

PUBLIC TRANSPORT AUTHORITY — BUS ROUTE 212

Grievance

MR P. ABETZ (Southern River) [9.24 am]: My grievance is to the Minister for Transport about bus route 212 in my electorate. I wish to preface my remarks by saying that I fully appreciate that it is always a challenge to provide good public transport in developing outer suburbs and Southern River is no exception. I want to compliment the minister's office and the Public Transport Authority for the way they have been responsive to past approaches to expand services. When I requested that bus route 517 deviate to take high school students from Bletchley Park to Southern River College, the minister's office responded very promptly and that service is now well utilised and very much appreciated. The 517 bus service used to run from Bletchley Park to Murdoch station, and now runs between Murdoch and Thornlie stations via Bletchley Park. That has been a tremendous improvement, and gives residents on Riverside estate on Southern River Road relatively easy access to this service at the corner of Southern River Road and Gay Street.

My grievance relates to the 212 bus service, which runs via Thornlie station into the city. The 212 bus deviates in the morning and evening into Southern River, which is much appreciated by those who use it. However, in our area we have a number of estates or subdivisions that are not well serviced because some of the connecting roads have not been constructed. Added to that is the problem of the 212 route terminating and starting on Warton Road, near the corner of Batman Road, Canning Vale. The 212 bus route could be rerouted slightly so more residents could have access to that service within easy walking distance. The good thing is that this could be done without increasing the running costs, as the distance is virtually identical. Firstly, I propose that the 212 bus from the city continues all the way down Harpenden Street to Holmes Street, and then turns right into Holmes Street servicing the houses along that extra stretch of Harpenden Street bounded by Holmes and Harpenden Streets and Dalyup Road, as well as the new estate developing on the corner of Holmes and Lakey Streets and the houses along Holmes Street. Secondly, there is the terminus issue. The 212 bus route commences and terminates its route on Warton Road outside City Farmers, near the corner of Batman Road. This results in the left-hand lane being blocked to traffic on Warton Road, which is quite hazardous. People accelerating away from the traffic lights on the corner of Amherst Road are suddenly confronted by a bus blocking their lane and have to hit their brakes, which often results in minor rear-end collisions. At times people have to queue at the intersection. If the bus drivers are early, they park the bus somewhere else for a time if they can find suitable space. Sometimes they park at the left-hand turn lane into Sandringham Promenade and other times they park in the parking bays outside the liquor store on Holmes Street.

Although these efforts by the drivers are appreciated and contribute to road safety, I do not believe their efforts can be considered a long-term solution. I think that an alternative terminus could be developed on Batman Road, just around the corner from the current terminus. There are some parallel parking bays there, and these could be easily converted into a bus bay. These parking bays are not heavily utilised, and the City Farmers shopping area has an adequate car park that is never completely full. The loss of a few parking bays on the street would not be a problem. These parking bays do not provide direct access to the businesses and should not affect their trade in any way. This arrangement would free up the lane on Warton Road and allow traffic to flow freely. The buses could then move onto Batman Road, and take three left-hand turns to get back onto Warton Road. I have spoken to the director of engineering services at the City of Gosnells, Dave Harris, and he was quite positive about changing the terminus of the 212 bus route to Batman Road. He did not envisage any problems with transferring the terminus into Batman Road. It means that the bus will drive along Batsford Way, which is a residential street; however, the bus will be driving past only seven houses in Batsford Way and, given the overall community benefit, I think freeing up a lane in Warton Road is a very small inconvenience for those residents as the bus is simply driving past their homes. Given the very low noise emissions of the newer buses, I believe most people will not be too bothered by the bus doing this loop back onto Warton Road.

Many of my constituents and I would be most grateful if the Public Transport Authority were to implement this change to the 212 route. It would have the benefit of improving safety on Warton Road and provide a better bus service for many hundreds of homes in my electorate. We may be on the outer fringes of suburbia, but given that this change can be implemented at minimal cost, I urge the minister to give this request his serious consideration.

MR D.C. NALDER (Alfred Cove — Minister for Transport) [9.30 am]: I thank the member for Southern River for raising this issue with me. He is absolutely correct that it is a challenge to service the ever-expanding suburban area of Perth with good public transport. The member has also noted correctly that this government is up to the task, and he referred to a few recent bus service improvements in his area. I think nearly every member on both sides of the chamber could offer their own list of bus service improvements in their electorates. The government has invested enormously in the expansion of the Transperth bus route network; in fact, since 2009–10 the number of bus-service kilometres, a measure of both buses network coverage and frequently, has increased by over 20 per cent. That means more buses are servicing more suburbs at higher frequency.

Recently I was in the member's electorate and noted the expansion of the residential pockets to which he has referred. It is a challenge to service areas in which residential expansion has become segmented and detached. It is often the case that bus routes are subject to incomplete road networks. I understand that the member has been briefed by my office staff about long-term plans for some of the bus routes in his electorate that are impacted by incomplete road linkages. Transperth agrees that route 212 should extend the length of Harpenden Street all the way through to Holmes Street to service the new residential pockets that have emerged. The problem for Transperth is to find an appropriate terminus location that would allow buses to wait for a period of time and then deliver a return journey. I thank him for raising the idea of a proposed terminus outside the childcare centre and to the side of City Farmers. I applaud his initiative by also proactively seeking the support of the City of Gosnells. I will ask Transperth to investigate his proposal with a view to implementing this important bus route change for his community as soon as possible. I agree that the difference in distance and therefore cost is likely to be negligible, and in the tight fiscal circumstances in which the state currently finds itself, it is this kind of cost-neutral initiative that will improve communities to which other members could also look. I thank the member for Southern River for sharing his grievance and I really look forward to coming back to him with some positive news in the future.