

Adelaide City Connector Bus

Strategic Alignment - Our Places

Public

Tuesday, 20 February 2024

Infrastructure and Public Works Committee

Program Contact:

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Infrastructure

Approving Officer:

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Services

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At its meeting on 28 March 2023, Council requested the Administration to prepare an implementation plan of the recommendations of the November 2020 City Connector Bus Service (City Connector) Engagement Summary report, including budget implications, and present it to the Infrastructure and Public Works Committee.

At its meeting on 9 February 2021, Council received a Report (item 10.1) on the City Connector Consultation Outcomes where the Administration advised of the outcomes of the City Connector Bus Service Engagement Summary Report.

This report has been prepared by the Administration in consultation with the Department for Infrastructure and Transport (DIT) and includes promotional measures that can be undertaken for the City Connector. Options to promote the service have been considered with a variety of approaches developed, ranging from no-cost to paid promotional options.

As the City Connector is a free service, patronage data is not recorded through ticketing information. Options for assessing the impacts of the campaign will be further discussed with DIT to consider potentially aligning the campaign with the periodic patronage counts to determine if a positive outcome is achieved.

RECOMMENDATION

The following recommendation will be presented to Council on 27 February 2024 for consideration

THAT THE INFRASTRUCTURE AND PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE RECOMMENDS TO COUNCIL

THAT COUNCIL

1. Notes that Council previously received a Report at its meeting on 9 February 2021 on the November 2020 City Connector Bus Service Engagement Summary Report.
 2. Notes promotional Option Two of this report will be considered as part of future Business Plan and Budget submission processes.
 3. Notes a report will be provided to the Infrastructure and Public Works Committee in the coming months on the City Connector Funding Deed.
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IMPLICATIONS AND FINANCIALS

City of Adelaide 2024-2028 Strategic Plan	Strategic Alignment – Our Places Community assets are adaptable and responsibly maintained
Policy	Not as a result of this report
Consultation	Not as a result of this report
Resource	Not as a result of this report
Risk / Legal / Legislative	Not as a result of this report
Opportunities	Opportunity to promote the City Connector service to facilitate passengers and increase patronage.
23/24 Budget Allocation	\$1,095,622 operating budget
Proposed 24/25 Budget Allocation	Recommended Option 2 results in a \$20,000 budget allocation being sought as part of future Business Plan & Budget submission process. Operating budget proposed to be \$1,126,299.
Life of Project, Service, Initiative or (Expectancy of) Asset	The Deed of Agreement for the operations of the City Connector extends for three years until June 2024. Notes a report will be provided to the Infrastructure and Public Works Committee in the coming months on the City Connector Funding Deed.
23/24 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	Whilst there is a 50/50 funding arrangement with DIT for the operation of the City Connector, any activities not considered operations, including promotional activities other than those being undertaken by DIT in-house, will be fully funded by CoA.

DISCUSSION

Background

1. At its meeting on 28 March 2023, Council resolved the following:

“That Council:

1. *Request Council Administration to prepare an implementation plan of the recommendations of the November 2021 City Connector Bus Service Engagement Summary Report, including budget implications and present it to the June Infrastructure and Public Works Committee meeting.”*
2. To provide clarity, the City Connector Bus Service Engagement Summary Report written by URPS is dated November 2020.
3. At its meeting on 9 February 2021, Council received a report ([Link 1](#)) titled City Connector Consultation Outcomes. The report presented the outcomes of the City Connector Bus Service Engagement Summary Report, and Council resolved the following:

“That Council:

1. *Receives the consultation report included in Attachment A to Item 10.1 on the Agenda for the meeting of the Council held on 9 February 2021, including outcomes from community and stakeholders workshops, intercept surveys, telephone surveys and the YourSay platform, which received almost 750 responses.*
2. *Approves, subject to Council’s support for the continuation of the service, a budget reconsideration of \$45,000 in QF3 to cover a funding shortfall resulting from DIT’s new service contract, resulting in an annual budget of \$1.1m, indexed.*
3. *Notes the public support for the services and for the existing routes to remain unchanged.*
4. *Ask the administration to review and to report to Council by the end of June 2021 on proposals, in partnership with DIT, to better promote the service.*
5. *Requests administration prioritise work to locate a low impact layover stop to mitigate the liveability impact of the current layover on Halifax Street adjacent to Hurtle Square.”*
4. As a result, a further report was presented to Council at its meeting on 8 June 2021 and Council received a Report ([Link 2](#)) on the City Connector Promotion and resolved the following:

“That Council:

1. *Notes the options developed for promotion of the City Connector service.*
2. *Approves, in partnership with DIT, the progression of the promotional options that can be undertaken at no additional cost to Council.*
3. *Notes that for any paid promotions, Council would be responsible for 100% of the cost.*
4. *Notes that assessment of the success of any campaign will be difficult due to the lack of ticketing information for the City Connector service and recent fluctuations in patronage.”*
5. In response to the Council resolution on 28 March 2023, the Administration has reviewed six Administrative actions that came out of the 2020 community engagement process from the discussion section of the 9 February 2021 Council Report ([Link 3](#)), including those to undertake further City Connector promotion. These actions and the corresponding paragraph numbers are listed below for reference.
 36. *The consultation process has highlighted the importance of the City Connector service to the community. The majority of respondents are happy with the service in its current form. It is recommended that the current route is retained.*
 37. *A number of existing stops are under-utilised, with several servicing fewer than 10 passengers per day. However, as these stops are located on the existing route, their removal or retention would have no impact on services timetables or operation. Consequently, it is recommended that all existing stops are retained.*
 38. *‘Stops H1 and S1 on Halifax Street are located adjacent to residential developments. These stops are used as timing points on all routes and buses can remain at these stops for several minutes. Since the commencement of the City Connector service, apartment buildings have been constructed on both sides of Halifax Street adjacent the stops. If an alternative stop location can be found that will not impact adjacent properties and can accommodate layover buses without the need for civil works, it is recommended that the layover point is relocated.*

39. *Better promotion of the service would assist in making more non-users aware of the service and would benefit tourists. It is recommended that options to improve promotion of the service are investigated.*
40. *Users and tourism-orientated stakeholders indicated that the route and stop naming can be confusing for some. It is recommended that possible naming alternatives are discussed with DIT. Suggestions raised during consultation included naming the stops after adjacent landmarks and more clearly highlighting clockwise / anticlockwise and City / North Adelaide routes would be more tourist-friendly and intuitive for residents.'*
41. *'Patronage analysis indicates that the services near the start and end of the day have low utilisation. It is recommended that operating hours are assessed to determine the suitability of removing the least utilised services from the timetable. This would impact a relatively minimal number of users and would result in operational cost savings.'*
6. The Administration advises that numbers 36, and 37 were for noting and did not require any further action.
7. In response to number 38 above, in April 2021 DIT changed the City Connector timing points and removed them from the residential locations at stops H1 and S1 Halifax Street. The layover points are currently located at stop I1 Whitmore Square and at stop D3 Grote Street. No complaints have been received by DIT following the changes being implemented.
8. The City Connector budget currently does not include any allowances for advertising. To address number 39 above, a promotional campaign would require new funding through a budget reconsideration or through the next Business Plan and Budget process.
9. In response to number 40 above, DIT has advised that the naming conventions are part of the whole bus network Wayfinding Strategy to ensure consistency for passengers. DIT has recently updated the City and North Adelaide Wayfinding online map ([Link 3](#)), and are being progressively updated at real time stops around the city, showing landmarks which may be useful for tourists and locals.
10. The Administration did not investigate number 41 as Council has indicated there would not be support for a reduction in the level of service.
11. Promotional options have been developed and are included below. Options have been separated to indicate those that can be undertaken at no additional cost and for those that will require new funding.

Promotion Objectives

12. The promotion objectives are:
- 12.1. Continue a convenient, valued community service to enable people to affordably get around and access different parts of the city to participate in city life.
- 12.2. Promote the City Connector in a campaign burst and on an ongoing basis to increase patronage through owned and earned channels.
13. The intention will be to deliver an awareness campaign, resulting in increased patronage. There are three identified campaign options incorporating a mix of free and paid promotional tactics, as well as a mix of ongoing and scheduled campaigns. Option 2 (medium spend) is recommended as the preferred option as it will allow the market to be tested at a lower cost with the potential to increase spend at a later date if positive outcomes are achieved. Options for assessing the impacts of the campaign will be further discussed with DIT to consider potentially aligning the campaign with the periodic patronage counts to determine if a positive outcome is achieved.
14. Campaigns could commence approximately four to six weeks from Council adoption of the next Business Plan and Budget, to allow time for campaign development.

Option 1 – Continue free promotion activities only across CoA owned channels.

15. The City Connector service can be promoted through existing CoA channels at no additional cost as detailed below.

Action	Timeframe	Cost
City of Adelaide website	Ongoing	\$0
Social media channels (organic)	Ongoing	\$0
'On hold' messaging within Customer Centre	Ongoing	\$0
Digital screens	Ongoing	\$0
Newsletter features	Ongoing	\$0

Key event webpage features	Ongoing	\$0
Web, digital, email and social media channels of partner organisations (e.g., DIT, Study Adelaide, Universities etc)	Ongoing	\$0

Option 2 – Medium spend (2-month campaign period and ongoing).

16. The anticipated cost of a 2-month campaign would be approximately \$20,000. Details of the campaign are listed below.

Action	Time fame	Cost per 2-month period
City of Adelaide website	Ongoing	\$0
'On hold' messaging within Customer Centre	Ongoing	\$0
Digital screens	Ongoing	\$0
Newsletter features	Ongoing	\$0
Key event webpage features	Ongoing	\$0
Web, digital, email and social media channels of partner organisations (e.g., DIT, Study Adelaide, Universities etc)	Ongoing	\$0
Social media channels (including paid advertising)	2 month paid burst	\$2,000
Google advertising	2 month paid burst	\$2,000
Bus shelter brand refresh on key stops	Ongoing	\$10,000
Flyers (distributed to key locations e.g., student accommodation, hotels, visitor information centre, airport)	Once-off	\$2,000
Radio	2 month paid burst	\$4,000
TOTAL		\$20,000

17. Option 2 is recommended as the preferred option as it will allow the market to be tested at a lower cost with the potential to increase spend at a later date if positive outcomes are achieved.

Option 3 – Highest spend (6-month campaign period including ongoing).

18. The anticipated cost of a 6-month campaign would be approximately \$50,000. Details of the campaign are listed below.

Action	Time fame	Cost per 6-month period
City of Adelaide website	Ongoing	\$0
Social media channels (including paid advertising)	6-month paid burst	\$6,000
'On hold' messaging within Customer Centre	Ongoing	\$0
Digital screens	Ongoing	\$0
Newsletter features	Ongoing	\$0
Key event webpage features	Ongoing	\$0
Web, digital, email and social media channels of partner organisations (e.g., DIT, Study Adelaide, Universities etc)	Ongoing	\$0
Google advertising	6-month paid burst	\$6,000
Bus shelter brand refresh on key stops	Ongoing	\$10,000
Radio	2 month paid burst	\$6,000

Action	Time fame	Cost per 6-month period
Flyers (distributed to key locations, e.g., student accommodation, hotels, visitor information centre, airport)	Once-off	\$2,000
Outdoor media (Billboard advertising)	2 month paid burst	\$10,000
DIT train station, tram and bus stop digital screens	2 month paid burst	\$4,000
DIT train stop audio	2 month paid burst	\$4,000
DIT in train stickers	2 month paid burst	\$2,000
TOTAL		\$50,000

Department for Infrastructure and Transport Campaigns

19. In May 2023, DIT wrapped the City Connector Buses in Kaurna artwork (two buses) and the colourful bump along community artwork (four buses). This was delivered as part of a State Government election commitment to make it easier for both residents and tourists to jump on board free services across the city and North Adelaide.
20. DIT is currently considering options for additional no-cost approaches they could undertake to promote the City Connector service.
 - 20.1. Updating and refreshing existing City Connector web content.
 - 20.2. Promotion on the Adelaide Railway Station visitor information centre digital screen.
 - 20.3. Promotion through posters and / or digital screens at Service SA locations.
21. DIT has advised it is in the process of evaluating the initial run of the 'back on board' advertising campaign that encouraged people to return to public transport following a COVID-19 related decline in patronage. DIT will keep CoA informed on possible future developments of this campaign.

Next Steps

22. Notes a report will be provided to the Infrastructure and Public Works Committee in the coming months on the City Connector Funding Deed. This report will allow Council to review the service and provide feedback on the route and bus stop locations.

DATA AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Link 1 – Council report dated 8 June 2021

Link 2 - Council report dated 2 February 2021

Link 3 – City and North Adelaide Wayfinding online map

ATTACHMENTS

Nil

- END OF REPORT -