



Interview Transcript

19 November 2021

Sonia Feldhoff (SF): So this morning, MP Dan Cregan, the member for Kavel, said he said he received formal notification that Infrastructure SA that it's going to look to solve the transport issues in the Adelaide Hills with a mass transit plan involving buses. This is what he told David Bevan:

Dan Cregan (DC): Today I received a very important piece of correspondence from infrastructure South Australia confirming that they are now looking at mass transit options in the Hills, so I believe we now have the government's full attention on local issues. We don't know where their review will lead, but I've been consistently arguing, since before I was elected as a member of my community, that we have serious congestion and other issues in the Hills and of course safety issues. There's been a number of very, very tragic accidents on the freeway over time and we need real focus and real investment on transport options in our community

David Bevan: So South Australia Infrastructure, that's a government organisation which controls an awful lot of money and it's told you, as one of the MPs for the Adelaide Hills, they're now looking a mass transit options – where to invest money in mass transit – is that what that means? What sort of mass transit though?

DC: I understand they're looking at Bus Rapid Transport, but also I've emphasised very strongly, and I know Rebekah Sharkie, federal independent member, and our mayors, have emphasised very strongly that there would be a consideration of all options and I'm a strong advocate for looking at the restoration of passenger rail, if possible, recognising the significant cost and engineering risks associated with such a project. But it's a very welcome development that Infrastructure South Australia is looking at our additional needs and there was a number of paragraphs in that letter that gave comfort to me that they do understand the pressures that our community is under; the massive population growth that has occurred right around the Hills.

SF: Okay so that was the member for Kavel, Dan Cregan, with that news. Steven Shotton is the Regional Development Manager of Regional Development Australia. Steven, good afternoon.

Steve Shotton (SS): Hello Sonya

SF: As you hear Dan Cregan say that, I have to say Infrastructure South Australia seemed to think that this was nothing new, but Dan Cregan certainly thought it showed a commitment he hadn't seen before. Does it buoy you in terms of the bus system to the government that you proposed?

SS: Well, I think it does Sonia. We released a public transport study back in 2019, which the key recommendation was to investigate and develop a Bus Rapid Transit system for the Hills and that's added to the weight of argument from the community. As Dan mentioned this morning, the community in the Hills has growing pains. Congestion results in lower productivity, less liveability, which is predominately why people move to the Hills in the first place, so it's building towards a solution being on the table, I believe.

SF: The bus proposal that you put there, and that seems to be the one that definitely is being looked at, what would that mean? What's a mass transit bus system all about?

SS: It's a good question because Bus Rapid Transit, or BRT for short, in its simplest form, is a regular express service along the shortest routes possible. At an extreme level is the same thing, but on a dedicated route, and we have a fantastic example of that in South Australia in the O'Bahn. For the Hills, it's unlikely to be an O'Bahn style BRT on its own track because we've got difficult terrain to work with, and an environment we need to work around. So back in 2019, that report suggested a regular express service along 2 routes: one up the freeway to Crafers and then to Stirling, Aldgate and Bridgewater; and a second route from Adelaide stopping firstly at Verdun, Hahndorf and then into Mount Barker – so two express routes.

SF: Do you think that will work on its own, or does it require the passenger rail option to complement it?

SS: Another good question. I believe it will work. The consultants from the transport industry believe that a BRT, well-designed and well-implemented, will service a population much bigger than what Mount Barker is even going to be in 10 or 20 years' time. However, we haven't ruled out rail, and in the 2019 study, and in a further report this year, we've kept rail on the table because it's hard to ignore the fact that there's an existing rail line. And yes, it is indirect, but that existing rail corridor, or a new corridor, are options – particularly in the medium to longer term.

SF: Thank you for your time. Steven Shotton, Regional Development Manager of Regional Development Australia