

Community Public Transport Advisory Committee

MINUTES

Section 5.8 of the *Local Government Act 1995*

Thursday 1 June 2017

Unconfirmed Minutes

These minutes were approved for distribution on 19 June 2017.

Stan Scott

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

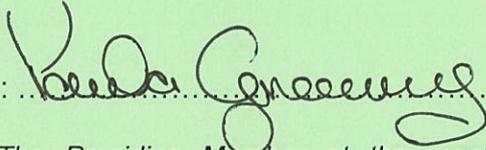
When the CEO approves these Minutes for distribution they are in essence "Unconfirmed" until the following Community and Public Transport Advisory Committee Meeting, where the Minutes will be confirmed subject to any amendments made by the members of the Committee.

The "Confirmed" Minutes are then signed off by the Presiding Person.

Attachments that formed part of the Agenda, in addition to those tabled at the Meeting are incorporated into a separate attachment to these Minutes.

Confirmed Minutes

These minutes were confirmed at a meeting held on 10-8-2017

Signed: 

Note: The Presiding Member at the meeting at which the minutes were confirmed is the person who signs above.

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ATTACHMENTS *with separate index follows Item 11.*

Shire of Toodyay

COMMUNITY AND PUBLIC TRANSPORT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

MINUTES

1. DECLARATION OF OPENING / ANNOUNCEMENT OF VISITORS

The CEO declared the meeting open at 5.00pm.

2. ELECTION OF A CHAIRPERSON

The CEO called for nominations for the position of Chairperson of the Community and Public Transport Advisory Committee.

Cr Greenway nominated herself for the position of Chairperson of the Committee.

As there were no further nominations Cr Greenway was duly elected Chairperson of the Community and Public Transport Advisory Committee.

Cr Greenway assumed the chair.

3. RECORDS OF ATTENDANCE / APOLOGIES

3.1 RECORD OF ATTENDANCE

Members

Cr P Greenway	Council Member/Chairperson
Cr J Dow	Council Member
Cr S Craddock	Council Member
Mr R Wilkinson	Community Member
Mr G Nelmes	Community Member
Mr B Neville	Community Member
Mr S Scott	Staff Member
Mrs A Bell	Manager Community Development

3.2 APOLOGIES

Nil

4. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

There were no disclosures of interest.

5. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

Nil

5.1 Matters arising from previous minutes

Nil

5.2 Review of the CPTAC Status Report

Nil

6. BUSINESS LEFT OVER FROM PREVIOUS MEETING (if adjourned)

Nil.

7. REPORTS OF OFFICERS

A media release from the Transport Minister was tabled at 5.10pm.

7.1 Retention of the Avon Link Service

Date of Report:	25 May 2017
File Reference:	COC16/COM15
Author:	S Scott – Chief Executive Officer
Responsible Officer:	S Scott – Chief Executive Officer
Attachments:	1. Announcement by Hon P Fletcher; 2. Official Responses; and 3. ABC Interview of Stan Scott;

PURPOSE

To consider further action that can be taken in respect to the retention of the Avon Link Service.

BACKGROUND

In a Media Release (9 May 2017) by the Hon Paul Fletcher MP Minister for Urban Infrastructure (in a joint release with Darren Chester Minister for Infrastructure and Transport) the Turnbull-Joyce Federal Government announced it will deliver a \$20 billion investment in rail (both passenger and freight). \$10 billion is for a *National Rail Program* for urban and regional passenger rail projects that will reduce travel times, connect people to jobs and opportunity and provide families and businesses with affordable options on where to live and invest (**Att.1**).

Additional commitments to rail in the 2017/2018 Budget include:

- \$792 million for Perth Metronet; and
- \$20 million to progress business cases for faster rail connections between our major cities and their surrounding regional centres.

Council resolved at an Ordinary Meeting of Council held in May 2017 (Council Resolution No 81/05/17) as follows:

That Council:

1. *Authorise the CEO to lobby strongly, at State level, for the retention of the Avon Link Rail Service; and*
2. *Authorise the CEO to strongly encourage the support of the CEO's of other affected Local Governments in respect to the retention of the Avon Link Rail Service*

At an Avon Regional Organisations (AROC) Meeting held in February 2017, RDA Wheatbelt gave a presentation to the meeting with the aim of discussing local issues that may have a Federal connection, and establishing a local

government list of priority regional projects. It was at this meeting that the future of local government roads was discussed in respect to the impact of the loss of Tier 3 Rail. Obtaining State support to link grain freight and direct transport routes as well as aiming to work strongly with road groups to have an agreed priority structure was discussed.

Council had previously resolved at an Ordinary Meeting of Council held in December 2016 (Council Resolution No 139/12/16) as follows:

1. *Confirm that the Lobbying Priorities of the Shire of Toodyay are as follows:*
 - (a) *Sport and Recreation Precinct;*
 - (b) *Avon Link Enhancement Project;*
 - (c) *Toodyay Bypass / Heavy Haulage Route; and*
 - (d) *The Duke Street Pedestrian Overpass.*

Following Council's resolution in December 2016 the CEO had written to 12 Parliamentarians stating:

Two years ago the Avonlink was slated for closure, but was saved thanks to a three year funded trial with a new timetable and additional services, funded in part by Royalties for Regions. This trial resulted from extensive community support, including in particular the Toodyay Avonlink Supporters Group, and commitment from local politicians.

Results of the trial have been less than we would have liked. This kind of project takes a long time to gather momentum and just as it appeared that usage was on a consistent upward trajectory Brookfield Rail commenced extensive track works in the Avon Valley. This track work is entirely appropriate and indeed essential to ensure the ongoing safety of the line. It has however created serious issues with the reliability of the rail passenger services, to the extent that many commuters have had to make alternative arrangements.

This has seriously disrupted the Avonlink trial and the results will not be an accurate reflection of the potential for the rail service. Further the recently announced plan for a new Avon Zoo adds another driver to continue the Avonlink service. We have serious concerns that the service may be cancelled due to a flawed trial, and the positive drivers that will result from new projects and projected population growth will be lost.

For this reason we urge you to support an extension of the trial for another three years. Better still would be confirming that this important form of public transport to support the development of Toodyay and Northam be confirmed as an ongoing service.

Seven acknowledgements were received, three of which included official responses (**Attz.2**)

OFFICER COMMENT

On 17 May 2017 the CEO was interviewed by the ABC in respect to the Avon Valley Rail Link (**Attz.3**).

In relation to the budget announcement it is heartening that the Federal Government has indicated a willingness to support rail projects, I am not sure that it will have a significant impact on the Avonlink. The Federal

announcement is about investment in infrastructure (building rail, acquiring rolling stock) and not about running costs. The State will still have to be convinced that the level of subsidy inherent in the delivery of this service is justified. The main differences between the Avonlink and metropolitan rails services are:

- Diesel versus electric;
- Population density, the high density standing room only rail services at peak times cross subsidise the empty services off peak; and
- The State government owns the metro tracks, while the country track is owned on long term lease to Brookfield. The PTA makes a substantial payment to Brookfield every year for track access. There is no equivalent payment for access by buses to roads.

Some of the arguments for retention are:

- The significant disruption to schedules for the recent essential track upgrade in the Avon Valley undermined the customer base that depends on reliable services;
- The new Midland Hospital is still relatively new and the potential impact of this new facility on the demand for rail services needs more time to have an effect;
- TransWA are in the public transport business not in the tourism or marketing business. They do an excellent job of delivering rails services but do not have the same expertise in other fields;
- Part of the solution to Perth's explosive expansion north and south and resultant congestion is to encourage more expansion to the east. The Avonlink is an investment in a high growth future. The travel time by Public Transport from Toodyay to Perth and Two Rocks to Perth or Mandurah to Perth is almost identical.
- The Avonlink is the only new country passenger rail service in Perth in the last 20 years. If we lose it we will never get it back; and
- The road toll in WA is the highest per capita in Australia, the Wheatbelt is the worst region in WA and Toodyay Road, the alternative route to Perth by car or bus is the worst road in the Wheatbelt. It is safer to drive in Thailand or Rwanda than it is on Toodyay Road. It is the worst road in the worst region in the worst state in Australia. Until the road is fixed the train is essential.

The Shire of Toodyay is in a peculiar position. There is a universal view that rail is good, but we are facing losing the Avon Link and extensive closure of Tier 3 railway lines. We need to somehow link retaining the Avon Link to the rail as being "good mantra."

A joint Toodyay Chamber of Commerce and Industry / Shire of Toodyay and Avon Link Working Group Council Forum is scheduled for 30 May 2017 to discuss the "Let's Brand and then Market Toodyay" project, and the Review of the Shire Strategic Plan. At the Forum there may be opportunity to briefly discuss this commitment by the Federal Government to invest in rail.

A news story on Wednesday 31 May 2017 via Facebook in respect to the Avon Link was as follows:

 **AvonLink Supporters**
6 hrs - 🌐

Did you catch the ABC radio interview at 6.45am this morning with ALSG chair Di Granger. Just before this beautiful sunrise and the morning train pulling into Toodyay. 😊 The ALSG is ecstatic that we still get to keep the train 'on the tracks'. Several weeks ago the prospects didn't look encouraging. In response to FB comments (in the earlier post below) and a few calls to us this morning...once the Minister has made the official announcement and we are aware of the details, we will provide an update. But at this stage it looks to be the 'bookend' morning and evening services (due to the numbers). There is however, 'talk' of new buses being considered for during the day. The ALSG will seek to be part of any discussions around adjustment into the future, and continue to advocate around the needs of the train community. For now, this retaining of a daily service is a great outcome.



Morning train 31 May 2017

OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATION

The Community and Public Transport Advisory Committee consider strategies for promotion of the Avon Link Service to recommend to Council.

At the meeting, the members of the Community and Public Transport Advisory Committee considered strategies for promotion of the Avon Link Service.

MOTION/CPTAC RESOLUTION NO. 01/06/17

MOVED Cr Greenway

The Community and Public Transport Advisory Committee recommended to Council as follows:

1. That Council acknowledge the efforts of the Avon Link Supporter's Group Members past and present in retaining the Avon Link Service;

2. That Council writes to Minister Saffioti, Hon Darren West MLC, Mia Davies MLA and Shane Love MLA to thank them for their ongoing support for the Avon Link Service;
3. Invite Tim Woolerson to the next Committee meeting in the next two to three weeks;
4. Email details of revised services to committee members.

MOTION CARRIED

8. REPORTS OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS

8.1 Purpose of the Committee

MOTION/CPTAC RESOLUTION NO. 02/06/17

MOVED Cr Greenway

SECONDED B Neville

The Community and Public Transport Advisory Committee recommended to Council that the purpose of the Community and Public Transport Committee be as follows:

1. To develop plans and advocacy positions for consideration by Council in the areas of community and public transport including but not limited to:
2. Identifying current, emerging and/or potential public transport issues likely to result from a growing, ageing and more diverse Shire;
3. Identifying current, emerging and/or potential public transport accessibility issues likely to affect people with disability or with mobility issues across the Shire;
4. Provide advice on public transport projects, initiatives and strategies; and
5. Investigate other forms of public transport that may enhance the Avon Link and Merredin Link Rail Services.

MOTION CARRIED

9. NEW BUSINESS OF AN URGENT NATURE

Nil

10. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Community and Public Transport Advisory Committee is scheduled to be held on 10 August 2017 commencing at 5.00pm.

11. CLOSURE OF MEETING

The Chairperson declared the meeting closed at 5.55pm.

Attachments to Minutes

Community and Public Transport Advisory Committee

Thursday 1 June 2017

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

5.3 Updated Status Report	1
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REPORTS OF OFFICERS

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STATUS REPORT

Community and Public Transport Advisory Committee

Including Recommendations made to Council, Action List and Completed items

Recommendations made to Council					
Meeting Date	Item	Title/Description of Item	Resp. Officer	Proposed / Notes / Actions to be taken	Deadline
1/6/2017 CPTAC Meeting	7.1	Retention of the Avon Link Service	CEO	1. That Council acknowledge the efforts of the Avon Link Supporter's Group Members past and present in retaining the Avon Link Service; 2. That Council writes to Minister Safiotti, Hon Darren West MLC, Mia Davies MLA and Shane Love MLA to thank them for their ongoing support for the Avon Link Service; 3. Invite Tim Woolerson to the next Committee meeting in the next two to three weeks; 4. Email details of revised services to committee members.	June 2017 Council Meeting
1/6/2017 CPTAC Meeting	8	Reports of Committee Members	CEO	That the purpose of the Community and Public Transport Committee be as follows: To develop plans and advocacy positions for consideration by Council in the areas of community and public transport including but not limited to: 1. Identifying current, emerging and/or potential public transport issues likely to result from a growing, ageing and more diverse Shire; 2. Identifying current, emerging and/or potential public transport accessibility issues likely to affect people with disability or with mobility issues across the Shire; 3. Provide advice on public transport projects, initiatives and strategies; and 4. Investigate other forms of public transport that may enhance the Avon Link and Merredin Link Rail Services.	June 2017 Council Meeting



STATUS REPORT

Community and Public Transport Advisory Committee

Including Recommendations made to Council, Action List and Completed items

ACTION LIST				
Meeting Date	Item	Title/Description of Item	Resp. Officer	Status / Action / Notes or Comment

COMPLETED RECOMMENDATIONS THAT HAVE GONE TO COUNCIL (and ACTIONS Completed)					
Meeting Date	Item	Title/Description of Item	Resp. Officer	Status / Action / Notes	RESOLUTION NO.

AvonLink train service to be saved

1/06/2017 8:45 AM

- AvonLink train to continue servicing Avon Valley communities
- Poor patronage means the expanded AvonLink trial will end on June 30
- McGowan Government to fund an extra \$800,000 to maintain once-daily return services from Northam and three return services per week to Merredin

The AvonLink train service will continue despite the previous Liberal National Government ceasing funding for the service beyond June 30, 2017.

AvonLink will revert to one return service per weekday following an unsuccessful trial of a significantly expanded timetable.

Poor patronage, and a shortage of funding beyond June 2017, has prompted the McGowan Government to end the trial of expanded services five months early.

The trial started in December 2014 and virtually trebled the number of Midland-Toodyay-Northam trips on offer.

However, the boost in services only resulted in a small increase in total passenger numbers while the average amount of passengers per service dropped.

An average weekday AvonLink train was at 21 per cent occupancy before the trial but that figure has since dropped to 15 per cent - an average of 16 passengers per service on a train with a capacity of 116.

From July 1, 2017, there will be return services running once a day from Monday to Friday, which is the level the AvonLink ran at before the trial. The last service of the expanded trial will run on Saturday, July 1.

MerredinLink services will revert to the pre-trial timetable offering return services between Perth and Merredin on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

There will be no AvonLink weekend or special event train services.



Hon Rita Saffioti BBus MLA
Minister for Transport;
Planning; Lands

Comments attributed to Transport Minister Rita Saffioti:

"The State Government is very supportive of public transport, in regional WA as well as the greater metropolitan area.

"I'm glad we could continue to fund AvonLink and we will be engaging with relevant stakeholders in tourism, ageing and local shires to discuss opportunities to optimise the train service.

"The previous government had not funded AvonLink beyond June 30, meaning we had to find an additional \$800,000 to retain the service.

"I would like to thank the community representatives involved with the AvonLink working group and the supporter groups over the last three years who supported the service."

Minister's office - 6552 5500



The Hon Paul Fletcher MP
Minister for Urban Infrastructure

[Home](#) > [Fletcher](#) > [Media Releases](#) > [2017](#) > [May](#) > \$20 billion investment in rail

\$20 billion investment in rail

MEDIA RELEASE
BUDGET INFRA 03/2017
09 May 2017

JOINT RELEASE WITH:
Darren Chester

The Turnbull-Joyce Government is delivering a \$20 billion investment in rail that will cut congestion in cities, grow the regions and create thousands of new jobs.

This long-term investment in passenger and freight rail will boost the national economy, and includes:

- A \$10 billion National Rail Program for urban and regional passenger rail projects that reduce travel times, connect people to jobs and opportunity and provide families and businesses with affordable options on where to live and invest.
- An additional \$8.4 billion to build the Melbourne to Brisbane Inland Rail, the Commonwealth's biggest rail project in 100 years, that will build a dedicated high productivity rail freight corridor also saving lives by getting freight off roads and onto rail;
- Additional commitments to rail in the 2017–18 Budget:
 - \$500 million to upgrade regional rail networks in Victoria;
 - \$792 million for Perth Metronet;
 - \$30 million towards development of a business case for Melbourne Airport Rail Link;
 - \$20.2 million for Murray Basin Rail building on our previous commitment, and
 - \$20 million to progress business cases for faster rail connections between our major cities and their surrounding regional centres.

The 2017–18 Budget demonstrates this Government's commitment to transform Australia's passenger and freight networks to meet our growing transport needs, improve liveability and boost national productivity.

National Rail Program

The Turnbull-Joyce Government is committing \$10 billion to a transformational National Rail Program for rail projects in our cities, as well as better connections between cities and regional centres.

This investment progresses the Government's Smart Cities agenda, recognising that urban rail projects have the capacity to be city-shaping by providing opportunities for urban regeneration, unlocking land for affordable housing, and promoting better integration between land use and transport planning.

Our investment in passenger rail will benefit hundreds of thousands of commuters each day through cutting congestion and travel times while improving access to jobs, education and vital services.

There are several once-in-a-generation, city-shaping rail projects around the country at different stages of development. These transformational rail projects have long planning and construction lead times, with high capital costs.

The Government will continue to work with state governments early in the planning process to ensure that Commonwealth funding is targeted to support these high priority projects.

Commonwealth funding for these projects will be linked to a tailored package of funding and financing measures for each project to ensure that the appropriate balance of Commonwealth, state and private funding and financing is leveraged.

This announcement builds on the current work that the Government is doing in partnership with state governments to develop urban rail plans for our five largest cities and their surrounding regions.

The Government's record \$10 billion investment in rail is in addition to \$792 million for Perth Metronet and \$30 million for the development of a business case for the Melbourne Airport Rail Link, a project that is expected to enhance Melbourne's urban rail network and role as international gateway. The transport corridor between Melbourne's CBD and Melbourne Airport has been identified by Infrastructure Australia as one of the most heavily congested in Melbourne, reducing the amenity, liveability and commuter experience of the surrounding suburbs.

Connecting Regional Australia

The Government's National Rail Program provides regional Australia with a fair share of the \$10 billion commitment to deliver faster, more reliable rail connections both between regional cities and our capitals, and within regions themselves. Better rail services have the potential to completely transform our regional communities, allowing easier access to jobs, health services and affordable housing.

The Government's initial focus will be regional rail in Victoria, with an additional \$500 million in the 2017–18 Budget to build a better regional rail network with improvements to the North-East Line, the Gippsland Line, and the Geelong Line, as well as undertaking a study into improving the Shepparton Line.

Faster Rail Connecting Capital Cities and Regional Centres

The Turnbull-Joyce Government recognises the important role that rail can play in connecting capital cities and regional centres. These connections provide a means to rejuvenate regional centres while mitigating population growth pressures in our major cities including congestion, housing affordability, job accessibility and liveability.

Under the 2017-18 Budget's Faster Rail initiative, the Government has committed \$20 million to support the development of up to three formal business cases for faster rail connections between our major cities and regional centres. The Government will call for submissions from state governments and the private sector later this year.

The business cases will then be considered for potential project funding in future years.

Delivering Inland Rail

The Government has committed to finance the Melbourne to Brisbane Inland Rail project by a combination of an additional \$8.4 billion equity investment in the Australian Rail Track Corporation and a public private partnership for the most complex elements of the project. Inland Rail will provide a high-capacity freight link between Melbourne and Brisbane through regional Australia to better connect our products to domestic and international markets.

The Inland Rail project will drive national productivity and reducing the number of trucks in our cities and on our regional roads.

The project will sustain thousands of jobs, with up to 16,000 direct and indirect jobs to be supported at the peak of construction.

The 126km section from Toowoomba to Kagaru, including large scale tunnelling, will be delivered through a Public Private Partnership. Under this delivery arrangement, the private sector will design, build, finance and maintain this section of the railway over a long-term concession period.

These funding arrangements will provide effective risk management and harness innovative design solutions for this nationally significant project, which is the biggest Commonwealth rail construction project since the transcontinental rail link across the Nullabor was finished 100 years ago.

Inland Rail is a national project that provides an opportunity for the states and the Commonwealth to work together to drive the Nation's prosperity through regional development and strategic transport investment. Construction of this transformational project will start this year.

The Government has previously committed nearly \$900 million towards planning and land acquisition.

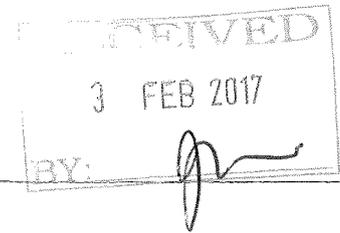
Our Ongoing Commitments

Infrastructure Australia's Infrastructure Priority List makes a clear case for the need for further investment in public transport and freight rail across Australia. That is why the Government is already partnering with State Governments early in the planning process to progress transformative rail projects.

In Queensland, the Government has committed funding to progress planning for Cross River Rail. In New South Wales, the Government is partnering with the Berejiklian Government to investigate rail options for Western Sydney to connect the future Western Sydney Airport to population and jobs centres, and unlock affordable housing, and further investment in the region.

These commitments build on current Australian Government funding for significant rail projects, such as Gold Coast Light Rail in Queensland, the Forrestfield Airport Link in Perth, Flinders Link in Adelaide, Capital Metro in Canberra, and the Moorebank Intermodal Terminal in Sydney.

Last Updated: 9 May, 2017



**The Hon Terry Redman MLA
Minister for Regional Development; Lands;
Minister Assisting the Minister for State Development**

Our ref: 39-37232

Hon Martin Aldridge MLC
Member for Agricultural Region
Level 1, 8 Parliament Place
WEST PERTH WA 6005

Marty
Dear Mr Aldridge

AVONLINK PROJECT – EXTENSION OF TRIAL

Thank you for your email dated 3 January 2017 in which you state that a letter has been received, by your office, from Mr Stan Scott, Chief Executive Officer, Shire of Toodyay regarding the Royalties for Regions three year AvonLink Train Enhancement Project (Project).

I have responded directly to Mr Scott advising the status of the Project, in particular that I am waiting for the final report on this initiative, which will enable me to consider future investment options.

A copy of my response to Mr Scott is attached for your information.

Yours sincerely

**HON TERRY REDMAN MLA
MINISTER FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Att 31 JAN 2017



**The Hon Terry Redman MLA
Minister for Regional Development; Lands;
Minister Assisting the Minister for State Development**

Our ref: 39-37229
Your ref: OCR29006

Mr Stan Scott
Chief Executive Officer
Shire of Toodyay
PO Box 96
TOODYAY WA 6566

Dear Mr Scott

AVONLINK PROJECT – EXTENSION OF TRIAL

Thank you for your letter dated 22 December 2016 regarding the AvonLink Train Enhancement Project (Project). I understand that you have also written to my colleague the Hon Bill Marmion, MLA Minister for Transport who has responded directly to you.

As part of a three year trial to increase patronage on the AvonLink train service six key elements have been introduced:

1. An additional two return services to the weekday schedule on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and a Merredin service one day per week on a Wednesday.
2. One return weekend service.
3. One return service for ten special events per year.
4. Investigation of feeder services.
5. Improved ticketing availability.
6. Increased marketing.

These enhancements were designed to increase patronage, cater for wider community need and refine a schedule for service sustainability. They were also designed to increase the direct cost recovery of the AvonLink train service from 17 per cent to 21 per cent to bring the service closer to an acceptable financial position compared with other public transport services in Western Australia.

The project has entered the last year of the three year trial. On the completion of the trial the Department of Regional Development (DRD) will receive a final report from the Public Transport Authority. Once the outcomes of this report have been presented to me by DRD, I will be determine the capacity for Royalties for Regions funds to further invest in the AvonLink train service.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'T' followed by a horizontal line and a small flourish.

HON TERRY REDMAN MLA
MINISTER FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

31 JAN 2017



**The Hon Terry Redman MLA
Minister for Regional Development; Lands;
Minister Assisting the Minister for State Development**

Our ref: 39-37229
Your ref: OCR29006

SHIRE OF TOODYAY	
Record Number:	ICR 43016
6 - FEB 2017	
Officer / Dept:	CEO
File Number:	COM15

Mr Stan Scott
Chief Executive Officer
Shire of Toodyay
PO Box 96
TOODYAY WA 6566

Dear Mr Scott

AVONLINK PROJECT – EXTENSION OF TRIAL

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Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'T' followed by a horizontal line and a small flourish.

HON TERRY REDMAN MLA
MINISTER FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

31 JAN 2017



Deputy Premier of Western Australia
Minister for Police; Road Safety;
Training and Workforce Development; Women's Interests

Our Ref: 45-45582

Mr Stan Scott
Shire of Toodyay
PO Box 96
TOODYAY WA 6566

xREF ICR 42599

SHIRE OF TOODYAY
Record Number: ICR 42824
23 JAN 2017
Officer / Dept: CEO
File Number: COM15

Dear Mr Scott

Thank you for your correspondence received on 30 December 2016 regarding the Avon Link Project – Extension of Trial.

Your comments have been noted by this office. However as matters raised fall under the portfolio responsibilities of the Hon Bill Marmion MLA, Minister for Transport, your correspondence has been forwarded to his office for consideration.

Thank you for bringing this matter to the Minister's attention.

Yours sincerely

BEN ALLEN
CHIEF OF STAFF

cc: Hon Bill Marmion MLA, Minister for Transport

18 JAN 2017

Avon Valley rail services look likely to be scrapped as residents flag road death fears

ABC Mid West and Wheatbelt By Sarah Taillier, Natasha Harradine and Glenn Barndon

Updated Wed 17 May 2017, 6:55pm

A WA country train service which is costing \$10,000 a day to run and averages just 11 passengers per trip looks likely to be scrapped, but some residents fear if it goes road fatalities will spike.

In 2013, the Barnett government backflipped on a decision to axe the train servicing the Avon Valley, running from Perth to Northam 100 kilometres east, choosing instead to fund a three-year trial which part-way through saw services increased to 28 per week.

The trial is due to finish June 30 and there are signs the service will be axed.

The cost of running the service, and another out to the Wheatbelt town of Merredin, was \$7.79 million over two-and-a-half years to the end of 2015, which local member and Labor politician Darren West said made it the most heavily subsidised service in the state.

"In this environment it's really hard to sell a service that cost \$10,000 a day and that only 11 people hop on each trip ... the train holds 116 passengers," he said.

Mr West, who is also an Upper House member for the Agricultural Region, said he wanted to know why the services were not being used, but said buses may be a more viable service as they could stop in more towns along the route.

However the Wheatbelt region has one of the highest road fatality rates in the nation and residents have told the ABC adding more buses onto the road network was not a safe option.

Nationals leader and member for the Central Wheatbelt, Mia Davies, said Mr West's comments were "highly hypocritical" given he had supported AvonLink when it was last at risk.

Ms Davies said the service was hard fought for and if it was axed, it would not be reinstated.

"It is incumbent on every government to try and make these services work, because once they're gone that's it," she said.

"I'm not very excited about the fact that we've got a wonderful building program in the metropolitan area, which is subsidised no matter what the patronage, when we don't see that sort of investment or commitment to regional Western Australia."

Mr West said the previous government had failed to allocate funding for the project in the forward estimates, past the end of the trial.

'Numbers down because of delays'

The AvonLink travels between Perth and Northam via Toodyay, about an hour north-east of the city centre.



PHOTO: Train services from Perth to Northam may be scrapped, with no funding past June 30. (ABC News)

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Shire of Toodyay chief executive Stan Scott said numbers were steadily increasing before major track work that disrupted the route for about 18 months.

"Regular users of the train on a couple of occasions ended up an hour late for work," he said.

"So people started making alternative arrangements."

Mr Scott said the service would grow and it would be a great loss to metro and country communities, as well as tourism, if it were stopped.

"Perth can't continue expanding north and south without some growth to the east," he said.

"So they will need a rail service to this part of the world eventually."

The Minister for Transport was unavailable for interview.

Topics: urban-development-and-planning, community-and-society, transport, wa, northam-6401

First posted Wed 17 May 2017, 4:55pm

Contact Sarah Taillier