

# Showdown over Hills traffic woes



Nathan Rogers, left, from Mount Barker & District Residents' Association, SA Transport Action Group's John Hill, MBDR's Douglas McCarty and Mount Barker deputy mayor Ian Grosser prepare for the forum. Picture: Tricia Watkinson

## LYDIA KELLNER

ADELAIDE Hills residents face uncertainty over future transport options – regardless of who wins the next state election.

Neither the Liberals, Labor nor the Greens have committed any big-ticket items to help address traffic woes in the Hills in the lead-up to the March election.

That's despite the region's growing transport pain coming under the spotlight at a public meeting in Mount Barker tonight.

The SA Transport Action Group will host the forum at Wallis Cinema to discuss a range of ideas, including the reintroduction of passenger rail, congestion issues on the South Eastern Freeway and the potential for a road and rail bypass.

It is the first community meeting of its kind and will be exclusively live streamed by The Advertiser and The Adel-

aide Hills News from 7pm on [advertiser.com.au](http://advertiser.com.au).

It will be attended by representatives from all levels of government, including Mayo MP Rebekha Sharkie (Centre Alliance), Kavel MP Dan Cregan (Labor), Waite MP Sam Duluk (independent), Frome MP Geoff Brock (independent) and opposition transport spokesman Tom Koutsantonis.

Mr Koutsantonis said on Monday the state government's announcement on committing to a \$10m South Eastern Freeway freight bypass was "nothing but a con".

He said the business case would not address congestion if it were to go ahead – but did not offer an alternative.

"The last time the Liberals promised a freight bypass solution, they called it Globe-Link – and it was spectacularly dumped when they got into government," Mr Koutsantonis said.

"The Marshall Liberal gov-

ernment keeps promising business cases but has a terrible track record when it comes to delivering real infrastructure projects.

"After being conned before the last election, Hills residents want real solutions, not more expensive business cases that will be dumped as soon as the next election is over."

Greens MLC Robert Simms, who will also be in attendance, said public transport would form an important part of his party's election campaign.

While he would not disclose details, he said public transport needed to become more accessible.

"One of the things in the Hills is that the service is really inadequate as there hasn't been any investment from the government over the years, and we'd really like to see that changed," Mr Simms said.

"The other element is the Covid pandemic. We need to

make sure that people still use public transport. One of the ways to do that is to make sure you have improved frequency and coverage of service to make it easier for people to socially distance.

"If you have an irregular and unreliable service, people aren't going to want to use it. So, it's going to be a big part of our election campaign."

Meanwhile, the government has ruled out passenger rail from the Adelaide Hills to the city.

Transport Minister Corey Wingard said construction of a rail line between Mount Barker and the CBD was too expensive.

"A rail link is not financially viable and the excessive costs wouldn't be the best use of the limited taxpayer dollars compared with other infrastructure priorities," he said.

Mr Wingard said the government was investing in road projects to get more freight off the freeway.