

PLANNERS CALL FOR CERTAINTY

MAX plan backtrack may derail developers

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The State Government's change of heart over the MAX light rail system has left a raft of developers with compromised plans for property projects along the city's northern corridor.

The Property Council is now calling on the Government to end the uncertainty.

Plans for apartments, shopping centres and smaller retail projects have been left in limbo by the stalled project and the industry group said it was now unlikely developers would secure the best use of well-placed land along the 22km route.

Property Council executive director Joe Lenzo said a light rail system would allow for projects that catered to higher levels of density but holding costs would put a time limit on those opportunities.

"Developers can't hold land for ever when there is this level of uncertainty," Mr Lenzo said. "They will develop the land based on what's there now and that's not the best use.

"It's not just residential apartments — the delays have certainly affected people who owned retail property, shopping centre expansions and other small business along the route."

The MAX project, which would extend from Mirrabooka to the city and then west to the medical precinct around QEII and east to Victoria Park, was promised by the Barnett Government at the last State election but was deferred in 2013 because of Budget constraints.

Transport Minister Dean Nalder has since commissioned a study to look at replacing light rail with a rapid bus system.

Mr Lenzo said the implication of a bus study was that rail was no longer an option.

"It's now looking pretty obvious that's the way they are going to go but we still don't know for sure," he said.

"The deferral is becoming a nonsense. It's a deferral with no end date of any kind and a deferral with no certainty of what we are going to have.

"The industry urgently needs a

decision on the form and the route for the alternative plan."

Mr Lenzo said the Property Council had asked the Government for its best-case situation so that it could be relayed to members.

"This is a bad outcome and let's face it, because of congestion, public transport is one of the most crucial areas that we need to look at," he said.

"It is probably the most critical infrastructure requirement that this State has and it's the one that is being played with."