



## **DAVID MORRIS MP**

**Member for Mornington  
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Environment  
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### **More Bureaucrats Won't Fix Our Public Transport Problems.**

**Legislative Assembly 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2010**

**Mr MORRIS** (Mornington) — As perhaps a follow-up to the member for Bundoora, the rail system would not be in the mess it is now in had former Premier Bracks in 1999, almost as his first action upon being elected, not cancelled an order for new trains.

Before I move to the contents of the bill I express my absolute disgust at the way this major piece of legislation is being rushed through the house in very short order. The way the program has been set this week means that a large part of Tuesday afternoon and virtually all day Thursday has to be devoted to the self-indulgent, self-congratulatory and totally ineffectual Premier's statement made yesterday.

The bill is a major rewrite of the legislation. Again this government is engaged in deception, again it is engaged in blurring the lines of responsibility and accountability. This bill is about creating a series of agencies which can take the blame when things go wrong, as things will inevitably go wrong with the government's unfunded \$38 billion Victorian transport plan. It will fail.

We are now in a situation where spin is entering the statute book. There is absolutely nothing this bill will do to improve public transport either in the metropolitan area or on the fringes. I am particularly concerned about the impact of the unfunded Victorian transport plan, and specifically its impact on the Peninsula Link project.

The budget papers provided no money for the Peninsula Link project. The begging bowl was still firmly thrust out in the direction of the commonwealth government. The more recent budget information paper 1 has two total estimated investment (TEI) figures. On page 5 the TEI is listed as \$750 million; on page 80 the TEI is listed as \$354.3 million. There is an explanation for this, but it is not a particularly plausible one. Whether we need \$277 million or \$672 million to fund the shortfall does not matter; either way we are way short of the funds required.

On 15 January the Minister for Roads and Ports made an announcement regarding the successful private partner. Buried at the bottom of the press release was a comment that as well as operating the roadway for 25 years, that partner will receive quarterly payments from the state government. Of course we are not privy to the scale of those payments; presumably they will cover the \$396 million or larger gap.

They would have to be pretty large quarterly payments, even if they are stretched over 25 years. If the budget position goes sour, and it is definitely the way we are heading — we will be \$30 billion-plus in debt by the end of the forward estimates period — there is no guarantee that the government will not have to find some other way to pay for this road and keep up the mortgage payments.

All we have so far is the minister saying, 'Trust me'. If he is fair dinkum, and if he really wants to convince the people of the Mornington Peninsula and Frankston that he will not do what has been done to EastLink — and as a regular EastLink user I know exactly how much of a hole it makes in my pocket — he should be legislating now and saying, 'No, there will be no tolls', not simply saying, 'Trust me'. I challenge the minister to write that into the bill.

Of course roads are not the only means of transport on the peninsula. We have trains down to Frankston and a fairly basic bus service. We have good bus operators, but the service they are allowed by the government to provide is a pretty basic one.

It is interesting to look at the train figures for the year concluded December 2009. We have had monthly reporting for some years. We now have a new definition of reliability: percentage of timetable not delivered. We do not have cancellations any more, we have percentage of timetable not delivered — and then there is a whole formula for how that is calculated.

This is typical of the government's approach: if you do not like the results, if you do not like the performance you are getting, change the definition or the indicator. We have also got a variation in terms of punctuality.

If you look at the Frankston line, you will see that over that 12-month period one in four trains failed to arrive on time. In the summer months — the hotter months — it was even worse: one in three trains failed to arrive on time. It improved in the winter, but as soon as the weather warmed up punctuality started to drop away again.

There is not one word in this bill that will do anything to solve the problems of the rail system. It is about spin, definitions and creating options for blame — it is about everything except fixing the problem.

I mentioned that the Mornington Peninsula had an inadequate bus service; it is the only option. If you happen to live in Mount Martha on the 781 bus route and you need to get to Frankston before 6.45 a.m., bad luck; the buses simply do not run that early. If you are a young person who lives on the 784 route and you want to go out in the evening at the normal time that young people go out these days — well after 10 o'clock at night — bad luck, because on weekdays the last bus leaves your neighbourhood at 9.15 p.m. and on weekends it is 9.08 p.m. The 781 route is slightly better, but not very much.

It is basics that need attention in the public transport arena. We do not need grand plans or fancy structures; what we need locally are services that run on time, at a reasonable frequency and according to a timetable that meets the needs of users. None of those conditions are met at the moment.

In roads, apart from the freeway and the bypass, attention needs to be paid to black spots, speed humps and traffic lights in the Mornington electorate — all the basic things that are not being looked at. However, the biggest thing we need is a Peninsula Link without tolls. None of these issues will be in any way improved by the bill; it is simply a device to disguise 10 years of neglect of the public transport system.

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