

Mr Andrew Barr MLA  
Chief Minister & Treasurer  
GPO Box 1020  
CANBERRA ACT 2601



2021-22 ACT BUDGET CONSULTATION  
Public Transport Association of Canberra

Dear Chief Minister,

The Public Transport Association of Canberra (PTCBR) welcomes the opportunity to participate in the 2021-22 Budget Consultation process. This submission provides our views on the revenue and expenditure priorities of the ACT, with a specific focus on public transport.

PTCBR recognises that the provision of high-quality public transport services is essential to ensuring equitable, affordable, and attractive transport options for all Canberrans. Good public transport increases ridership and reduces the use and ownership of private vehicles, with benefits flowing to individuals and households through reduced costs, the community through reduced pollution and congestion, and the government through reduced expenditure on public roads, including externalities such as emergency services and healthcare costs.

PTCBR's submission has been considered in the context of these well recognised benefits, as well as the ACT Government's recently adopted *ACT Transport Recovery Plan*, the *Zero-Emission Transition Plan* and the *ACT Transport Strategy 2020*. Our recommendations are consistent with the priorities outlined in these key documents.

Finally, successive budgets have "re-profiled" a number of key transport projects into the future. For example, the 2017-18 budget anticipated the Woden bus depot would be completed by June 2019. However, last year's budget estimated that Stage 1 of this project would not be completed until 2022-23. PTCBR encourages further investment in project delivery capabilities, as well as the projects themselves, to ensure they are delivered as soon as possible.

Members of the PTCBR Executive Committee are available to discuss any aspect of this submission.

Sincerely,

Ryan Hemsley  
Chair,  
Public Transport Association of Canberra  
chair@ptcbr.org.au

# PTCBR 2021-22 ACT BUDGET SUBMISSION

## Budget Priority 1: Bus lanes

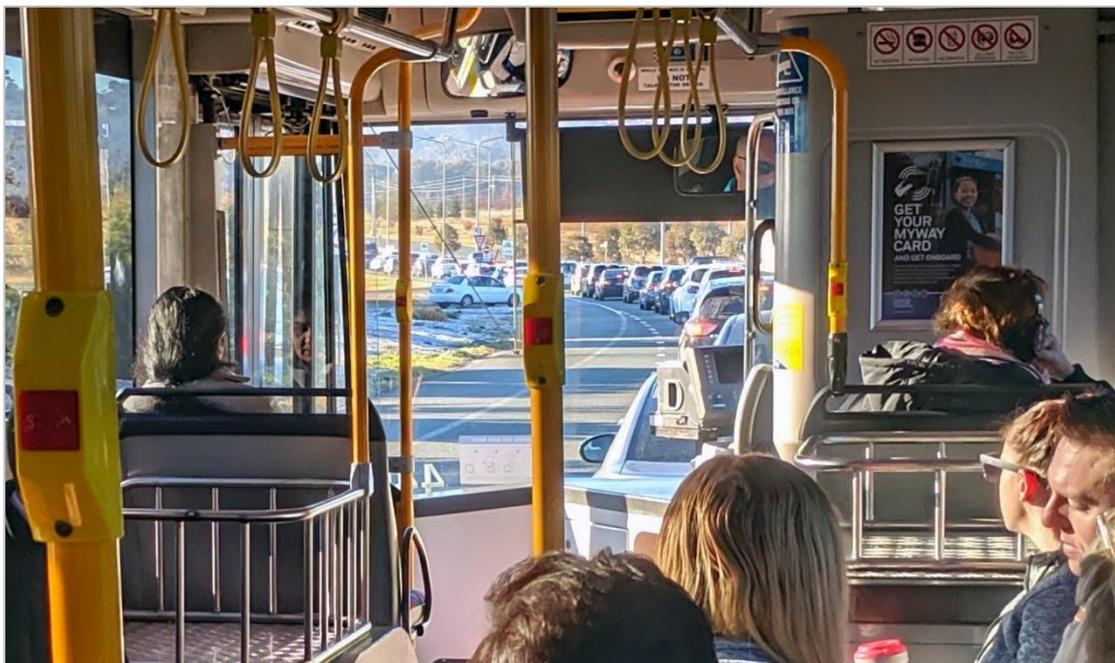
One of the key actions outlined in the *ACT Transport Recovery Plan* to assist in the uptake of public transport patronage in a COVID-normal world is the “increased prioritisation of buses on our roads through the provision of additional bus lanes”.<sup>1</sup>

PTCBR strongly supports the creation of bus priority measures in areas where road congestion is a persistent issue. Such measures improve the reliability and speed of bus services, producing a virtuous circle that is likely to drive increased patronage.

PTCBR has identified several areas across the ACT where such measures could be introduced to relieve existing transport bottlenecks, including:

- Mouat Street, at the intersection with Northbourne Avenue
- Haydon Drive, between Battye Street and Belconnen Way
- Cotter Road, eastbound between John Gorton Drive and Kirkpatrick Street and westbound between Yarralumla Creek and the Tuggeranong Parkway
- Mirrabei Drive and Anthony Rolf Avenue, between Paul Coe Crescent and Gozzard Street
- Hindmarsh Drive, between Namatjira Drive and Melrose Drive, and
- Soward Way and Athllon Drive, within the Tuggeranong Town Centre.

PTCBR recommends that funding in the 2021-22 budget be allocated towards identifying which corridors would most benefit from additional priority measures and undertaking feasibility studies to facilitate their future implementation.



**Figure 1:** Interior of a bus caught in northbound AM traffic on the Cotter Road

<sup>1</sup> Action 3, "New Normal and Beyond" phase of the *ACT Transport Recovery Plan*

## Budget Priority 2: Northern bus depot

While significant funding has been allocated towards the future procurement of new vehicles to replace the ageing buses in the Transport Canberra fleet, the continued growth of Canberra's population necessitates the acquisition of additional vehicles to increase the capacity of the network to deliver more and better services.

To its credit, the ACT Government has outlined a plan to construct two new bus depots, which will also help facilitate the transition of the bus fleet to zero-emissions vehicles. Unfortunately, while work on the Woden bus depot is well progressed, little information exists about the proposed new Northern bus depot, other than its scheduled opening date of 2026.<sup>2</sup>

To ensure that this project is not faced with unnecessary delays, PTCBR recommends that funding be allocated in the 2021-22 budget to fast-track the necessary feasibility and design work for the new Northern bus depot.



**Figure 2:** A perspective render of the new Woden bus depot, scheduled for completion in 2022-23

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<sup>2</sup> 'Transition Pathway', Action 4 of the *Zero-Emission Transition Plan*

### Budget Priority 3: Ticketing system

The COVID-19 pandemic has seen the Transport Canberra bus fleet switch towards a “cash free” ticketing system. Recent comments by the ACT Minister for Transport suggest that this change is likely to be permanent, with the proposed new ticketing system being entirely cashless.<sup>3</sup>

PTCBR is concerned about potential social equity issues that may arise from removing a common method of payment from the transport system. As it stands, there are too few MyWay recharge machines located across the ACT to provide infrequent users of public transport with a reliable means of purchasing tickets.

To minimise the transition period between MyWay and the proposed new ticketing system, PTCBR recommends that funding in the 2021-22 budget be allocated to ensuring that the procurement of the new system occurs in a reasonable timeframe, with a view to having MyWay phased out by no later than 2023.



**Figure 3:** A MyWay recharge machine at the City Bus Interchange

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<sup>3</sup> [the-riotact.com/cash-fares-history-as-government-seeks-myway-replacement](https://the-riotact.com/cash-fares-history-as-government-seeks-myway-replacement)

## Budget Priority 4: Bus shelters

Arguably one of the most overlooked aspects of a good public transport system, the provision of high-quality shelters, connected footpaths and suitable lighting can make public transport a safer and more attractive choice for potential passengers.

Canberra has a proud history of providing public transport shelters that are both functional and enduring. As evidenced by the popularity of the concrete “bunker” shelter and its recent ascension to becoming an icon for the city, there is clearly strong public demand for the benefits that such facilities provide.

To build on this public goodwill, PTCBR recommends that funding in the 2021-22 budget be allocated towards the continued rollout of accessible bus stops along all of Transport Canberra’s rapid and local bus routes, with an interim target of all rapid bus stops having shelters, footpaths, and lighting by 2024.



**Figure 4:** An example of an unsheltered bus stop (1286) on Boddington Crescent in Kambah

## Budget Priority 5: Light rail

PTCBR strongly supports the ACT Government's investment in light rail. With the completion of light rail to Woden still many years away, there is an opportunity to conduct early consultation and feasibility work for future extensions, with a view to minimise the kind of costly planning delays that have affected light rail stage two.

Consistent with the strategic routes identified in the *ACT Transport Strategy 2020*, the *ACT Infrastructure Plan* and the *Light Rail Network Plan*, funding in the 2021-22 budget should be allocated towards conducting feasibility and consultation processes for future extensions, such as Belconnen to the Airport and Mawson to Tuggeranong.

To maximise transparency and facilitate an informed and civilised debate about the future form of Canberra's light rail network, the comparative costs, patronage estimates, journey times, development opportunities and environmental impacts of the various alignments should be investigated early and made publicly available.<sup>4</sup>



**Figure 5:** The interim terminus of Canberra's light rail network at Alinga Street, prior to its extension to Canberra's southern districts

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<sup>4</sup> [ptcbr.org/2021/03/08/next-stop-belconnen-why-the-alignment-of-the-belconnen-to-city-light-rail-line-deserves-scrutiny](https://ptcbr.org/2021/03/08/next-stop-belconnen-why-the-alignment-of-the-belconnen-to-city-light-rail-line-deserves-scrutiny)