

MORE YEARS OF LIFE IN THE

SLOW LANE



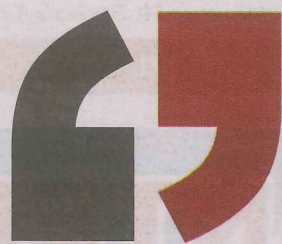
A public meeting to discuss solutions to the growing freight and public transport issues in the region attracted about 250 people to the cinema in Mt Barker last week.

By Nick Grimm

Hills MPs believe more time and further detailed studies are required in order to fix the freeway's congestion woes.

About 250 people gathered at Wallis Cinemas last Tuesday under Covid-19 spacing restrictions to hear the SA Transport Action Group (SATAG) outline ideas to fix increasing traffic issues on the freeway and Glen Osmond, Cross and Portrush roads.

SATAG's John Hill and Maurice Parry – who both have decades of experience in the freight rail industry – told the meeting the long-term solutions were road and rail bypasses around the Hills



We're talking about everything ... from O-Bahn, light rail, standard rail, dedicated bus lanes. I'm open to all of it as I want as many people as possible to get onto public transport.

– Federal MP for Mayo Rebekha Sharkie

and the re-introduction of a passenger rail service.

But Federal Member for Mayo Rebekha Sharkie told attendees further investigations were needed “to work out what it is that we actually need”.

“We're talking about everything ...

from O-Bahn, light rail, standard rail, dedicated bus lanes,” she said. “I'm open to all of it as I want as many people as possible to get onto public transport.

“But ultimately we're not engineers, we're Members of Parliament, and we'll be doing our darnedest to make sure

the experts can make the decisions and actually study what needs to happen for the future. We need to plan for the next two decades, three decades, for our whole community.”

Ms Sharkie said she would be lobbying for funds for a “comprehensive transport study” in addition to the State Government's \$10m Greater Adelaide freight bypass study.

State Kavel MP Dan Cregan backed Ms Sharkie's comments, however their statements were met with discontent from some attendees.

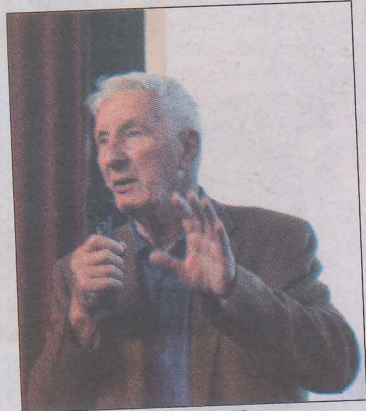
One opponent was former Transport Department senior bureaucrat Luigi Rossi who urged the MPs to make a fast rail service the priority.

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Group to continue its passenger rail push

By Nick Grimm

The chair of the SA Transport Action Group (SATAG) has vowed to continue a push to implement a passenger rail service in the Hills.



John Hill

SATAG's John Hill and Maurice Parry chaired a public meeting at Mt Barker's Wallis Cinema on July 6 where they discussed a range of ideas on how to improve traffic problems faced by Hills commuters.

Topics included freeway congestion, possible introduction of passenger rail services and the potential for a road and rail bypass around the Hills.

Mr Hill said he was thrilled with the turn-out of about 250 people, which included Federal Mayo MP Rebekha Sharkie, State MPs Dan Cregan, Adrian Pederick and Sam Duluk and Opposition Shadow Transport Minister Tom Koutsantonis.

Transport Minister Corey Wingard – who has previously said passenger rail is not an option for the region – and Heysen MP Josh Teague did not attend.

Mr Hill said he thought his group was able to get its points across.

"I think the politicians who were there saw that this is a big issue for people in the region," Mr Hill said.

He said the group would continue pitching passenger rail and both freight road and rail bypasses to the State and Federal governments.

"We're going to keep on about this, because the problem is only going to get worse as the Hills continues to grow," Mr Hill said.

The group would also look to host more public meetings, likely in Adelaide's inner eastern and southern suburbs, he said.

More study needed

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"If you're looking at the city in a 30-40 year horizon, you need to look at a fast train from Adelaide to Mt Barker," he said.

"What I'm talking about is a 22-minute journey from Adelaide to Mt Barker ... it's a game changer.

"My plan is to then enable us to get to Strathalbyn, Victor Harbor and Goolwa and to Monarto, Murray Bridge and Tailem Bend."

Mr Rossi was part of a group which pitched that concept to the Mt Barker Council in 2018.



Tom Koutsantonis

The State Opposition's Shadow Transport Minister Tom Koutsantonis told attendees an elected Labor government would use the \$10m currently allocated to the freight bypass planning study to consult local and industry groups on the best transport solutions.

Greens Upper House member Robert Simms said better public transport was a key to solving the Hills' broader transport woes, while Member for Waite Sam Duluk said his priority was keeping heavy vehicles away from major routes in his electorate, such as Cross Road.

Neither Transport Minister Corey Wingard – who recently ruled out creating a passenger rail service – nor Heysen MP Josh Teague attended the forum.