



# Submission to the Light Rail Stage 2B Draft Environmental Impact Statement

June 2024

**SUBMISSION TO THE LIGHT RAIL STAGE 2B  
DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

PUBLIC TRANSPORT ASSOCIATION OF CANBERRA



The Public Transport Association of Canberra (PTCBR) are grateful for the opportunity to provide feedback as part of the current public consultation round on the *Light Rail Stage 2B: Commonwealth Park to Woden* project.

PTCBR are highly supportive of this project and is pleased to see it advancing. The decision to extend Canberra's successful light rail network south to Woden was announced many years ago and has been debated and ultimately accepted by the community as the next logical step in creating a north-south public transport spine. However, it is not until this year that more detailed plans have been released to the public – and with this has come information about various technical challenges and issues presented by the proposed route. We are glad to see open communication from the team at Major Projects Canberra about the challenges of extending light rail to Woden and are confident that suitable engineering, design, and environmental solutions will be found.

PTCBR acknowledge a diversity of views within our membership on the two routes presented - these being the ACT Government's preferred route around State Circle East and the alternative route through Parkes-Barton. Our feedback is premised on the project proceeding with the State Circle East route. We appreciate the need for Major Projects Canberra to present these options, and have evaluated all information released in line with our commitment to advocating for:

- a) the most effective public transport options for Canberra, and
- b) the optimal employment of a mass transit system.

This feedback report is presented in two sections. The first section looks at key themes that have been consistently present in discussions and feedback heard by the PTCBR Committee from our membership and the general public. The second section presents feedback pertaining to each of the precincts comprising the LRS2B alignment.

PTCBR trust that our recommendations are of use in preparing the draft Environmental Impact Statement for LRS2B and are available to provide further information or answer any questions you have arising from this submission

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ryan Hemsley', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Ryan Hemsley  
Chair, Public Transport Association of Canberra  
[chair@ptcbr.org](mailto:chair@ptcbr.org)

## Section 1: Key topics



### *Transport interchanges and bus connectivity*

PTCBR are eager to see thoughtful integration of the *Light Rail Stage 2B: Commonwealth Park to Woden* (LRS2B) project with Canberra's bus network. We know that work on this needs to start now. While light rail will not commence southside operations for some years, planning for the necessary infrastructure to ensure full network integration must be incorporated into the project design now.

PTCBR call for planning and design work to commence on anticipated transport interchanges and bus connectivity measures along the LRS2B route. We believe this must include, but not be limited to, the following:

- ➔ **Connecting passengers on the R7 and R10 bus routes to LRS2B.** This could be implemented with a new bus stop and appropriate pedestrian connections in the vicinity of the intersection of Kent, Novar, and Dudley Streets to allow passengers to easily access the Kent Street light rail station.
- ➔ **Connectivity between stops in the Parliament House Precinct and the R2, R6, 56 and 59 bus routes.** Light rail stations on the State Circle East alignment and bus stops serviced by routes 2, 6, 56, and 59 will all be within a 500 metre walking distance of each other. PTCBR strongly urges planning for the creation of safe and direct active travel routes between these stops.
  - Connectivity between the Barton bus station and the Kings Avenue light rail station will also be critical. The 500 metres between these stations, located primarily along Kings Avenue, should be transformed into an active, vibrant, and highly walkable corridor.
- ➔ **Future transport network planning.** The extension of light rail to Woden will free up hundreds of bus service kilometres per hour that can be used to provide significantly improved local bus services right across Canberra. PTCBR urges all relevant stakeholders to begin this planning now, taking lessons from Light Rail Stage 1 (LRS1) to produce better network integration outcomes.



### *Stop location*

PTCBR urges the LRS2B project team, along with other relevant stakeholders, to consider the placement of the proposed Kent/Novar Street stop in the context of the proposed North Curtin Residential Area. This new neighbourhood will contain over 1,000 new homes, and transport arrangements for area must be incorporated into planning decisions now. Some possible placement options for this stop are illustrated in [Figure 1](#).



**Figure 1:** Possible light rail station locations and connections.

PTCBR acknowledge that there are sound reasons for maintaining the present stop location and also for moving it. We do not advocate exclusively for either option, but urge a fully-researched decision that ensures the best outcomes for future residents of catchment areas around LRS2B stations.



## Station design and access

PTCBR call for a holistic approach to the design of stations and surrounding areas in the Inner South and Yarra Glen precincts to ensure facilities that are pleasant, safe, and attractive to use for a wide range of passengers. These stops are located in the median of a freeway road environment and thus present a range of challenges from a passenger-focused perspective. From conversations with the LRS2B project team, we are confident that solutions to these challenges are being actively considered and planned for.

We note that LRS2B requires a more expansive view when planning station approaches than was required for LRS1, which featured more readily accessible stations at grade with the street, surrounded by shops/offices/residential buildings, and in many cases had well-developed pedestrian infrastructure already in place.

Our analysis and recommendations for station design and access are informed by data recorded from LRS1 operations showing that *“the median distance that people travel is approximately 600 metres to a Light Rail Stop and 500 metres*

from a Light Rail Stop to their destination. However, the distribution of trips indicated that people regularly travelled up to 1,200 metres to access stops.<sup>1</sup> We have applied these distances to the LRS2B route, as shown in [Figure 2](#).



**Figure 2:** LRS2 alignment showing median and outlier passenger walking distances.

<sup>1</sup> Light Rail Five Years On: Benefits Realisation Report 2024, p11.

Below are a list of key station concerns that have been raised by PTCBR members:

- **Accessibility.** PTCBR encourage careful consideration of necessary improvements to pedestrian infrastructure on approach to LRS2B stations - including, but not limited to, wide footpaths, appropriate pedestrian storage areas at intersections, and favourable light cycles for pedestrians.

PTCBR strongly support the expansive approach to wayfinding taken with LRS1 and encourages a similar scope to adopted for LRS2B. The signage and lighting installed at and around LRS1 stops has had a significant uplift effect on the surrounding, and we anticipate that this will have an even more pronounced effect around proposed LRS2B stations which are largely located in areas that are currently unfriendly to pedestrian activity.

- **Safety and area activation.** PTCBR encourage the LRS2B project team and relevant stakeholders to maximise opportunities to improve land use surrounding stations to encourage increased levels of pedestrian activity at all times of the day. This will be a significant contributor to both real and perceived safety levels at all stations, especially those located in a freeway median environment.
- **Weather protection.** PTCBR support the implementation of coverings over walkways, staircases, and waiting areas. While we recognise factors such as cost and visual impact, we consider that the overriding consideration here must be ensuring passenger comfort in an exposed and harsh environment.
- **Noise.** We strongly suggest that noise reduction measures are investigated and implemented to aid passenger comfort. This may include noise barriers and road surface treatments that reduce the sound of tyres on the road, which is the main source of road noise.



## ***Progressive commissioning of Stage 2B***

PTCBR encourage the project team to consider progressive commissioning of light rail to Woden – that is, commissioning operations in stages. We do not mean splitting design or procurement processes for LRS2B.

The first stage to be commissioned could be from Commonwealth Park to Sydney Avenue; we note that a track cross-over and battery recharging would be necessary to enable return trips from this point. An alternative first operational stage could terminate at Hopetoun Circuit where overhead power is expected to resume.

Progressive commissioning could realise significant benefits of LRS2B earlier than anticipated and more rapidly serve the currently developing office precinct in Barton, the visitor attractions in the National Triangle, and Parliament House.

PTCBR believe this would be welcomed by the Federal Government, not only the precinct's major employer and landholder, but also an expected joint funder of the project. Various office projects in the National Triangle are currently underway or in planning, with the Australian Tax Office's new national office - expected to accommodate more than 2,000 staff - expected to be occupied by 2026.<sup>2</sup> On National Circuit, two other smaller projects are also underway, while development approvals have been submitted for two additional projects on Brisbane Avenue.

Importantly, construction of the 5,000 pax National Security Precinct on the corner of Brisbane Avenue and State Circle will commence in 2025.<sup>3</sup> This location will have a high occupancy rate, as there is likely to be little scope for employees at this precinct to work from home. Good transport connections will therefore be essential.

## Section 2: Feedback by precinct

### Commonwealth Avenue Precinct

#### Albert Hall station

- PTCBR anticipate that the Albert Hall station will perform an important role in making this precinct a place for people, not just cars. A light rail stop will encourage higher levels of public transport travel to the many places of interest within a short walk of the station, as shown in [Figure 2](#).
- We anticipate that this light rail station can and will be a catalyst for re-thinking land use in this area. We note that there are many surface carparks near the future Albert Hall station location - these are Treasury West, Treasury South, National Library Flynn Place, and the National Library short stay carparks, which account for a tremendous amount of land use. Strong public transport connections will enable a shift away from car-centric travel and land use in this area. PTCBR strongly encourages all stakeholders to collaborate on this issue and begin the discussion on redeveloping the surface carparks in the National Triangle into new precincts and attractions.
- Place-making around the Albert Hall stop ought to deliver on the possibilities identified in the National Capital Authority's 2004 publication *The Griffin Legacy*, which proposed, among other long-term changes to the Parliamentary Triangle, removal of the cloverleaves on the southern approach to Commonwealth Avenue Bridge and their replacement with a T-junction intersection of Commonwealth Ave and King Edward Terrace.

### Parliament House Precinct

#### Kings Avenue station

- PTCBR urge the redesign of roads surrounding this station to allow for comfortable and safe pedestrian access from all directions. This should

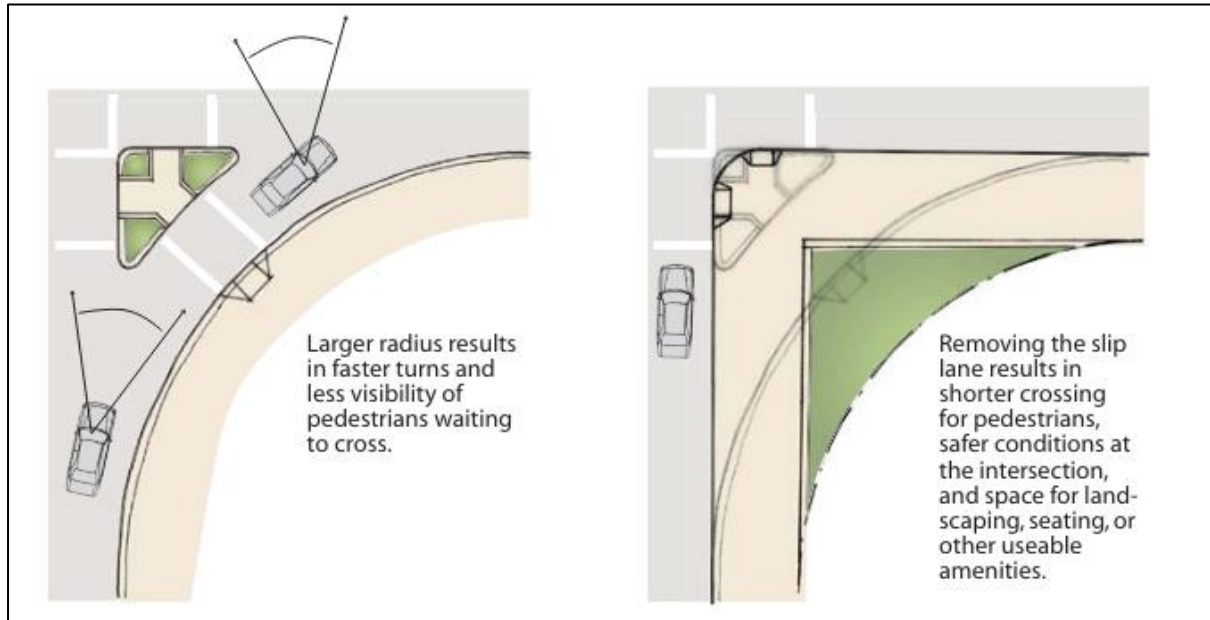
---

<sup>2</sup> [content.knightfrank.com/research/451/documents/en/canberra-office-market-march-2024-11065.pdf](https://content.knightfrank.com/research/451/documents/en/canberra-office-market-march-2024-11065.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> [finance.gov.au/government/property-and-construction/national-security-office-precinct](https://finance.gov.au/government/property-and-construction/national-security-office-precinct)

involve the removal of all slip lanes at this intersection (as described in [Figure 3](#)), as well as:

- timely pedestrian access to the light rail station - no lengthy waits at traffic lights
- appropriate levels of pedestrian storage capacity - no crowds forced onto small islands, and
- safe, unambiguous, formal crossing points.



**Figure 3:** Removing slip lanes provides a safer environment for pedestrians and additional room for landscaping and other amenities.

- ➔ We further recommend engaging with Federal Government to deliver two zebra crossings across Parliament Drive to ensure light rail passengers have a convenient and safe way to enter and leave Parliament House after walking up Kings Avenue.

### **Sydney Avenue station**

- ➔ This station will provide a more accessible connection to Parliament House (particularly for passholders who can enter and leave at the House of Representatives entrance) via the existing underpass under Capital Circle, currently used to access the Parliament House grounds maintenance depot. Improvements to the pedestrian environment in this area would benefit not only light rail passengers arriving at Parliament House, but also the entire Parliamentary community and visitors who seek to access services, businesses, hotels and residential buildings in Barton.

### **Melbourne Avenue station**

- ➔ As with the Kings Avenue station, the roads surrounding the Melbourne Avenue station must be redesigned to ensure convenient and safe passenger movements around the station. At a minimum, the slip lanes at the Melbourne Avenue/State Circle intersection should be removed.



## ***Inner South Precinct***

### **Hopetoun Circuit station**

- Bus stops must be located close to the station stairs/elevator to minimise the walking distance and number of traffic lanes that passengers need to cross to safely transfer between bus and light rail services.
- Hopetoun Circuit should be redesigned to allow for safe, pleasant, and prioritised pedestrian movement to and from this station. This should involve the removal of any slip lanes near the station.
- Covered stairs and walkways are important at this exposed location to reduce weather impacts, including from rain and ice.

### **Kent Street station**

- Bus stops must be located close to the station stairs/elevator to minimise the walking distance and number of traffic lanes that passengers need to cross to safely transfer between bus and light rail services.
- Kent and Novar Streets should be redesigned to allow for safe, pleasant, and prioritised pedestrian movement to and from this station. This should involve the removal of any slip lanes near the station.
- Traffic noise mitigation measures should be considered to provide a more comfortable environment for people waiting at the platform.
- Covered stairs and walkways are important at this exposed location to reduce weather impacts, including from rain and ice.

## ***Yarra Glen Precinct***

### **Carruthers Street station**

- Bus stops must be located close to the station stairs/elevator to minimise the walking distance and number of traffic lanes that passengers need to cross to safely transfer between bus and light rail services.
- Carruthers Street should be redesigned to facilitate pleasant and easy pedestrian access to this station. This should involve the removal of any slip lanes near the station.

## ***Woden Precinct***

### **Phillip Oval station**

- PTCBR propose an active travel bridge across Yarralumla Creek that provides direct connections to existing and proposed footpaths.
- We also suggest consolidation of nearby surface car parks into a multi-level parking structure and the release of remaining sites for mixed-use retail near this station.

## Woden Interchange

- PTCBR urge the LRS2B project team to reconsider wire-free running in this precinct. The need for it in this area, located well outside the Parliamentary Zone, has not been adequately justified.
- We encourage provisions to be made for the future extension south to Mawson. This should involve delivering a short section of track down to Neptune/Wilbow Streets to minimise operational disruption during construction of the future extension.
- To assist with pedestrian access from the east, we urge the replacement and upgrading of the bridge across Yarralumla Creek located next to the new Woden Community Services Hub, as announced in the 2024-25 ACT Budget.<sup>4</sup>

### Submission image sources:

Cover Page: *Artist's impression of Kings Avenue stop on State Circle alignment*, by Major Projects Canberra via YourSay.

Figure 3: *San Francisco Planning – Better Streets Plan (December 2010), p137.*

---

<sup>4</sup> [act.gov.au/our-canberra/latest-news/2024/june/act-budget-whats-in-it-for-woden,-weston-creek-and-molonglo](https://act.gov.au/our-canberra/latest-news/2024/june/act-budget-whats-in-it-for-woden,-weston-creek-and-molonglo)