

GATEWAY WA — HALE ROAD–TONKIN HIGHWAY INTERSECTION

Grievance

MR N.W. MORTON (Forrestfield) [9.50 am]: My grievance today is to the Minister for Transport. I start by acknowledging the transport solutions that are being delivered to my electorate as we speak. Firstly, there is the Gateway WA project, which I will come back to. This record spend is delivering some great outcomes for the local community. I take this opportunity to make mention of Nick Combe and his team, who are doing a great job of delivering this project ahead of time and under budget. Retrofitting major interchanges within highways is never easy and they have done it very well. In particular, their traffic management has been exemplary. I also need to thank the minister for coming out to my electorate last week to turn the sod on the grade-separated interchange that is occurring at the Berkshire Road–Roe Highway intersection. That is a fantastic outcome for the electorate of Forrestfield, as we have mentioned many times in this chamber. It has been a major bugbear for my constituents and a major black spot, with an accident occurring every 10 days on average at that intersection. For people who do not know the lie of the land, if they saw it firsthand, they would understand why; half the intersection is uncontrolled and that half of the intersection is primarily used by trucks and has industrial-type movements. That is a fantastic outcome for the community and it is great that we are delivering that one.

I also note the Forrestfield–Airport Link, which will be a game changer for the eastern suburbs, connecting my electorate to the city with a 20-minute train ride. All these things are fantastic and I thought I should be fair and make note of the fantastic things that are being delivered for the community. However, with that said, I return to the Gateway WA project, which I mentioned earlier. Although I acknowledge the great things that Gateway WA is doing, I want to highlight with the minister today an issue that has been raised with me by a number of my constituents—that is, the intersection at Hale Road and Tonkin Highway. As it stands, Gateway WA intends to close the right-turn lane from Tonkin Highway into Hale Road for people travelling into the suburb of Wattle Grove. My constituents are not happy with this outcome and, as such, I have raised this with the Gateway WA team; in fact, I raised it at the meeting I had with the team at Parliament House. The Gateway WA team was very responsive and had done some initial planning around a possible solution to this problem and undertook to take that possible solution to a steering committee meeting, which I believe was held last month.

I understand that the rationale behind closing the lane is due to the upgrades occurring at the neighbouring Tonkin Highway–Roe Highway interchange and, as such, the off-ramp from Roe Highway south onto Tonkin Highway is considered too close to Hale Road for commuters to merge in time to safely enter the right-turn lane and enter Wattle Grove; thus, the initial solution was to close the right-turn lane and instead people could turn left at Hale Road, go up to a roundabout at Reynolds Road, near Hartfield Park, and return to the lights at Tonkin Highway and then cross when the lights are green into Wattle Grove. Quite rightly, the residents of Wattle Grove view this as ridiculous, as do I. The alternative solution is to put bollards along the off-ramp from Roe Highway so that cars from that lane cannot merge, add a lane to the intersection and keep the right-turn lane into Wattle Grove open. This would mean that motorists entering Tonkin Highway from Roe Highway would not be able to enter Hale Road; they would need to do this at the upgraded interchange at Berkshire Road and Roe Highway and then travel down Hale Road into Wattle Grove. However, all other commuters heading south along Tonkin Highway would be able to enter Hale Road from Tonkin Highway at the right-turn lane, which I see as a commonsense solution that balances both safety and accessibility for the community.

Responsible government should always look for commonsense solutions, and I think this is a solution that the community would welcome, rather than the closure of the right-turn lane. I look forward to the minister's response.

MR D.C. NALDER (Alfred Cove — Minister for Transport) [9.55 am]: I thank the member for Forrestfield for raising this issue with me. After visiting the intersection with him last week, I can understand his constituents' frustration with this otherwise very successful infrastructure project. His constituents have appropriately identified an issue with the initial planning for this intersection that would have removed the right-turn access from Tonkin Highway into Hale Road. Without right-turn access from Tonkin Highway, his constituents from Wattle Grove will spend more time in transit and I worry that, out of frustration, they may consider performing a risky or unsafe U-turn. I applaud the work the member has undertaken with Gateway WA and its willingness to assist by preparing an alternative design for this intersection that will retain the right-hand turn into Hale Road.

As the member mentioned, the proposal involves widening Tonkin Highway to three southbound lanes through the intersection, merging the entry ramp with the left-most lane and physically separating this lane from the remaining two lanes through the intersection. The right-turn pocket would remain, but a physical separation would prevent cars weaving across multiple lanes, creating a significant safety issue. This means that motorists originating from the Roe Highway ramp, both westbound and eastbound, will be prevented from turning right

into Hale Road. They will be required to use the new Berkshire Road interchange or Welshpool Road East. Again, this will prevent the unsafe weaving movement I mentioned earlier.

The Gateway WA project steering committee agreed to proceed with developing a preliminary design and cost for this project. Once the details are available, I will seek advice from Main Roads to determine whether this will fit with the current scope of the project. I hope to have good news for the member and his constituents early in the new year.