

## MAYOR SAYS ROAD TRANSIT PLAN SELLS COMMUNITY SHORT

# Light rail bus-ted

**JOE SPAGNOLO**

Political Editor

THE Barnett Government's plan to dump its promised \$2.5 billion light rail project for a cheaper rapid bus transit system "just won't cut it", City of Vincent Mayor John Carey says.

Mr Carey said the light rail plan was not just about moving people from the northern suburbs into central Perth, but building communities around a light rail service and its stations.

He said the City of Vincent had already developed plans around a light rail system going down Fitzgerald Street, as had other land owners.

The original plan, first promised in 2012 and a major component of the 2013 re-election strategy, involved a 22km route starting at Balga, running along Alexander Drive and Fitzgerald St into the city before branching off to Queen Elizabeth II Medical Centre and east to the Causeway.

Yesterday, Premier Colin Barnett confirmed he had asked Transport Minister Dean Nalder to investigate "the advantages and disadvantages" of both plans. "If we did decide to move to a BRT (bus rapid transit) system this could be simply upgraded to a Max Light rail in the longer term," he said.

But Mr Carey said: "This is a lost opportunity for a transitional project.

"To now turn around, after years of promises, to say, 'we'll give you some buses instead',

just doesn't cut it.

"You get a major transformation of centres around rail nodes. You won't get that kind of renewal around a rapid bus transit system."

Curtin University transport expert Jemma Green said "pursuing buses in lieu of light rail shows a lack of understanding about light rail".

"It's not just about bang for buck as a people-moving exercise. Light rail, critically and distinctly, catalyses development around it – density and urban village centres. Buses can never do that," she said.

"Light rail shows a commitment to a city growing, putting in place a more permanent public transport, it allows land use planning to really be optimised.

"If the Government has \$1.2 billion to spend, it would be far better off spending \$1.2 billion on a shorter section of light rail."

As revealed on PerthNow on Friday, the Barnett Government is now considering using buses – rather than trains – to ease congestion along a 22km route through the Perth metro area.

Mr Nalder commissioned a preliminary investigation into the plan last year which showed it could be done for half the \$2.5 billion revised cost of the light rail project.

Mr Nalder said yesterday it would be "irresponsible" not to further investigate the plan in

light of the Government's worsening financial position and the fact that MAX had already been deferred to at least 2017.

"If we can use buses and deliver the same outcomes (as rail) and do it at half the cost why wouldn't we explore it?" Mr Nalder said.

"I would be hopeful that if this (stacks up), the plan would be accepted by Cabinet.

"At this stage, I have only spoken to the Premier and Treasurer who encouraged me to explore this further and go public with the idea.

"But we need to explore it further and this week I will be speaking to the Department of Transport about that."

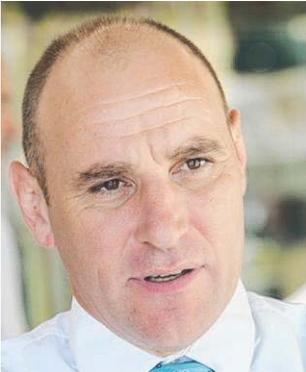
Mr Nalder said he would now develop a business plan to take to Cabinet next year.



Rail roaded: A Bus Rapid Transit vehicle on the road in Las Vegas.

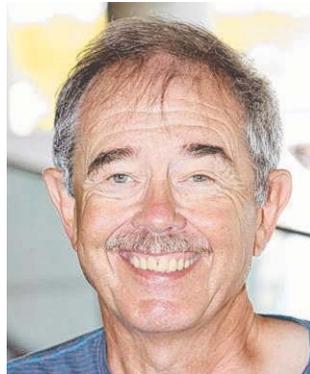
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## WE ASKED WHAT YOU THINK OF THE RAPID BUS PLAN



**NICK WOOD, 45,  
MANAGER FROM  
ROLEYSTONE**

"If a bus system was more efficient and less costly, then no problem. But would we get that answer before implementing it? Probably not."



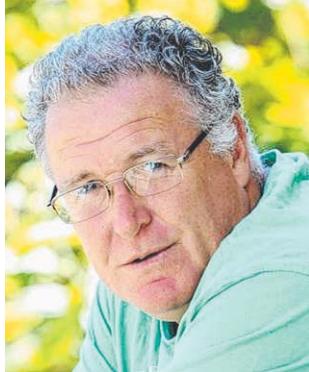
**ALAN WILSON, 64,  
ENGINEER FROM  
CONNOLLY**

"The light rail system would provide a more direct route. People feel safer on a train than a bus because there's more security."



**TAYLOR GULLOTTI, 18,  
STUDENT FROM  
WANNEROO**

"In the long term, I think it would be better to spend more money on a light rail system."



**ROB JEFFREY, 58,  
COMMUNICATIONS WORKER  
FROM DUNSBOROUGH**

"I come from Melbourne and we have the equivalent of a light rail network. I think it's a great idea. Perth's current transport system leaves a lot to be desired."



**MIKE HEPWORTH, 21,  
SCHOOL CHAPLAIN FROM  
CONNOLLY**

"Our transport system is five years in the past of anywhere else in the world. If we have light rail, we need to increase the size of our trains because there's just too much congestion."