

GREENS AND NATIONALS BACK PASSENGER RAIL



Could a Hills or regional passenger rail be the answer to commuter needs?

Luke Harris

The debate about a Hills-based passenger rail continues, as more political parties add their voice to the discussion.

Last week, The Greens launched a campaign to secure federal and state funding to build a rail service from Mount Barker to the city.

Calls for a Hills passenger rail service follow significant population growth in the townships around the region, particularly Mount Barker. Greens spokesperson on transport Robert Simms said this has put a strain on existing transport infrastructure.

"For years, calls by the Hills community to establish a railway service have been met with silence by successive federal and state governments," Robert said.

"The people of Mount Barker and the Adelaide Hills have been the victims of a poor planning process - one that fails to consider infrastructure needs and puts the interests of developers ahead of the community.

"The people of the Adelaide Hills deserve reliable, accessible and safe transport options. This would not only reduce commuter car traffic on the SE Freeway, but also reduce emissions."

The statement has been echoed throughout the Hills by Greens candidates for the upcoming state

election.

The calls come as SA Transport Action Group, who have lobbied for a Hills passenger rail service, condemned Infrastructure SA's findings that passenger rail would not be suitable for the Hills.

Through independent research, the group's findings showed travel by rail between Mount Barker and the city would take no more than 50 minutes.

The recently-revived Nationals Party has also called on both major parties to actively support the concept of a passenger rail to drive regional tourism.

SA Nationals Legislative Council candidate Gary Johanson announced a plan for a passenger rail line to Taillem Bend.

"The Bend Motorsport Park has been a boon for Taillem Bend and a great example of private enterprise driving tourism development that benefits a whole region," Gary said.

"The Nationals are calling for the re-opening of passenger rail services to Taillem Bend as part of an overall strategy to use rail to drive regional tourism.---

"Wouldn't it be terrific if motor enthusiasts from Adelaide could catch a train out to Taillem, pulling up alongside the new train station at The Bend and walking through an underpass straight to the track?"