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**THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS MET
IN COMMITTEE ROOM 1, PARLIAMENT HOUSE, HOBART, ON THURSDAY,
3 NOVEMBER 2022**

ADDITIONAL HEARING ON THE SOUTHERN OUTLET TRANSIT LANE

THE HON. MICHAEL FERGUSON MP, MINISTER FOR INFRASTRUCTURE
AND TRANSPORT AND **DR MARTIN BLAKE**, CEO INFRASTRUCTURE TASMANIA,
WERE CALLED AND EXAMINED.

Ms DENISE McINTYRE GENERAL MANAGER, STATE ROADS, DEPARTMENT
OF STATE GROWTH, WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND
WAS EXAMINED.

CHAIR (Mr Valentine) - Welcome to members of the public who may be watching today. This is a second hearing for the Southern Outlet transit lane submission to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, a reference from the Governor. I

welcome everybody, including members of the public who may be here with us and members of the media who may be listening in as well.

I have a statement to read with respect to your appearing before the committee today. We are pleased to hear your evidence and thank you for the conducted tour we had of the site this morning. It is all very important for deliberations. Before you begin giving evidence, I want to inform you of some important aspects of committee proceedings.

A committee hearing is a proceeding in parliament and this means it receives the protection of parliamentary privilege. It is an important legal protection that allows individuals giving evidence to a parliamentary committee to speak with complete freedom without the fear of being sued or questioned in any court or place out of parliament. It applies to ensure that parliament receives the very best information when conducting its inquiries.

It is important to be aware that this protection is not accorded to you if statements that may be defamatory are repeated or referred to by you outside the confines of the parliamentary proceedings.

It is a public hearing and members of the public and journalists maybe present and this means your evidence maybe reported. Do you understand?

Ms McIntYRE - Yes.

CHAIR - I will introduce members of the committee that are here with us today.

On line we have the members Simon Wood, Tania Rattray, John Tucker, myself, Rob Valentine as Chair and Jen Butler.

Minister, seeing we have requested you to come, rather than you appearing here, you won't have an opening statement, I guess, unless you wish to have one.

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Mr FERGUSON - Thank you, Chair, good morning to you and your fellow committee members. As you requested the extra opportunity for a discussion, I am entirely in your committee's hands. If we can work within the time allocation to really meet answers to your questions, particularly noting that there was an interest by the committee in the staging of the different components of the southern project. We are completely in your hands and happy to respond as best we can. We have our hardworking officials from the Department of State Growth to support me and your committee today.

CHAIR - Thank you for appearing. We know it is not all that common for ministers to appear before a Public Works Committee but it is an important role that we all play in this and I thank you for coming. The reason you have been requested to come is that some of the questions are on policy as opposed to the infrastructure itself.

From my perspective, if I could kick off, and other members will have questions.

With respect to the timing of this particular part of the Hobart City Deal, if you like, the Southern Outlet transit lane, but this particular section from Mount Nelson down to where the current lane starts, is there a reason that this is being done now before the CBD end of those projects has been undertaken? I think the figures say that there is a two-minute advantage in this, just on its own, as opposed to having the Southern Outlet fifth lane coming from Kingborough all the way through to the bottom end of Macquarie Street, if I can put that way. Just on its own it seems a little out of time or not in the best timing to yield the best result before the softer projects are actually undertaken. Do you wish to comment on that?

Mr FERGUSON - I would love to comment. What if I were to provide some context and then invite the further detail from perhaps Martin, Dr Blake, and Ms McIntyre. The first thing I would emphasise is that this is not a new transit lane from Mount Nelson to the current transit lane or the current bus lane. This is an entirely end-to-end solution that the southern project represents, which is about providing an end-to-end solution for traffic from the south of Hobart to enter into the city and strongly promoting public transport as well and to encourage some mode shift.

The easy thing to do, if you would like, in policy terms would be to build an extra lane or to just build extra capacity on existing infrastructure. That is not what we are seeking to do because we recognise that with growth that is projected for the Kingborough and Huon Valley communities, that extra capacity, if not treated carefully and designed for a long-term social purpose is only going to fill up and we will have the existing challenges right now just come back to us in a few years' time.

It is an end-to-end solution because it is about providing park and ride facilities south of Hobart. It is also about the extra bus services. We are actually placing 65 additional express bus services each week day and promoting that extra service capability. Then you would talk about and introduce the transit lane itself, which is commonly referred to as 'the fifth lane'. People know that there is already a bus lane that commences just before Davey Street. If we do not build the extra capacity back to Olinda Grove and deliver these benefits plus, I hasten to add, I think the commonly misunderstood view that you don't deal with the bottleneck. I have to address that.

The bottleneck, if we would refer to that as the section of road which is currently three lanes between Davey and Macquarie streets at the southern-most end of Davey and Macquarie

streets where they meet. We are actually building an extra lane through there as well, which then sweeps around the corner into Macquarie. Then the treatment of the lanes in Macquarie Street and having clear ways and bus prioritisation.

If I can capture the full project in the way that I just have I believe that we are able to better articulate how this is about a suite of solutions working together for a common outcome. In terms of staging, I would like to ask my colleagues from the department to address that.

But I would make the point if we do not build the extra infrastructure, the key reason for this integrated approach is that without the additional transit lane and bus improvement measures, the additional buses will simply end up at the back of the queue currently being formed each day, particularly in the morning peaks on the Southern Outlet. We want those buses to have somewhere to go and to place some priority on them.

I would have said two weeks ago to this committee we have never done that before. We have never seen bus prioritisation through our key asset, meaning you provide a travel time advantage to commuters who are prepared to leave their car at home or at the park and ride and get on the bus and perceive they will be able to arrive at their destination sooner than if they had brought their own motor car. In the past two weeks we have had the Cam River Bridge significantly assaulted by the floods and we have had to restrict it to one lane for 13 days and we introduced bus prioritisation. It was a challenging and stressful time for the local community but what we have done there for the first time is introduced in Tasmania, for a short period of time, bus prioritisation. It is the same thinking we have always had as part of this project.

I hope that is useful context for the committee as we recognise this has been a controversial project for a number of people, particularly those like me with a sensitivity and a concern for those who have been worried about their homes, acquisitions and ultimately demolition of three properties. I might pause there and ask Dr Blake to jump in terms of the staging and is this the right sequence of steps as part of the integrated solution and then go to your further question. Would that be okay?

Dr BLAKE - Thank you, Deputy Premier, and thank you Chair. We covered a bit last time that this is one of range of different things happening concurrently. At the same time, we are working on the planning for this other people are working on common ticketing solution. Other people are working on ferries. We have the uplift in bus services. We have other people working on park and ride facilities around the city. Basically, they are all designed to ultimately work together. That is the idea and they have all been progressed concurrently. It is not a matter of necessarily one thing following another thing, following another thing. Some of these things take a lot longer to do than others and therefore need a longer lead time.

We did talk at length last time about the pressures we are facing and the difficulties of addressing those given our topography, our road network and the limited options we do have, not that ultimately the solution we are proposing is any different from what is being pursued in other cities in similar circumstances. We are not breaking new ground. We are simply moving into the next phase of city shaping which is trying to get as much capacity out of the infrastructure as possible in terms of the movement of people.

We do have a luxury in that we do not have a lot of the port conflicts the other major cities do and therefore, the problem is simpler than what they have. At the same time, we do

not have the luxury of a city that has been built around a rail network or necessarily has the topography that suits a rail network that can work on all three corridors in an integrated way.

What we are effectively left with is a bus-based transit system and then the question becomes, as we talked about last time, how we incentivise its use. It is going to be difficult and a hard grind. It is something we are going to have to chip away at over the next decade and going to be a matter of getting all those different things in place in order to encourage that behaviour change, because it is not going to be easy.

CHAIR - I understand the concept of the entire bus transit lane from Kingston all the way through. I do not think any committee member misunderstands that. This is about putting effort, time and money into this particular section before the softer options are done to see what impact they have on the overall congestion. It is argued in various areas you are increasing the capacity for such a short period of time from Mount Nelson to Davey Street in this instance, you are widening the funnel and then you are narrowing it down at the bottom end of Macquarie Street. It is actually going to result in greater congestion, the way it is being done in this sequence. That is what I was interested in terms of policy, as to doing this project now, as opposed to doing the bottom end of - as you point out about the extra lane around Macquarie and the Davey Street aspect, doing that first to see what impact that has on congestion, instead of doing this first, which is a significant amount of money and not having all the other things lined up at this point.

Not knowing how successful or otherwise the park and ride will be, because as soon as you reduce congestion, people will think they use their cars more. They will just get more cars on the Southern Outlet and the buses will not be full. If there is a congestion, you say the buses will come in at the tail end, people will still be more inclined to actually catch a bus if they know that bus is going to give them a time advantage, just as you point out. The nub of my question is, is it just about timing?

Mr FERGUSON - I would like to address that because I hold the committee in great respect. My comment in relation to misunderstanding is very squarely at a broader community. There has been a misunderstanding and there is continued belief the section of road between Davey and Macquarie will continue to be three lanes. That is a misunderstanding and a continual challenge for the department to ensure the community is fully aware of the full suite of measures.

In relation to the sequencing, it is a very fair question because I do understand the additional transit lane, fifth lane or call it what you will, the T3 lane -

CHAIR - This is called the Southern Outlet Transit Lane, fifth lane, Southern Outlet is the reference.

Mr FERGUSON - It has to be seen in parallel with the simultaneous work of building extra bus services. The concern that we hold is that building the park and ride and providing the extra bus services without a travel time advantage is not going to see the take-up and utilisation that would actually relieve congestion into the long term. Who would like to add to that?

Dr BLAKE - It is probably just for your benefit, Chair, to explain to add a bit of clarity around - particularly making Macquarie Street more efficient in general. This is something we

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discussed at great length. A lot of modelling was done around where these cars coming from the Southern Outlet into Macquarie Street are actually going. A surprisingly high proportion at that time of day were actually heading down Molle Street. We believe a lot of it is to parking. Some of it is going back streets routes and otherwise could have taken the Brooker. Nonetheless, that is what a large proportion of the vehicles are doing.

Now, we could facilitate that without the additional bus services, but to do that in isolation would simply be reinforcing the existing paradigm which is not going to solve anything in the long run. What the actual idea in doing that is to get the part from the end of the transit lane to that part of Macquarie Street flowing better. We did talk last time that in a perfect world we would actually have a bus or transit lane coming down Macquarie Street. We do not have the space to add another lane again on top of that extra turning lane we are putting in that does go down to Molle Street. That would be the perfect solution but because we don't, the effect of that is to actually make the queues on the Southern Outlet even longer than they are now.

Until the transit lane goes all the way back to Kingborough, the buses are caught at the back of that queue. This is, if you like, an interim step that actually takes you to that point. In terms of the staging, this is actually a stage that takes you then to the ultimate solution, which may actually be one day to have a bus lane at certain times of day in Macquarie Street, which I think is probably getting to why would we do it this way in relation to the cars and the buses. Part of it, to be brutally frank, is that it would be very difficult for members of parliament if we put in place something that was highly advantageous for passenger transport users, but substantially and immediately disadvantaged everyone who was using a car - because some of those people don't have a choice. It's a certain cohort of the travelling public at that time of day who do have a choice. Other people are going to other places in the city and beyond and don't have any choice but to use a car.

It is about careful balancing: how do you create a little bit of an advantage for the passenger transport users? As I said, we have to tackle that on multiple fronts. It's about a whole range of different levels of service. It was, and still is, regularly suggested to us that the private motor vehicle user should be sacrificed in obtaining that. But, it is not a realistic proposition, at least at this stage of the city's development, and at least until we have got a passenger transport system that can adequately deal with that whole range of different movements across the city that we would need to accommodate.

CHAIR - Thank you. Do other members wish to ask any questions?

Ms BUTLER - Thanks for coming in today, minister, I appreciate it. As you know, our role as the Public Works Committee is to assess a project on value for money and whether or not it is a good use of taxpayer funds.

I have a few questions about cost-benefit analysis of this particular project. My reading and understanding is that expert guides suggest anything under two minutes is not considered to meet a best practice threshold. Indeed, if they are under that two-minute period, that benefit is considered negligible. I am speaking about commuter travel time and bus travel time.

It is my understanding that the project will result in an estimated 90-second improvement time to commuters. Is that correct? I am talking about people in cars, not in buses.

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Dr BLAKE - I am not too sure off the top of my head about the commuters. Certainly, in terms of the transit lane use, what needs to be brought in mind - and we touched on this last time - is the modelling result to an average. That is across the board on a whole range of different traffic conditions in the course of a year.

It is actually much higher than that on the days when the traffic is moving slowly. On a day where the traffic is moving slowly, that could be several minutes on a given day. It's actually the travel time reliability that people value more than necessarily the time travel. Ultimately, the idea is to build towards a public transport transit system which, once complete, hopefully will - and should - end up providing a better and more reliable transport option into the city than simply private motor vehicle use.

Ms BUTLER - Thank you. Through the minister. The information from the summary report, *The Traffic Impacts of the Southern Projects*, which we have received as a committee, suggest that there is a two-minute improvement for buses as a result of this project. Has modelling been undertaken to assess the potential cost-benefit of a 90-second improvement to commuters, as well as that two minutes improvement for buses? Has that analysis or modelling been done? If there has, would the committee be able to access it?

Dr BLAKE - The cost benefit analysis in this case doesn't strictly apply in that what we have is a problem we are trying to solve at the strategic level for the long-term for the city. There are no other solutions to this problem. It's not as though there is other solutions we can measure this one against, or we can benchmark this against. The only conceivable solutions are massive changes in people's behaviour.

People have suggested, for example, that we change the times of schools and things like that, but they underestimate the disruption that causes to society, in terms of people, working parents, and various things, and how people operate in their day-to-day lives.

As I said, we have looked across the board. There is no other way of providing Hobart with the capacity for growth if the CBD is to continue to be a central area for jobs growth. In fact, even if it isn't, we've got a more difficult problem to solve in terms of moving people across the city through a very narrow and constrained space.

We briefly touched on the tunnelling work last time. We looked at it, or that option -

CHAIR - The Western Bypass.

Dr BLAKE - The Western Bypass, and going underneath. There was a range of different options that the consultants looked at in that. The impacts on people, in terms of properties and the city, are absolutely horrendous. It is something you would absolutely avoid, if you possibly could. As I said, it would require the demolition of whole blocks in the city. The land acquisition for that particular project was dozens of properties. It would be highly likely to change the whole nature of the city and may not even solve the problem of queueing on the Southern Outlet. To the extent that people still want to park in the city, there would still be a queue on the Southern Outlet after we had built that infrastructure.

I suppose that's what we are comparing this against. When we talk about the costs and the impacts of infrastructure like this to promote public transport use as opposed to -

Ms BUTLER - Cost-benefit.

Dr BLAKE - Yes. There really isn't a need to do that in numbers. It is very much at the strategic level. There really isn't another option. There isn't another way of moving people around the city better than that.

Mr FERGUSON - I will chip in if you do not mind, Ms Butler, because Ms Butler asked you about travel time advantages, not just through the day, but also through the peak. I would just like to check that we have at least provided the committee with the data and the analysis on the impacts. Have we done that? If not, we should provide it.

Dr BLAKE - There was a summary, as a committee. The committee has a summary in the GHD report. The modelling that WSP did for us and then our own analysts, did more -

CHAIR - WSP, for the record?

Dr BLAKE - Oh, I don't even know what WSP stands for.

Mr FERGUSON - That is a national consulting firm.

Dr BLAKE - National engineering consulting business. They are using their traffic engineering models, and our own people did some more work on top of that. They were literally modelling dozens and dozens of scenarios, looking for different ways of making the traffic flow better and more easily, and getting the outcome we wanted, which was to improve the travel time for the buses. As I said, ultimately, it's about reliability. It's not about the average; it's about how can you improve it the most when it is bad.

Mr FERGUSON - The advice that the Government has received in bringing forward this project - which is committed to in the City Deal and also has the strong support of the Kingborough Mayor Paula Wriedt, as she made very clear about two or three weeks ago when we opened the park and ride - this is about an end-to-end solution. There is no other solution that can alleviate the very real congestion issues that commuters are facing right now - and that is on days where there isn't, for example, somebody who has run out of fuel or had a traffic accident, and there is a blockage of a single lane. That did occur six weeks ago. There was a fairly major congestion event on the Southern Outlet, on the basis of a traffic crash that had only closed one lane.

We need this extra capacity to deal with the here-and-now issues because the current asset has outlived its usefulness. We need to build for the future, but I am very keen to not just to build an extra lane. I am very keen to build an extra lane that can start to see some mobility method change, what you might call mode shift, so that we can encourage people to choose public transport for the broader good of society and the community because it is a far more efficient way for large numbers of people to move.

We don't expect everyone to catch the bus but we'd like to create an incentive for a minority of people to shift to the bus, which will be better not just for themselves as they get a travel time advantage, but then also fewer cars in the queue.

CHAIR - I am aware that you have a limited amount of time, minister.

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Ms BUTLER - I have more to ask.

CHAIR - I will see if the other members online have questions to ask.

Ms RATTRAY - Thank you, Chair, I would just like to ask about the noise attenuation and the fact that that has not been factored into this project. It was certainly one of the matters that was raised with the committee through the first hearing process. I would be very pleased to hear from the minister or somebody at the table as to why that had not been included, given that our site visit showed that it is a very noisy area to be living right on.

Mr FERGUSON - Thank you for the question, Ms Rattray. I might ask Ms McIntyre to respond to that. It is a very fair question, noting that your committee back in 1963 had the very same question to deal with before this asset was even built in the first place and the Southern Outlet was carved through suburbs of Hobart back then, which would have been a very testing time for that committee. Noise was one of their main issues address, but -

CHAIR - Back in ancient history, minister.

Mr FERGUSON - I have the report here, but noting that it is an existing corridor and we are looking to increase the use of asset. So I might ask Ms McIntyre to respond to that further.

Ms RATTRAY - Thank you and before you hand over, minister, I am aware that the government in 2013 had some standards that they adopted in regard to noise. I am interested in what was taken into account in regard to that as well. I'm not sure if that is one for Ms McIntyre or for yourself, minister.

Mr FERGUSON - It is definitely one for Ms McIntyre who is the subject expert, but I have been working with a range of communities. When we build assets right around the state there is a set of guidelines that relate to existing corridors and the same set of guidelines deal with new corridors as well. Over to you, Denise.

Ms McINTYRE - We do have noise guidelines in place that we operate on when we are undertaking new works. Noise modelling has been undertaken for the additional lane on the Southern Outlet and that will be analysed as part of the project development and appropriate mitigation measures will be implemented as required. They may include noise walls or treatments to specific buildings if necessary. We do that as a matter of course when we are developing up our road projects.

Ms RATTRAY - It has been suggested that that will cost in the order of about \$6.5 million, a 20 per cent increase. How is that going to be funded then if it is going to be after the event or after the works have been completed enough so those analyses have been completed?

Ms McINTYRE - They will be factored into the total cost estimate of the project if they are required. I assume because it is already a fairly busy and noisy road, especially the downhill side heading into the city, that there will be some requirement for noise mitigation but the cost of that mitigation will be determined when we understand what that includes.

Ms RATTRAY - So, there is not a cost estimate at this point in time?

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Ms McINTYRE - Not at this point in time. There will be a provisional sum that will be considered as part of the total cost estimation, but until we have the analysis completed, we won't have that figure.

Ms RATTRAY - So, there will be no understanding of what the financial impact of having those noise walls installed until afterwards. Will that impact on the final design of the proposed works?

Ms McINTYRE - Any noise mitigation will need to be factored into the final design, absolutely, yes.

Ms RATTRAY - So, it will have to come in as part of the \$30.42 million.

Ms McINTYRE - It will have to come into the total cost estimate, yes.

Ms RATTRAY - Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR - Just for clarification, at the moment, it is \$30.42 million. This \$6 million, is that on top of the \$30.42 million or is it within the \$30.42 million?

Ms McINTYRE - Well, I do not have the detail of the actual cost estimate and what is included in the cost estimate, but there is usually an amount for contingency. It may be able to be included in the contingency, but it may be additional to the \$30.42 million.

CHAIR - The contingency is \$3.38 million -

Ms McINTYRE - If it is \$6 million then obviously, it will be above the contingency.

CHAIR - The question is, are the funds available should these figures be adjusted to cope with what may be a \$6 million-dollar impost?

Ms RATTRAY - I expect that is a question for the minister, chair.

Mr FERGUSON - I will jump in, I have no hesitation. We have guidelines for a reason and we follow them so we can keep good our commitments - noting if you live on a busy road, as I have in the past, you know you have - if you would then add an extra lane to it, there will be an increase that could be measured in terms of noise impacts and then we seek to mitigate that. We are very familiar with this across a range of projects around the state and the department has expertise at monitoring, measuring and then mitigating noise impacts, particularly, when it is a new asset or expanded capacity, that we have taken account of that.

The project budget is intended to canvass that and, as Ms McIntyre has indicated, there is a provisional sum for that. But you do not ever know the actual necessary outlay until you have actually fully designed and implemented. If further investment was required, of course, that would be favourably considered but I do not believe that we are anywhere near that point right now.

Mr TUCKER - A quick point of clarification: that is for the P50, the view you read out? Is that correct?

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CHAIR - Yes, it's P50.

Mr TUCKER - Not P90.

CHAIR - It is not P90 because it does not have any Commonwealth funding.

Mr TUCKER - Yes.

CHAIR - That is exactly right.

Ms RATTRAY - Thank you, Chair, it is pretty clear that it has not been costed and we will not know what the cost will be until the design has been undertaken.

CHAIR - Till the work is done. Okay, thank you.

Ms BUTLER - A question on the constructability of the project. As you will be aware 10 per cent of Tasmania's population live south of Hobart. I think 50 000 in Kingborough; 18 000 Huon Valley roughly. We know that when there is a traffic accident or a blockage on the Southern Outlet it is sometimes reduced to one lane and that backlog can go all the way back as far as Snug.

Can you quickly talk us through the construction of the project? Will there be one lane of northbound traffic during peak hour times and on work days? Will that actually be happening as this project is built and what kind of time frames would that be in place for?

Dr BLAKE - State Roads is delivering the project, which will deal with a lot of these things. It is just from a planning point of view, we do not have many big urban projects. What we have got at the moment - obviously, we have some work that has to happen on the Tasman Bridge and it will have the same issues. We have some work that will need to happen on the Domain Highway, which will have the same issues. We have work to do on the Brooker/Domain Highway interchange, which will have the same issues. I suppose we have been lucky for a long time we have not had to do these types of urban works.

Having said that, when we assisted Hobart City Council with projects like the pedestrian overpass of the Tasman Highway, that could have gone very badly closing off the Tasman Highway for a whole day. While obviously it was just a day, but it was the entire highway closed not just reduced by a lane. What was really interesting there was it did not actually create much disruption at all relative to what we thought, because originally when we modelled it, we had queues from the western side of the Tasman Bridge back to the airport and thought what could happen here? What could go wrong?

As it turned out, the answer to that problem was communication. The answer to that problem was ensuring the public was aware of what the impacts were at what time of day and for how long and how that was managed. That awareness then actually enabled people to work around it, but I think it is fair in this one, it is going to be challenging. It is going to be - because what we have done to minimise the impact on the houses, we have moved the road across to the east which is going to have some impact on the south bound traffic. The question we are going to pose to the tenderers is how best to do that given their understanding of traffic management and how this can be done. I think, Denise, we are getting some early advice on

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that at the moment, but it is going to have to be complimented by a range of Government measures to assist, which will include for example; increase in public transport availability. Essentially, there would be a whole plan around how you manage that over the given period.

Ms BUTLER - Going back to my question, do you know what kind of time frames on north bound traffic, how long will this take to construct? Has that modelling been done and will it be done during those peak hour times on work days on north bound traffic?

Mr FERGUSON - For the benefit of the committee, Infrastructure Tas has designed and planned and now State Road will implement and deliver, if you are wondering why occasionally my offices have to confer.

Ms McINTYRE - In terms of traffic management, it is going to be a complex project to manage and deliver because of the volumes of traffic that flow through the Southern Outlet. We have people working on some options and traffic management possibilities. One of the reasons why the additional 65 bus services were introduced was as part of preparing for the construction of this additional lane to ensure we can have additional bus services to allow people to make that choice. That is starting to work quite well. The uptake is increasing as time goes by.

As Martin mentioned, communication is key and we know if we allow people to plan in advance. We have learnt recently with the Cam River Bridge issue and the congestion that occurred on the Bass Highway, that communication of expected timeframes and delays is important to help people manage their day as well.

We are hoping north bound will not be significantly impaired. We will be looking at work potentially outside peak hours which could extend the total length of the works required to construct the lane. We do know there will be a relatively short period of time where south bound will be down to one lane while we move the road and we will need to manage that carefully.

Ms BUTLER - Do you have any general idea on the amount of time the work will be undertaken over? How long will the project time span will be? If we look at the Midlands for example, small sections of road do take a long time to pull together.

Ms McINTYRE - We are constrained in terms of works through a construction window weatherwise. We would expect it to be constructed over two construction seasons, but there will be limitations on the south bound for a period of several months.

Ms BUTLER - And north bound?

Ms McINTYRE - In theory, there will be limited impact on north bound, we will be working outside peak hours as much as possible.

CHAIR - Construction completion October 2024 according to the figures here. Minister, it is fair to say it is a policy thing, given the whole purpose of this project is to work towards reducing congestion, have you considered time restrictions on heavy vehicles on the Southern Outlet between 7 a.m. to 9 a.m.? With some analysis provided by the department, the extra information we requested - thank you for that and we do appreciate it - there are 4994 normal

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vehicles and 408 heavy vehicles traveling north in morning peak. Have you considered time restrictions on heavy vehicles, from a policy perspective?

Mr FERGUSON - We have taken the question because a number of local residents have asked us to look at that. I will ask Dr Blake to respond further. We took the view, after listening to the advice of the department, that it would be a significant impact on businesses and on employment. Also, it would have a dampening effect on the ability of suburbs and communities south of Hobart to operate as businesses ought to be able to and get their goods to market at times that work for them and don't present a new impediment to business success.

To restrict the movement of trucks on a state highway to certain times of the day has never been done before in Tasmania, and would be very damaging to business. I will ask Dr Blake to respond further with our conversations. We took the question in good faith from the community and responded accordingly.

Dr BLAKE - The definition of heavy vehicle in the way that we collect data is very broad. When most people think of heavy vehicles, they think of articulated semi-trailers and very large heavy rigids. The vast majority of those vehicles are not those. These are involved in delivery -

Mr FERGUSON - A bus is a heavy vehicle.

Dr BLAKE - Buses are heavy vehicles. But the vast majority of these are not what you would identify coming down Macquarie Street as being a large truck. These are some larger vehicles, and probably the majority of them are to do with contracting -

CHAIR - Like a Coca-Cola truck, that size of vehicle, is that what you are talking about? Not that I am wishing to give an ad for Coca-Cola.

Dr BLAKE - Correct. At that time of the day, the movement of those vehicles for business purposes - whether it be delivery of food to local stores or tradesmen needing materials and supplies - it wouldn't be a practical or fair treatment of that part of the economy and our community. If you did take what we would think of those larger trucks out of that number, I think it is a very small number.

CHAIR - I had to ask that question, as it was raised. Further questions, members?

Ms BUTLER - I have one more question but I understand the minister has limited time.

Mr FERGUSON - I would like to take your question.

Ms BUTLER - Thank you. It is about changes to an existing express bus lane, which does work quite efficiently. It seems to me that it's seen to be beneficial and there will be a reduction in travel time because it is going to be turned into a T3 lane. I can't get my head around how that will actually decrease the time for buses to travel, when you're also including vehicles in that lane. Currently, it is an express bus lane. It's just for buses and it's efficient because it's just for buses. I can't understand the reasoning behind the addition of commuters in that bus lane. Can you talk me through that?

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Dr BLAKE - It is a good question. It is generally accepted that there are stages as to how you can efficiently use road space to move people. This is documented in things like the national Austroads guidelines. Essentially, the idea is not to leave spare capacity, or as little as possible. If you can use the same space to incentivise carpooling, in this instance, then that is an efficient use of the space rather than having what looks like a relatively low density of buses to begin with.

As the density of buses increases, then you start winding back some of those measures, because you are moving even more people using that same amount of road space than using a T3 lane. It's all to do with how many people you can move in a given lane. And so, while bus densities allow it, you can make it available for T3s. As the bus patronage gets up to very high numbers, I think that's when we start talking about the usage of a lane in Macquarie Street as well, for example, for that purpose. It is just making sure you are not leaving spare capacity that can be otherwise used. In this case, we are trying to incentivise efficient behaviour in terms of the travelling public at the same time.

Ms BUTLER - So, the T3 lane isn't that much about greater time efficiency; it's about changing the use. It's not about the efficiency of the people on the buses or the people in the cars?

Dr BLAKE - Yes, because the advantage is that they are getting a more reliable journey, in terms of the time. If it gets to the point where the T3 utilisation does create issues for bus travel reliability, you then make it an exclusive. It's that staging; a commonly accepted approach. Where you're able to, topographically, then they would even suggest, at an extreme, when the buses start to become full, then you're talking about rail. And that's the point where you talk about rail. You move through the gradations.

CHAIR - Minister, just one last question on the park and ride or the facilities in Kingborough and down at Firthside and Huntingfield. Clearly, a small percentage of vehicles would use that because it's simply not big enough.

Do you have a vision it will be expanded in any way to meet demand? Clearly, if money is being spent on this project, with the expectation that park and ride services will work efficiently and therefore give good reason for doing this project, it would have to be much bigger. What's the circumstance there?

Mr FERGUSON - Thanks, a great question. The answer is, it's an open question. I believe it has 174 car spaces capacity at the moment, so potential exists. If that meets capacity in the future, that would be a good thing. It would be an indication that our strategy has worked and it may well be that a future government would need to give thought to partnering with councils to do more park and rides.

Noting as well, that the park and rides are also designed for bicyclists who ride to the park and ride and jump on the bus. It is also what's flippantly called the 'kiss and ride' - being dropped off there, and jumping on the bus - as well as for those who are able to walk to the park and ride. It's not all about the motor car. But, definitely to your question, potential exists for future growth there and the Government has provided some \$20 million to expand park and rides around the south of the southern area.

CHAIR - That's over and above what's been spent already?

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Mr FERGUSON - That's over and above. So, park and ride at Firthside and Huntingfield is funded through Southern Projects. That was our election commitment of \$20 million.

CHAIR - Quite clearly, there is 4994 in the peak period going north; 174 doesn't take a lot out of that. That is why I asked the question.

Mr FERGUSON - These are baby steps for our Government. We have never done park and ride before. And we've never before done a T3 lane with bus prioritisation. These are new initiatives to deal with contemporary problems. Living in our beautiful state, we have been able to rely on the motor car for our personal mode of travel and more or less rely on it. But, as the city of Hobart with infrastructure constraints, has met urban and peri-urban significant growth and increased demand on those infrastructure assets, we've got to be innovative. That's why it would've been easy for me and the Government to simply say we are going to build a new lane for your existing usage.

What we've had to do is think more creatively and this is more challenging for some people. We have to provide that travel time incentive for people who are prepared to car pool or jump on the bus so we can drive that change of use in order to get the wider community benefit. Otherwise, we will be back here having arguments about it, not with committee, but generally in the community and the parliament. And we will be having more arguments about how you can flatten more domestic houses in order to build more lanes. It just won't be possible - particularly when we recognise the very significant restrictions that we have on Macquarie Street. You know, 75 per cent of people wanting to use these assets are trying to get into the city. We've looked at a range of other proposals, including the tunnelling idea, where you are looking at billions of dollars. This is our best opportunity to build infrastructure for current challenges and to allow traffic managers in the future to evolve their responses. If we can't build this, we won't be able to provide any other solutions to the community, which they are crying out for.

CHAIR - Thank you for the answer.

Ms RATTRAY - Just a quick one, in regard to the consultation or conversation that you are having with Collegiate, the school that jams a lot of congestion at the top end. There was some discussion about that, but we have not touched on it today. We've have been told there is opportunity to take some of that congestion away if they had somewhere to drop students or parents and carers and the like.

Dr BLAKE - Yes. Not part of this project, obviously; but separately, we are having conversations with people, residents, and businesses in Macquarie Street, including the school. It has been raised over a very long time. We have had complaints raised with us from the community - particularly, south of Hobart - about the practice of parents dropping children off at the side of the road in Collegiate around the school, and the impact that that has on the flow of traffic, as well as safety concerns. That has been a long-running issue. I think this is the first time there has been a serious conversation with the school about it, and what some of the options might be to do it differently.

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As I said, not necessarily part of this project, but it is something that we are talking to the school about now, as well as other residents and businesses in Macquarie Street, about how things could be done a bit differently that would help everyone.

Ms RATTRAY - It was raised with the committee during this reference. Also, if we are talking about congestion - which is the reason that we are looking at this reference - then I would say it is very relevant. If you are looking at all options, I would suggest that that is one that needs to be progressed as soon as possible. That is my view.

Dr BLAKE - It is being progressed concurrently. We have a project, as the minister said, to reshape Macquarie Street. It includes moving the lane around and making some changes in the street. It has been progressed as part of that, which will be happening concurrently with this project.

Ms RATTRAY - To get that one done prior might help your next project perhaps. Advice only, minister, from a resident!

Mr FERGUSON - Always open to those good ideas. Seriously, that is a contemporary engagement that is under way right now.

Ms RATTRAY - Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR - It has been suggested that if they were to drop off in Davey Street, rather than in Macquarie, it would take it around the corner where there is less congestion.

Final question - ferries are a way of getting people from Kingston and Blackmans Bay to Hobart. It would take a lot of stress and strain off of the Southern Outlet. Do you have anything to share about any vision in that regard, minister?

Mr FERGUSON - Yes. A separate project, obviously, but there is potential for ferry expansion. The Derwent Ferry has been wildly successful. We have had about 100 000 people travel on the Derwent Ferry in the first year of its operation. Most of those people have expressed through survey that they otherwise would have travelled on the Tasman Bridge, so that has provided some level of relief. It's an open question as we continue to lock-in the future of that existing operation. We're now working with the new Australian Government, which promised \$20 million to expand. We are working with the Australian Government, as I believe they will, more or less, directly fund opportunities for expansion in other places around Hobart. I don't believe any firm commitments have been made around that.

CHAIR - In terms of Kingborough and Margate?

Mr FERGUSON - In terms of specific locations. Sitting here today, I wouldn't have any confidence in saying to the committee that a ferry from Kingston, say, to Hobart city would provide significant relief on the existing infrastructure. I would be very doubtful of that. It is a fairly long journey as it would be a proposed ferry operation from Kingston to Hobart. I suspect it would be convenient to a number of people in the community. In terms of moving large numbers of people quickly through that narrow peak of, say, two hours, it may be of value, but I suspect it would be of some limited value. We are nowhere near seeing a business case on that at this time.

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CHAIR - Depends on the speed of the ferry, I suppose.

Mr FERGUSON - And its capacity and its frequency.

CHAIR - And the 30-year Infrastructure Strategy - is that a current strategy or not?

Dr BLAKE - Chair, that was a draft that was prepared a number of years ago.

CHAIR - Yes, it was. 2010, I think.

Mr FERGUSON - No.

Dr BLAKE - No, not quite that far back; but a long time ago. there is a more contemporary version that, I think, my predecessor prepared at least in draft form. It is very much on our to-do list to and revisit that.

CHAIR - It is still a draft?

Dr BLAKE - Correct.

CHAIR - That's all I wanted to know.

Mr FERGUSON - Chair, that was about 2019 or 2020.

CHAIR - 2019, was it? I couldn't find a date on it, but I thought 2010 was mentioned.

Dr BLAKE - That looks like a different document than the more recent one.

Mr FERGUSON - COVID-19 put that right on the backburner while we focused on other assets.

CHAIR - Thank you for that. Thank you, minister, for appearing today to provide some information for us to consider.

I need to read the statement to those who have been sworn today. As we advised at the commencement of the evidence, what you have said here to us today is protected by parliamentary privilege. Once you leave the table, you need to be aware that privilege does not attach to comments you may make to anyone, including the media, even if you are just repeating what you said to us. Do you understand that? Thank you.

Mr FERGUSON - Thank you to the committee for your time. May I just finish with a couple of brief points?

CHAIR - You certainly can.

Mr FERGUSON - Although not part of the invitation to be here today, I will take on notice, and assure the committee, that noise mitigation is a standard practice when we build any major new infrastructure to make sure that we meet our obligations under the guidelines. We want to look after people. It's the same reason that we have reduced down to three the number of homes that would be need to be acquired for demolition to make way for the new

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infrastructure. The people to my left and right and their teams have worked really hard to minimise the impact on the community. Faithful to my word on that.

There is no other solution for mitigating and dealing with, not just current congestion, but known future growth in southern areas of Hobart.

I will say in my final message here that we will have to work through this, not just as a Public Works Committee, but the parliament has to work together on this going forward. Building new infrastructure that is of significance, particularly through existing assets, where boundary adjustments and demolitions are required, is never easy. It's always hard. But, faced with the alternative of not doing it, is a far worse outcome for the broader community.

Ms Butler asked about constructability. Very fair questions. There will be impacts. We will have to work through that very carefully so that we can stage the works in a way that the short-term pain is worth the long-term gains that we will see.

As I close, thank you for your time. I commend you to your considerations from here.

CHAIR - Thank you, minister. Thank you, officers. The session is complete.

Mr FERGUSON - Thank you.

THE WITNESSES WITHDREW.