

HIGH STREET–STIRLING HIGHWAY INTERSECTION UPGRADE

Grievance

MS S.F. McGURK (Fremantle) [9.35 am]: My grievance is also to the Minister for Transport. Given it is the third grievance for today, I think he is having a good morning. It is about the proposed design for the High Street–Stirling Highway upgrade. It is perhaps no surprise to the minister that I am raising this issue, given that I have raised it previously in this house. In fact, the upgrade has been the subject of numerous designs over at least the last decade, if not longer. The residents in the area affected have told me that they feel they have been consulted to within an inch of their lives over this issue, but are yet to see any actual progress.

First of all, I, together with the vast majority of residents, want to see a road upgrade. I think the minister is familiar with the area I am speaking about—that is, the intersection between High Street and Stirling Highway which is currently a T-intersection. The road design would allow for a curve, which would increase the traffic flow importantly for freight trucks moving through that area. People want to see the upgrade. Although I cannot speak on behalf of the Fremantle council, I think it, too, wants to see the upgrade. I think the minister will find some maturity on its part in the negotiations around this road upgrade. A balance needs to be considered given that a significant number of trucks move through this area, and that the truck numbers are projected only to increase. We need to get the road upgrade right for the efficient movement of trucks, but we also need to get the road upgrade right for a built-up residential area.

There are four areas in particular that I would like to raise with the minister. The first is that there could be noise amenity walls—I think that is how they are described—on the Stirling Highway side of the upgrade. However, all the way north to Canning Highway, around Duke Street in East Fremantle—the minister is probably familiar with this area—residents have felt very frustrated about the amount of noise and pollution in their backyards. I am assuming that the only way to make the noise amenity walls financially viable is to include them in this upgrade. Therefore, that is one request in relation to this upgrade.

The second area I wanted to raise is that there needs to be an east–west pedestrian access. Again, this matter was discussed in Parliament last week. It will enable residents residing in the north–east area of the intersection to cross to community facilities such as the East Fremantle Primary School. There is currently a school crossing in that area, for instance, that would not be able to continue unless there is some sort of pedestrian access. The third area I want to raise is around the degree of the curve. I understand from the council that there were negotiations to allow for a maximum of a 210-degree curve. In fact, that was agreed to in discussions between the council and the department. However, at a senior level, the department then rejected that degree of a curve; it is now saying it needs to be a 240-degree curve.

Mr T.R. Buswell: Metre.

Ms S.F. McGURK: Sorry, “metre”, not degree. Thank you. It is a 240-metre curve.

In any case, it is a discussion about the degree of the curve and how that influences how many houses need to be resumed, and the amount of A-class reserve affected in the golf course. This ensures that the upgrade will allow for the efficient movement of trucks and, at the same time, reduce the impact on the local community.

The fourth issue, which is probably the most important, is the width of the road upgrade. The minister is probably aware that this particular design will involve a trench and retaining walls. The width of the road is important because although the department is now saying that only four lanes will have traffic on them, the upgrade will allow for six lanes, and because it involves a trench with retaining walls that cannot be economically retrofitted, we must get the design right now. Stock Road and, importantly, Stirling Bridge are only four lanes wide. People are frustrated that we are looking at a massive six-lane upgrade when it will move onto only four lanes across Stirling Bridge. Given that scenario, consideration should be given to the design having only four lanes and not a six-lane reserve. Movement on that issue would go a long way towards reaching an agreement with the community on this road design, and the design progressing. I welcome seeing money allocated for this project in this year’s budget, including the forward estimates, and at the same time securing federal money—at least I hope the \$59 million of federal money is secured. I welcome the coming together of those two budget allocations so that the upgrade can proceed. But as I said, the width of the road will be the most contentious issue. I do not think the community is being recalcitrant on this point. It wants an upgrade. There has been a lot of history and a lot of toing and froing on this upgrade. People understood that it would be a four-lane upgrade, so to see the trench design, the retaining walls and a six-lane reserve has left them feeling despair. Finally, using the existing resources of the rail facilities to move freight would also be very welcomed by the Fremantle community.

MR T.R. BUSWELL (Vasse — Minister for Transport) [9.42 am]: Each time I drive south down Stirling Highway and get to the T-junction, I always look straight ahead and think to myself, “We would not be

discussing a lot of these problems if the Fremantle eastern bypass route had been left". It has gone, but it is an important point. The other important point is that the driver for the planned upgrade of High Street is road safety. Clearly, on current traffic volumes and as we head into supporting further growth of the port, traffic volumes will continue to grow, including the number of heavy vehicles. When we do the sums, even if we reach some aspirational target of 30 per cent for containers on roads, heavy vehicle movements will still increase, which is a given. I am just as frustrated as the member for Fremantle with how long this process has taken. I was just reading through my briefing notes and through some briefing notes provided to the council for its meeting of 27 November. We could have built the pyramids in the amount of time this consultation has been going on. I must say I have been frustrated with my agencies. They have engaged in a lot of consultation but there comes a time when we have to say, "That is it." I thought that time was about a year ago, but the more I read, the more I understand that this dialogue has been ongoing.

I will first address the issue about the horizontal curve radius, which is what the member was talking about. Main Roads WA changed it from 210 metres to 240 metres because, following that process and the dialogue with the City of Fremantle, it conducted an internal design review. This included a study by the Australian Road Research Board that confirmed that the horizontal curve component of 210 metres did not meet acceptable standards. I expect Main Roads to build roads to acceptable standards so that they are safe and can deal with traffic volumes. Its view is that a 240-metre horizontal curved radius is required.

The member raised a second issue about the road width. The member is right; a fair bit of trenching has to occur to smooth out some of the peaks along High Street, especially the peak near the golf course. The member can say her constituents do not want the extra lanes, but all our traffic modelling says that we will need six lanes by 2031. It would be completely unacceptable if today—in 2013, heading into 2014—knowing that we need six lanes in 17 years' time, we were to build only four lanes. We know that the cost to build those extra lanes retrospectively—I do not think we would be able to go back, but we might—would be astronomical. The upgrade will be designed to take six lanes. It may initially be constructed with six lanes if it is a value proposition, but it will definitely be designed to accommodate six lanes, because we know that the volume of traffic will grow to that whether I like it or not, whether the local community likes it or not, or whether the City of Fremantle likes it or not.

With regard to the amenity walls, I am very sympathetic to the concerns raised by the residents as far north as Duke Street. I have visited people who live in the Holland Street area and traffic noise is an issue there, and as traffic grows it will become more of an issue. Technically, the project stops at Marmion Street, and Duke Street is further north. However, I have given an undertaking to the people who live in that Duke Street area that either through this project or through some supplementary funding, we will make sure those amenity walls provide the level of amenity that they should. Main Roads is currently working through issues around pedestrian access, which is a very valid point. Traffic volumes will go up, we need to have connectivity east and west across Stirling —

Ms S.F. McGurk: It is particularly expensive if the upgrade is six lanes wide. It makes it more expensive and a much bigger project.

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: I agree. We must look at pedestrian crossings that separate the pedestrians from the traffic—I accept what the member has said on that front. Some issues must be worked through around the design and ramp angle and all that sort of stuff, but we must do our job properly on that front. I agree with the member 100 per cent on that matter and with regard to the amenity walls, but I simply cannot agree on the matter of the width because it is my strong view that that is not the right thing to do.

I spoke to our project coordinator this morning. Interestingly, Main Roads lodged—either last night or today—a formal request with the City of Fremantle to excise land from the A-class reserve, which I think is to the south of High Street, the Fremantle Public Golf Course and the Fremantle Environmental Resource Network. My hope is that the City of Fremantle concurs and does not try to frustrate this process by going off on another round of consultation and its own round of engineering, which I suspect it will. I do not know what happened at the City of Fremantle meeting on Wednesday, 27 November—I do not follow it that closely—but a motion about this matter was moved by, I think, a fellow from the socialist loony party called Worthington. I do not know what the result was—it was not on the City of Fremantle's website this morning—but we will not be agreeing to parts of that motion. The ball is now in the city's court. I have told the department to move forward with compulsory acquisition and to get legal advice about what we can do if we form the view that the city is trying to frustrate the process. I want to get on and build this upgrade and get a much safer outcome for everybody.