

# City Connector Review

**ITEM 4.6 02/06/2020**  
**The Committee**

2019/02429  
Public

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As part of a major Public Transport Services Review, the Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure (DPTI) has advised of its intention to modify the City Connector service to improve efficiency and to remove sections of duplication with the free tram network in the City. Modification of the service will result in changes to routes and frequency. It is anticipated to operate at a reduced cost to the City of Adelaide.

The City Connector service was suspended by DPTI on 6 April 2020 based on advice from SA Health regarding COVID-19 restrictions. It remains suspended until further notice and is subject to advice from SA Health and the State Government.

The purpose of this report is to assess the impacts of the proposed City Connector route modifications and to examine potential alternatives to the service, to provide Council's feedback to DPTI.

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The following recommendation will be presented to Council on 9 June 2020 for consideration

### That Council:

1. Notes the City of Adelaide's need to resolve the Deed of Agreement with DPTI regarding the City Connector service.
2. Endorses the Administration to continue working with DPTI on options for providing a City Connector service, to further explore opportunities, costs and impacts of each option, with a report to be brought back to Council for endorsement, following consultation which will be undertaken by DPTI in June 2020.

## IMPLICATIONS AND FINANCIALS

City of Adelaide 2016-2020 Strategic Plan	<b>Strategic Alignment – Liveable</b> Encourage the State Government to improve public transport to promote greater patronage, including continued investment and expansion of the free City Connector Services
Policy	Not as a result of this report
Consultation	Not as a result of this report
Resource	Changes to the Connector Service will managed within existing resources
Risk / Legal / Legislative	Not as a result of this report
Opportunities	Opportunity to provide a more efficient public transport service to the community
19/20 Budget Allocation	\$935k general operating
Proposed 20/21 Budget Allocation	\$923k general operating
Life of Project, Service, Initiative or (Expectancy of) Asset	A new Deed of Agreement will have an end date five years from the date of agreement, with opportunities for five-year extensions, up to a maximum of 25 years
19/20 Budget Reconsideration (if applicable)	Not as a result of this report
Ongoing Costs (eg maintenance cost)	\$923k (plus inflation) for the life of the deed to continue operating the service in addition to ongoing battery purchases for Tindo, and bus replacement at the end of the buses economic lives.
Other Funding Sources	DPTI will 50% co-fund a new City Connector service

# DISCUSSION

## Background

1. The Free City Connector service was expanded in 2014 to provide a service in the City and North Adelaide every 15-30 minutes, seven days a week. It currently caters for 17,000-18,000 passengers per week.
2. The service operates in a loop covering North Adelaide, with a 30-minute frequency in each direction, and the city, with 15-minute frequency in each direction.
3. The service is funded jointly by City of Adelaide (CoA) and the Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure (DPTI), with DPTI managing the service through the metropolitan east-west bus service provider Torrens Transit.
4. As part of its Public Transport Services Review, DPTI intends to modify the City Connector service (the service). The review is part of a network-wide suite of public transport changes aimed at improving efficiency.
5. While exclusively operating within the City of Adelaide, the City Connector forms part of the Adelaide Metro East – West contract area and any changes to the contract may have implications for the service.
6. DPTI's intentions for the review of the service is to remove duplication with the free tram network and improve the efficiency of the service.
7. The Deed of Agreement for the existing service was due to expire in 2023. The Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Local Government has provided notice of his intention to terminate the existing Deed on 30 June 2020. A copy of the notice can be viewed (Link 1 view [here](#)).
8. The service costs approximately \$935k per annum which includes:
  - 8.1. \$872k contribution to DPTI to operate the service (indexed), inclusive of drivers, minor maintenance, fuel and operating six buses
  - 8.2. \$8k electricity for Tindo
  - 8.3. \$7k bus registration
  - 8.4. \$50k maintenance
9. The CoA owns three buses (2 diesel buses and Tindo) which are depreciating assets and will need to be replaced at the end of their economic lives, in addition to major lifecycle maintenance (including batteries for Tindo).
10. The service is relatively expensive when compared to other bus services in other cities:
  - 10.1. The cost per service kilometre is more than double the cost of bus services in other cities, at approximately \$22/km (compared to Sydney and Canberra bus services which are below \$10/km)
  - 10.2. The cost per passenger is approximately \$7 (fully subsidised by CoA and State Government), compared to Canberra and Brisbane services which are between \$4-5 per passenger
11. The service was suspended on 6 April 2020 due to COVID-19. We understand that the service will resume following further restrictions being lifted, based on advice from SA Health.

## Proposed Route

12. The South Australian Public Transport Authority (SAPTA) recommends a proposed route for the modified service. A copy of the proposed route can be viewed (Link 2 view [here](#)).
13. The recommended route includes some key differences to the existing, including:
  - 13.1. A single, out-and-back service for the city and North Adelaide, compared to the existing looped services.
  - 13.2. A 20-minute service frequency instead of the existing 15-minute frequency in the city and 30-minute frequency in North Adelaide.
  - 13.3. Removal of duplication on King William Street and North Terrace corresponding to the locations where DPTI provides free tram services.
  - 13.4. Removal of services from Mackinnon Parade, Jerningham Street and Kingston Terrace in North Adelaide.
  - 13.5. Removal of services from Hill Street, Ward Street and Buxton Street in North Adelaide,
  - 13.6. Removal of services from Currie Street and Morphett Street in the City.

14. Following our discussions with SAPTA, we understand that the proposed route has been determined based on patronage, service timing and ease of use.
  - 14.1. Most stops removed from the route which are not along the tram corridors, generally have very low patronage with fewer than 25 passengers boarding at these stops per day. See **Service Impacts**, below, for more information.
  - 14.2. The existing service operates with a 15-minute frequency in the City and 30 minute frequency in North Adelaide. The proposed 20-minute frequency would be equally intuitive and improves accessibility in North Adelaide. Operating the service with an extended route would require additional buses (and therefore cost) or a reduced frequency.
15. SAPTA will be undertaking public consultation on the proposed Adelaide Metro network changes in June 2020, which will include the proposed changes to the City Connector route.
16. Council's feedback on the service will be provided to SAPTA for consideration as part of the consultation.
17. We understand that proposed service changes are anticipated to be introduced in late 2020.

### Service Impacts

18. The route proposed by SAPTA will result in a reduction in the number of stops for the service within the CoA:
  - 18.1. 35 stops from a total of 65 will be removed, eight of these stops are along tram corridors and broadly aligned with tram stops.
  - 18.2. 28 of these stops are serviced by other regular Adelaide Metro routes.
  - 18.3. Six existing Adelaide Metro stops will be included, and three new stops constructed to accommodate the new route.
19. Some of the stops proposed to be removed have very low patronage, accommodating as few as four passengers per day (from surveys undertaken in late 2019). A map illustrating the popularity of each stop can be viewed here (Link 3 view [here](#)). A table ranking stops by popularity, patronage and impact from the proposed route can be viewed (Link 4 view [here](#)).
20. The removal of the Jerningham Street stop will have the greatest impact, as this is one of the most popular stops on the network. The removal of Hill Street will also impact access in North Adelaide west of Wellington Square.
21. The CoA has a population of approximately 24,000. This is projected to increase to over 50,000 by 2041. A map illustrating the current and projected population by area in the CoA can be viewed here (Link 5 view [here](#)). A map illustrating population age demographics can be viewed here (Link 6 view [here](#)).
  - 21.1. The proposed City Connector route will not directly service the west CBD area bordered by North Terrace, Grote Street, West Terrace and King William Street. However, the route will service Grote Street and the area is bounded by the tram to the north and west.
    - 21.1.1. This area accounts for 18% of the current population which is also expected to experience significant growth and is projected to make up 23% of the population of the City of Adelaide.
    - 21.1.2. City Connector patronage in this area is currently low, accounting for 12% of trips over 9 stops.
  - 21.2. Lower North Adelaide will be served by stops on Lefevre Terrace and Brougham Place but will lose the popular Jerningham street stop.
    - 21.2.1. The area accounts for 10% of the current and 5% of the projected population.
    - 21.2.2. City Connector patronage in this area is 7%, with Jerningham Street alone accounting for 6%.
  - 21.3. Accessibility to the west of upper North Adelaide is reduced, with some areas up to 1.1km from the nearest Connector bus stop.
  - 21.4. Service to the southern and eastern areas of the city remain unchanged.
22. A number of new developments are planned or under construction in the CoA. The majority are in the city, with a limited number in North Adelaide. A map illustrating planned and commenced development in the CoA can be viewed (Link 7 view [here](#)).
23. Developments are dispersed throughout the city. There is a large concentration in the west CBD, which is not served by the proposed route, but the majority of new developments are within one block of City Connector or tram services.

### City of Adelaide Feedback

24. Improvements to the route can be made to increase accessibility and reduce impacts to users, including altering the service to travel along:
- 24.1. MacKinnon Parade, Jerningham Street and Kingston Terrace, to service the Melbourne Street precinct
  - 24.2. Hill Street, Ward Street and Buxton Street, to service the western areas of upper North Adelaide
25. These alternate options can be viewed (Link 8 view [here](#)).

### Free Adelaide Metro Travel

26. On 12 May 2020 Council endorsed a Motion requesting that the Lord Mayor write to the State Government requesting all Adelaide Metro Bus and Tram services operate free of charge within the City of Adelaide boundary.
27. Travel is already provided free to Seniors card holders on all Adelaide Metro services outside of weekday morning (7-9am) and afternoon peak (3-7pm) periods.
28. Providing free travel to everyone on all Adelaide Metro services in the city could serve as a replacement for the City Connector. A request for free Metro travel will be made to State Government following Council's decision in May 2020.
29. SAPTA has previously advised that zoned fares were considered as part of the Public Transport Services Review, but that the system was not considered feasible:
- 29.1. Public transport in South Australia requires passengers to 'tap on' to validate as they board the service, but they do not have to 'tap off' when alighting and the infrastructure is not in place on buses to accommodate 'tap off'.
  - 29.2. The lack of 'tap off' infrastructure means that it would not be possible to monitor whether patrons are only using the free service within the CoA or are travelling beyond the city limits without validating.
  - 29.3. To implement free CoA bus travel would require the installation of 'tap off' facilities on all metro buses and a reprogramming of the validation software. This was considered prohibitively expensive and the option was not pursued at the time.

### Other Transport Services

30. The CoA operates a weekly community bus for elderly residents. The service collects users from their homes and takes them to the Central Market. The service:
- 30.1. Costs \$2 per round trip and attracts 12-15 users on average.
  - 30.2. Is 100% funded by the federal Government. Applications are managed by My Age Care.
  - 30.3. Was suspended at the end of March as a consequence of COVID-19.
31. The University of Adelaide operates a free after-hours shuttle bus for students and staff. The bus operates between 5:30pm and 11:30pm and provides transport to all residential areas in the CoA.
32. Both the University of Adelaide and the University of South Australia operate bus services between their respective campuses. The services are available for staff and students.

### On-Demand Bus Service

33. On-demand transport is a public transportation system that dynamically adapts to demand. Vehicles only go where and when they are needed. Instead of hailing the bus at a traditional bus stop, passengers can either plan ahead or book at short notice and meet their bus at a nearby 'stop'. Service routes are determined based on passenger origin and destination and are optimised to reduce distance and journey time.
34. Services can use a single transport mode or integrate multiple modes – linking to traditional public transport, to rideshare services, and to emerging mobility options.
35. On-demand transport is an emerging discipline and continues to be refined to identify and address issues with the service. Successful operation of the service requires comprehensive planning and integration with the broader transport network, and we note that at present, an on-demand service is unlikely to replace the existing Connector bus service, but supplement existing transport options.
36. SAPTA has been trialling on-demand services in Gawler and Mount Barker.
- 36.1. Background research was undertaken by service providers using tools such as mobile data to understand the movement of customers.

- 36.2. The research has indicated that on-demand services typically work well where a responsive service is needed to meet the challenge of low or irregular passenger demand, in sparsely populated areas, or in off peak periods.
- 36.3. In this context, low patronage would be hundreds per day rather than thousands as currently carried by the City Connector and on-demand services have not been found to scale up successfully when patronage is higher.
- 36.4. SAPTA has advised that, based on their findings and experience operating the service, they would not support the implementation of an on-demand service in the CoA.

### **City Access Strategy**

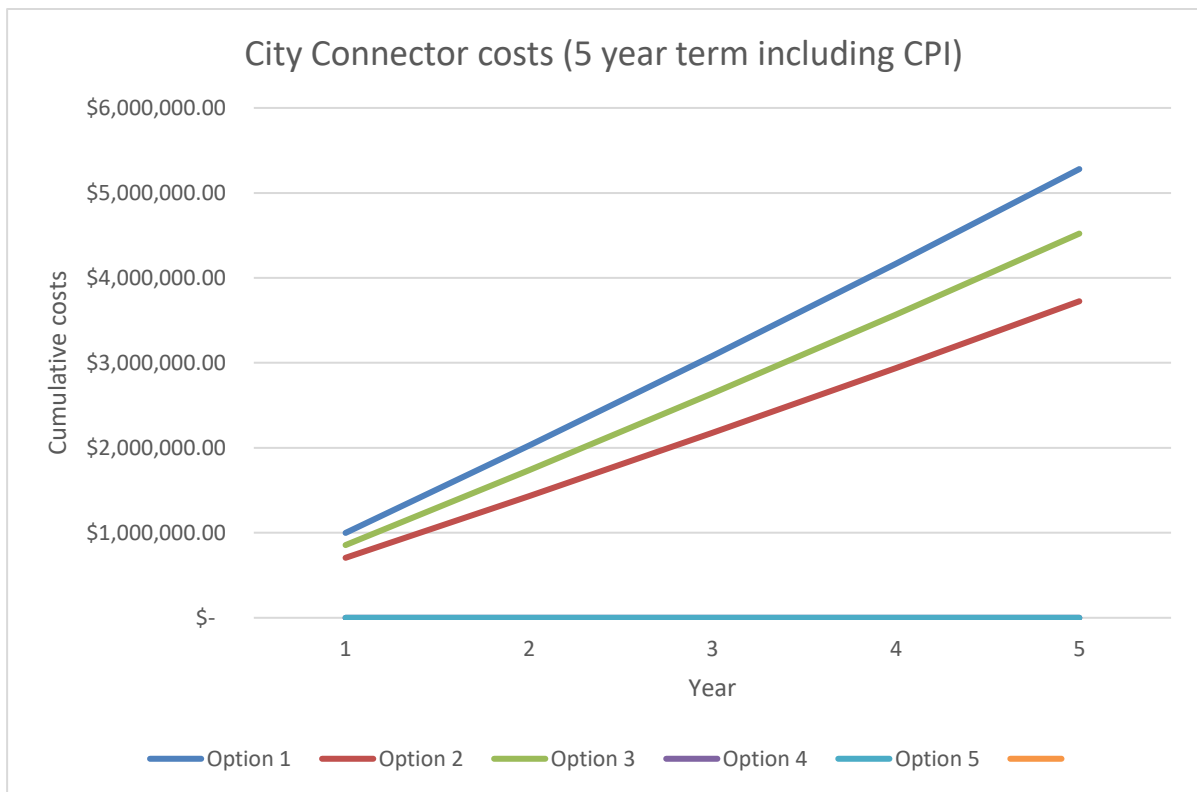
- 37. The City Access Strategy (the Strategy), a project from the Capital City Committee in collaboration with DPTI and CoA, aims to establish a future vision for transport and movement in the CoA.
- 38. The Strategy will take an integrated approach to the planning for transport infrastructure and services to support future growth in population, employment and visitors in the CoA and surrounding suburbs.
- 39. While not specifically examining any one service, the Strategy will consider bus movement in the city, with the aim of expanding service catchment and improving efficiency.

### **City Connector options**

- 40. A number of options have been considered for the future of the Connector bus service including:
  - 40.1. Option 1: continue with existing Connector route, co-funded with DPTI
  - 40.2. Option 2: adopt the DPTI proposed Connector route, co-funded with DPTI
  - 40.3. Option 3: adopt the DPTI proposed Connector route with modifications to include Hill Street and Jerningham Street, co-funded with DPTI
  - 40.4. Option 4: cancel the Connector service, and trial an on-demand transport service or similar
  - 40.5. Option 5: cancel the Connector service
- 41. The options are summarised in the below table:

Options	Opportunities	Risks	Financial implications	Community implications
Option 1: continue with existing Connector route, co-funded with DPTI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Retains existing routes, coverage and frequency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not supported by DPTI and co-funding may not be agreed due to duplication with free tram services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Estimated continuing cost per annum: \$923k</li> <li>Estimated 5 year contract cost: \$4.9m</li> <li>CoA may have to fund full service or cover shortfall</li> <li>High service costs remain</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintains current level of service</li> </ul>
Option 2: adopt the DPTI proposed Connector route, co-funded with DPTI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Removes duplication with tram services</li> <li>Integrates with revised Metro network</li> <li>Improved frequency to North Adelaide</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduction in coverage (North Adelaide west, Melbourne St, Morphett St)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Estimated continuing cost per annum: \$630k</li> <li>Estimated 5 year contract cost: \$3.4m</li> <li>Reduced, but still high service costs remain</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduced coverage within the city from existing</li> <li>Less confusing routes</li> </ul>
Option 3: adopt the DPTI proposed Connector route with modifications to include Hill Street and Jerningham Street, co-funded with DPTI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Removes duplication with tram</li> <li>Retains existing North Adelaide coverage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Will need to be agreed to by DPTI</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Estimated continuing cost per annum: \$780k</li> <li>Estimated 5 year contract cost: \$4.2m</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduced coverage within the city from existing</li> <li>Less confusing routes</li> <li>Reduced residential impact</li> </ul>
Option 4: cancel the Connector service, and trial an on-demand transport service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highly efficient compared to timetabled services</li> <li>Would highlight Adelaide as a progressive city</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Detailed investigation required before implementation</li> <li>An emerging approach, teething problems likely</li> <li>Not currently feasible for current Connector volumes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Likely cost savings over Connector bus</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More direct and efficient than bus</li> <li>Users may take time to adapt</li> <li>Relies on technology which will be a barrier for some existing users</li> <li>Will not meet user demand</li> </ul>
Option 5: cancel the Connector service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Funds could be directed elsewhere</li> <li>Discuss with DPTI opportunity to provide free travel within the City and North Adelaide</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reputational risk to Council</li> <li>Reduces city connectivity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Significant cost savings - \$1m per annum</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Would reduce accessibility of the city</li> </ul>

42. Costs for the various options are summarised in the below chart over a 5 year term, which would be the initial duration of the service changes. The costs shown include operational costs and depreciation to the 3 buses that CoA own and contribute to the service. The costs for Option 4 are not included as the option has not been scoped or currently given due consideration by DPTI.



## DATA & SUPPORTING INFORMATION

**Link 1** - Minister for Transport - Intention to Terminate City Connector Services

**Link 2** - Map of Proposed City Connector Route

**Link 3** - Map of City Connector Stop Popularity

**Link 4** - Table of City Connector Stop Patronage

**Link 5** - Map of Current and Projected City of Adelaide Population

**Link 6** - Map of City of Adelaide Population Age Demographics

**Link 7** - Map of Recent and Planned Development in the City of Adelaide

**Link 8** - Map of City of Adelaide's Proposed City Connector Route

## ATTACHMENTS

Nil

- END OF REPORT -