the Queensland Government's commitment to road safety, the $709.9 million Gold Coast Light Rail Stage 3 project, and a $1 billion new pipeline of rail projects that includes making trains again in Queensland.