

Free City Connector

ITEM 5.6 16/04/2019
The Committee

2012/03151
Public

Program Contact:
Daniel Bennett, AD Strategy &
Design 8203 7295

Approving Officer:
Beth Davidson-Park, Director
Operations

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Following its review of the bus timetables across the Adelaide Metro public transport network, the Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure has written to the City of Adelaide to seek discussion on the free City Connector network, to explore reduction of the service where there is duplication with the tram network and to explore potential removal of the 99A/99C inner loop services.

This report recommends that we work with the State Government to review opportunities to improve the operation of the free City Connector network while maintaining a valuable and high-use service and recommends that we provide a further report to Council with recommendations for consideration by September 2019.

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT THE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDS TO COUNCIL:

That Council:

1. Notes that the Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure (DPTI) has advised the City of Adelaide (CoA) (Attachment A to Item 5.6 on the Agenda for the meeting of The Committee held on 16 April 2019) that as part of the review of the Adelaide Metro public transport network, the free City Connector has been considered and the following has been identified:
 - 1.1. The possibility of reducing the frequency of the free City Connector service where there is a duplication with the tram network
 - 1.2. That the State Government would be willing to work with City of Adelaide staff on a proposal to remove the 99A/99C services, which have the most duplication with the free tram network in the city.
2. Approves that the Chief Executive Officer write to the State Government to seek that we jointly review the routes and frequency of the free City Connector, including the following:
 - 2.1. Consideration of the current users of the service
 - 2.2. Maintaining and/or extending high-use routes and reducing duplication with existing services in response to city changes
 - 2.3. Opportunities to enhance the service to encourage tourism and visitor use
 - 2.4. Options for payment for the service, integrating with the Adelaide Metro system
 - 2.5. Calls upon the State Government to continue to fund its contribution to this vital community service.

3. Approves that a report be prepared for Council's consideration and decision-making on the outcomes of the review by September 2019 in order to inform the City of Adelaide's 2020-21 Integrated Business Plan.

IMPLICATIONS AND FINANCIALS:

City of Adelaide 2016-2020 Strategic Plan	<i>Smart Move Action Plan 2012-2022:</i> 3.5.1 <i>Improve the Adelaide Connector community bus service</i> <i>Smart Move Interim Action Plan:</i> 5.8 Identify opportunities to improve the free City Connector service
Policy	Not as a result of this report.
Consultation	We would recommend community consultation on changes to the free City Connector route or timetable as required.
Resource	The review will be managed within existing resources.
Risk / Legal / Legislative	Not as a result of this report.
Opportunities	There is an opportunity to undertake a collaborative project with the State Government to improve the service to respond to city changes and add value to the existing free City Connector Network, in the process reinforcing the importance of continued State Government funding.
18/19 Budget Allocation	\$880,000 was allocated in the 2018-19 Integrated Business Plan.
Proposed 19/20 Budget Allocation	\$915,000 is allocated to the free City Connector in the draft 2019-20 Integrated Business Plan, noting a CPI increase as per the Deed of Agreement. DPTI contributes approximately an equal amount as the City of Adelaide for the operating cost of the service, along with managing timetable production, auditing and the performance of the service.
Life of Project, Service, Initiative or (Expectancy of) Asset	Not as a result of this report.
18/19 Budget Reconsideration (if applicable)	Not as a result of this report.
Ongoing Costs (eg maintenance cost)	Not as a result of this report.

Other Funding Sources	Not as a result of this report.
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DISCUSSION

Background

1. The Department of Planning Transport and Infrastructure (DPTI) has written to Mark Goldstone, CEO (the CEO) (**Attachment A**) regarding the State Government's commitment to deliver a more efficient public transport network.
2. The correspondence notes the review of the Adelaide Metro public transport network has been undertaken indicates that the second stage of the review of the network has included the possibility of reducing the free City Connector service frequency where there is duplication with the tram network, and where the 98A and 98C can provide sufficient service and adequate capacity.
3. The State Government has requested to work with the CoA on developing a proposal that removes the 99A and 99C services, which have the most duplication with the recently expanded tram network.
4. On 9 April 2019, Council resolved:

'That Council:

 1. *Reaffirms its commitment to the continuation of the joint City of Adelaide and State Government City Connector Bus Service, in the 2019-2020 Budget;*
 2. *Calls on the State Government to continue to fund their contribution to this vital community service.*
 3. *In the case that the State Government ceases its funding, Council investigates alternate routes in consultation with the community and funding measures to continue with this vital service. This report outlines the options for Council to consider based on the letter from the State Government.'*

The free City Connector operations

5. The City of Adelaide has provided some form of community-based transport since 1977. Two former free city routes (one State Government and one CoA) were integrated to create a new higher quality, higher frequency free bus service. The current free City Connector commenced in January 2014 as a joint initiative with the State Government.
6. The free City Connector consists of two bus routes.
 - 6.1. **Route 98A/98C** (A: Anti-clockwise, C: Clockwise) operates in a large loop around the City and North Adelaide with a 30-minute frequency, seven days a week
 - 6.2. **Route 99A/99C** operates a smaller loop around the city, on weekdays only.
7. Route 98 and 99 operate along the same corridor consisting of North Terrace, East Terrace, Hutt Street, Halifax Street, Hurtle Square, Sturt Street, Whitmore Square, Morphett Street, Grote Street, Victoria Square and King William Street. The routes, together with the overlap with the city tram network, can be viewed [here](#).
8. Together, the two routes provide a 15-minute frequency on weekdays between 8am and 7pm in both directions. Changes to the number of bus stops, route or roads travelled impact on the coordinated timetable.
9. Since its launch in 2014, 27 free City Connector bus stops have been upgraded to meet accessibility (DDA) requirements, and two new buses have been added to the fleet. Community consultation has been undertaken in relation to bus stop locations and upgrades.

Deed of Agreement with DPTI

10. The joint delivery of the free City Connector is managed through a Deed of Agreement (the Deed), which was signed in 2013. This sets out the commitments of each party in relation to ongoing management, key performance indicators, survey standards, and changes to the service, among other operational matters.
11. The Deed outlines that 12 months written notice is required from either party for a termination or a reduction in scope of the service. This enables adequate financial planning and community communication time for any changes to the service.

Changes in patronage 2014 to 2019

12. Prior to the free City Connector commencing, the two former free city bus routes (one State Government and one CoA) transported approximately 13,300 passengers per week across the City and North Adelaide.
13. The first passenger survey of the new free City Connector service conducted in March 2014 indicated a slight decline in patronage to 12,800 passengers per week compared to the former routes. By March 2017, patronage had grown to 22,950 passengers per week, a 72% growth in patronage (or 9,600 more passengers) than prior to the integration of the bus services.
14. The most recent survey undertaken in March 2019 indicates that patronage had declined to 19,400 passengers per week (however this is 6,100 passengers more than integration, or 45% growth over six years). The two main contributing factors for the decline in patronage relates to the relocation of the Royal Adelaide Hospital (September 2017) and the opening of the North Terrace Tram Line (October 2018).

The City Tram Line Extension and service duplication

15. Route 99 is the route that DPTI has identified for potential removal. This provides the higher frequency service that connects the North Terrace Precinct to Hutt Street, Hurtle Square, Whitmore Square, Central Market, Victoria Square, Town Hall and the Central Business District on King William Street. From the most recent passenger survey, route 99 transports between 900 and 1,400 passengers each weekday.
16. Route 99 duplicates a section of the free tram (in total eight stops) on King William Street between Victoria Square and North Terrace, and then again on North Terrace between King William Street and East Terrace. Patronage from the bus stops along the duplicated section of route represents between 25% and 35% of route 99 boardings.
17. In March 2018 and March 2019, overall patronage of the free City Connector declined to 20,100 and 19,400 passengers per week respectively. The construction of the City Tram Line Extension along North Terrace and King William Road had major impacts on traffic and congestion on North Terrace. As both routes 98 and 99 travelled in the construction zone, services were heavily delayed and timetable reliability was impacted.
18. In September 2017, the Royal Adelaide Hospital relocated from the East End to the new site near West Terrace. Passenger boardings at the Old Royal Adelaide Hospital bus stop declined from 1,550 passengers per week in 2017, to 640 in 2018, and 525 in 2019. This represents a decline of more than 1,000 passengers per week which we attribute to the hospital relocation and the provision of the free tram service.
19. Patronage at the State Library on North Terrace also declined from 2,660 in 2017 (prior to tram construction) to 1,715 in 2018 (during construction) and then increased again to 2,025 in 2019. In October 2018, regular tram services commenced on North Terrace.
20. Together the impacts of the hospital relocation, tram construction works, and the opening of the new tram line has reduced the number of people boarding the free City Connector on North Terrace decline by 1,500 passengers per week, a 6.5% reduction from March 2017.
21. Since the service started in 2014, the usage of the free City Connector has shifted across the city and some parts of the route have grown stronger than others:
 - 21.1. North Adelaide: From 1,100 passenger per week to 4,400 passengers per week (275% growth) – Route 98 only
 - 21.2. Adelaide Zoo and Universities: From 100 passenger per week to 900 passengers per week (725% growth) – Route 98 only

- 21.3. Hutt Street Precinct: From 260 passengers per week to 2,375 passengers per week (800% growth) – Route 98 and 99
- 21.4. City South East and West (Halifax Street, Sturt Street and Whitmore Square): from 410 passengers per week to 2,835 passengers per week (585% growth) – Route 98 and 99.
22. The remaining areas which cover the City Centre, North Terrace, City West and East End have seen a decline in patronage from 10,000 passengers per week to 8,865 passengers per week (12% decline). In these areas the free City Connector operates alongside the two new free City Tram routes.
23. In summary, the demand across the free City Connector network has shifted due to changes in the city including the new tram extension and the Royal Adelaide Hospital moving to the west, and there is strong demand for many CBD routes that are not serviced by the tram network. We would need to understand this demand in more detail to determine the best way for the routes or frequencies to change.
24. This proposed collaborative project presents the opportunity to review and improve the free City Connector to ensure that the funding continues to provide for a valuable community service.

Next steps

25. This report recommends that in response to the recent correspondence the CEO commits that we seek to work with the State Government to review the service to maximise community benefit and reduce any duplication with the service offered by the city tram network.
26. We will ensure that the following opportunities are considered as part of the review:
- 26.1. Consideration of the current users of the service
 - 26.2. Maintaining and/or extending high-use routes and reducing duplication with existing services in response to city changes
 - 26.3. Opportunities to enhance the service to encourage tourism and visitor use
 - 26.4. Options for payment for the service, integration with the Adelaide Metro system and/or a free resident card system.
27. Through this review we will also reinforce that Council calls on the State Government to continue to fund its contribution to this vital community service.
28. The review can be undertaken in adequate time to inform the draft City of Adelaide 2020-21 Integrated Business Plan.
29. There is an allocation for the free City Connector in the draft 2019-20 Integrated Business Plan of \$915,000 and we do not anticipate at this stage that the free City Connector operations will be altered within the next 12 months, as per the Deed of Agreement with DPTI. Any proposed reductions or alterations will be brought to Council for consideration and decision-making prior to implementation.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A – Correspondence from the State Government in relation to the free City Connector service.

- END OF REPORT -

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Mr Mark Goldstone
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Dear Mr Goldstone,

As part of the Government's commitment to deliver a more efficient public transport network, changes to bus timetables occurred across the Adelaide Metro public transport network from 27 January 2019.

The Government has been working with Adelaide Metro bus contractors and DPTI Public Transport Operations planning staff to identify changes that minimise disruption and inconvenience to the majority of passengers who use the network.

The review of the network has focused on rationalising poorly patronised services, removing routes – or portions of routes- that duplicate train or tram lines, adjusting services to match demand and commencing a staged approach to the introduction of more feeder services into dedicated corridors.

Other initiatives included the introduction of festive season timetables over each Christmas and New Year's period, where patronage is consistently up to 50% lower than a standard workday.

The second stage of the review of the network has included the possibility of reducing the frequency of the City Connector service where there is duplication with the tram network and where the 98A and 98C service can still provide adequate capacity. Therefore we would be willing to work with council staff on developing a proposal to remove the 99A/99C services that operate the inner loop and have the most duplication with the free tram network within the city.

DPTI staff may be attending a council workshop on 16th April to determine any possible changes that council are willing to progress and further work can take place after this has occurred.

We look forward to your support of this proposal.

Yours sincerely,



Michelle Spagnoletti
Manager, Public Transport Operations and Planning

9 April 2019