

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

Budget estimates 2020–21 (Carroll)

Melbourne—Thursday, 17 December 2020

MEMBERS

Ms Lizzie Blandthorn—Chair

Mr Richard Riordan—Deputy Chair

Mr Sam Hibbins

Mr David Limbrick

Mr Gary Maas

Mr Danny O’Brien

Ms Pauline Richards

Mr Tim Richardson

Ms Nina Taylor

Ms Bridget Vallenge

WITNESSES

Mr Ben Carroll, MP, Minister for Public Transport,

Mr Paul Younis, Secretary, and

Mr Nicholas Foa, Deputy Secretary, Transport Services, Department of Transport; and

Ms Santhi Sinniah, Public Accounts and Estimates Committee Adviser.

The CHAIR: I declare open this hearing of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee.

On behalf of the Parliament, the committee is conducting this Inquiry into the 2020–21 Budget Estimates. Its aim is to scrutinise public administration and finance to improve outcomes for the Victorian community.

We note that witnesses and members may remove their masks when speaking to the committee but should replace them afterwards.

All mobile telephones should now be turned to silent.

All evidence taken by this committee is protected by parliamentary privilege. Comments repeated outside this hearing may not be protected by this privilege.

Witnesses will be provided with a proof version of the transcript to check. Verified transcripts, presentations and handouts will be placed on the committee's website as soon as possible.

We welcome Minister Carroll and officers from your department, and we invite you to make an opening statement which will be followed by questions from the committee. Thank you.

Visual presentation.

Mr CARROLL: Thank you, Chair, and members. It is a pleasure to be here this afternoon with Secretary Paul Younis and head of transport services Nicholas Foa. The 2020–21 budget responds to the challenges we have faced this year and sets our public transport system up for the future with a series of unprecedented investments. In addition to the major transport infrastructure projects you heard about earlier from Minister Allan, I will also outline to the committee today how we are investing in operations and also making sure that the network is doing everything it can to support Victoria's economic recovery. There are a series of landmark investments that I will touch on, including the \$1.5 billion investment in 100 next-generation trams, a \$20 million trial of zero-emissions buses, nearly \$200 million to maintain and improve the performance of the regional rail network and \$25.4 million into new bus services for schools in our fast-growing outer suburbs.

As you can see on the graph, public transport use is still at only 52 per cent of its pre-pandemic average. The proactive measures put in place by the government to limit the spread of COVID-19 caused a significant reduction in people using all modes of public transport. In the immediate days following the first round of stage 3 restrictions patronage dropped by about 75 per cent and then increased with the gradual easing of restrictions. Under stage 4 restrictions, patronage declined again to approximately 240 000 daily trips on the network, compared to a baseline expectation of just over 2 million. That is a reduction of 86 per cent.

The pattern we have seen in Victoria is consistent with that of other jurisdictions across the globe, and indeed a number of other jurisdictions have struggled to rebuild passenger numbers since the initial onset of the pandemic earlier this year. This has the potential to create a transport and wider economic challenge. If we do not respond with the continued operation of our public transport and get people to return to it, there will be risks in terms of road congestion, road safety and also a loss of productivity.

This is why the Victorian government has taken unprecedented action over the course of this year to keep our public transport system running, to ensure that it is COVID safe and to put in place measures that will give Victorians confidence in returning to the network. The budget includes \$438 million in funding for the transport COVID response that has supported much of this work. Throughout the year public transport operators have continued to run a full timetable to make sure people who need it to get to work, such as medical staff and retail

workers, could still travel when they needed to. We have continued to pay the operators their full core franchise payments on the basis that all staff would be retained.

Other measures listed in this slide that we have put in place include enhanced cleaning across the public transport network, installation of more than 350 contactless hand sanitising stations and removing cash transactions from buses. The PTV app has also been redesigned to be fully accessible and deliver more personalised functionality for the more than half a million Victorians who used it every week before the pandemic. The new design allows passengers to manage their Myki through the app, as well as real-time bus and train location information to help passengers know when their service will arrive and depart. We have also begun the first phase of a trial to get passengers information about how busy their train station or bus will be, an important measure coming out of COVID.

We invested \$22 million in a support package for the commercial passenger vehicle industry, as we know this is another vital component of our public transport system, and we have added hundreds of additional services across the train and tram networks so passengers have more choice and more opportunity to spread out.

This slide shows the spread of additional services we have added to the network over recent months, including the 95 additional weekly services added in July and, more recently, the 450 weekly services that will commence on 31 January next year. We are seizing the benefits of the Big Build by delivering more frequent services following upgrades on the Ballarat, Geelong, Cranbourne, Pakenham and Frankston lines. This will also support efforts to get people back on the network, providing more travel options and more space on services—very important measures—as we focus on new services to extend the peak-hour frequency to broaden the peaks for longer periods across the morning and afternoon.

The other major budget commitments for the public transport portfolio are focused on getting people moving again and back to work after the pandemic. I would like to use my remaining time to cover off each of these in a little more detail. As we know, Melbourne is home to the largest tram network in the world, which in normal times moves around 800 000 passengers every day. Our trams are iconic and a part of our social fabric in Melbourne. The 2020–21 budget invests in the future of our tram network through the largest order of trams in decades. These 100 modern, accessible trams will progressively replace Victoria's ageing A- and Z-class tram fleet. By allowing us to retire much of the high-floor tram fleet, we will also be able to support Victoria's compliance with commonwealth disability standards for accessible public transport. This investment will support close to 1900 local manufacturing and supply jobs across peak production. An investment like this also builds on the state's advanced manufacturing capability and helps Victorian workers and businesses develop skills in cutting-edge advanced manufacturing. There is also funding to begin the process of establishing a new tram maintenance facility in Melbourne's west to support the deployment of the next generation of trams.

We also want to become the leader in global emissions in terms of smart, sustainable transport solutions, and this year's budget does invest \$20 million in a statewide trial to investigate solutions to achieve a zero-emissions bus fleet and create a pipeline of local job opportunities. The zero-emissions bus trial will run over three years, trialling different technologies on buses right across the state. Importantly, the trial will focus on how we prepare our wider bus network, including depots and supporting infrastructure for the wider rollout of zero-emissions technology. There are currently 40 hybrid buses operating in Melbourne and eight in the Latrobe Valley, and Victoria's first fully electric bus is also being trialled as we speak. In its first 300 days on the road it has saved 61 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions since its operation.

Regional rail has also been a key priority for the Andrews Labor government. As you would appreciate, V/Line has seen a 63 per cent increase in growth over the past five years—from 13 million boardings in 2014 to around 21 million last year. While that number dropped to 17.9 million last financial year, it is expected to rebound as we again see strong growth on the regional network and more people returning to intrastate travel. We are also in the process of upgrading every single regional rail line through our \$2 billion Regional Rail Revival program.

The budget also supports the operations of V/Line through \$187.6 million of investment in upgrades and maintenance. This is in addition to the \$90.5 million worth of rail track maintenance for regional Victoria that was announced as part of the building works package in May. This funding is supporting the upkeep and performance of the network, with hundreds of kilometres of rail sleepers, replaced bridges, rail crossings and stations upgraded, and new stabling and maintenance facilities brought online.

We are supporting Victorians to safely get to where they need to go by investing more than \$25.4 million to improve bus services across the state and help drive our economic recovery. We are bringing forward the introduction of a new route in the north to meet the demands of our growing urban areas. We are also improving the bus network on the Mornington Peninsula by increasing the frequency of current bus services to give locals more choice when they travel. We will be delivering enhanced bus service initiatives to help students get to school safely and also back home again. We are investing in supporting pedestrians and cyclists to travel from the western suburbs of the CBD, and we are also, importantly, keeping the very popular Westgate Punt service running.

The budget also funds a number of initiatives to prepare the public transport network for the future. These include a tram corridor strategy to explore opportunities to increase the frequency and reliability of tram services across inner Melbourne as well as our middle suburbs. This strategy will also identify options to reform the tram network to make the best use of Melbourne's existing but also our next generation trams. Four million dollars is being invested for the deployment of a new pathway for the future of our public transport ticketing; \$3 million is being invested so we can undertake regular timetable planning, including the development of timetable uplifts as we take advantage of the ongoing delivery of our Big Build projects. Chair, that is the remainder of my presentation. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Minister, and I will pass the call to Mr Richard Riordan, MP.

Mr RIORDAN: Thanks, Chair. Welcome, Minister. It is good to have you here on a big issue, public transport. Minister, I refer to the timetable planning output initiative for the Department of Transport in budget paper 3, page 127, and your media release of a few weeks ago on 1 December entitled 'Building a train network for the future'. Why have you not yet released the timetable?

Mr CARROLL: Thank you, Deputy Chair, for that question. This is the most substantial investment—450 additional services—since the city loop opened in 1981. If you go on the PTV app, if you go on the PTV website, you will be able to get the information I think you are after. In fact you can actually even download how many off-peak services you will get and how many peak services you will get. The reason we are releasing it on 8 January and then for it to come online at the end of January is that we also have about 350 bus connections. We are also working with Metro, Yarra Trams and a range of bus operators, particularly the 100 most frequent buses that are the most popular, to connect into the trains to make sure it is all going to work as succinctly and smoothly as possible.

Mr RIORDAN: Okay. So the allegation put out by many that the timetable changes you made to the Cranbourne and Pakenham line actually extended the time on services—I think they were 5- to 6-minute longer services—is that what is happening with these changes?

Mr CARROLL: Far from it. The Cranbourne-Pakenham line as well as the Ballarat line have been major Big Build projects that have helped facilitate the 450 additional services—

Mr RIORDAN: No, but your changes now.

Mr CARROLL: So coming out of COVID a lot of the feedback we have got through our survey work and talking to commuters is that they want additional dwell time—longer times to get on the train and off the train. That has necessitated not 5 to 6 minutes but some 1- to 2-minute delays.

Mr RIORDAN: So how much longer on average will these journeys be on the Frankston line?

Mr CARROLL: Well, I think under your government it was about 5 to 6 minutes, and under our government we are looking at about 1 to 2 minutes.

Mr RIORDAN: That is all? So your commitment is only 1–2 minutes longer. Minister, Frankston trains have been going around the city loop since it opened back in January 1981. For both of us, we were only very young at that time, Minister. Why did the government not tell commuters on the Frankston line the truth at both the 2014 and 2018 elections that you intended to take the Frankston line out of the city loop and block access to Parliament, Melbourne Central and Flagstaff stations?

Mr CARROLL: I thank the Deputy Chair for his question. I was not the public transport minister in 2014 or 2018, but I can say working with local members, including Member Richardson, the Member for Mordialloc, we have surveyed the commuters that use the Frankston line. In fact 62 per cent of respondents said they want to go directly to Southern Cross or Flinders Street. However, if you do want to continue to go through the city loop, you can still get off at Richmond station or South Yarra station. And I should also make note that once the exciting Metro Tunnel is completed, as we have highlighted, the Frankston line will return to it a lot better, a lot faster and more frequent than ever before.

Mr RIORDAN: So 40, 50 per cent of passengers are just going to have to get used to getting on and off the train for the next five years?

Mr CARROLL: Well, we all get on and off the train. That is how you get on and off the train.

Mr RIORDAN: Well, an extra on and off.

Mr CARROLL: If you want to go through the city loop, you will make that choice. But it will return, and for many of the passengers they will be able to go to Flinders Street quicker or Southern Cross. So 62 per cent is not a bad favour for an important change that will pay dividends to come.

Mr RIORDAN: I refer to the timetable planning output initiative for the Department of Transport on page 127 of budget paper 3 and your media release of 1 December, which states:

Frankston passengers ... will not run via the City Loop until the Metro Tunnel is open in 2025 ...

Minister, given the pre-COVID congestion at Richmond station in the morning peak and the unfortunately frequent occurrence of trains scheduled to travel via the city loop in fact skipping the loop, which only adds to congestion and wait times, what range of additional time, from shortest to longest, will be added to the current average trip time from Frankston station to Parliament station?

Mr CARROLL: Thanks, Mr Riordan, for your question. At the end of the day we are adding 45 additional services to the Frankston line. It is actually going to increase capacity for about 1800 extra Victorians to get on the Frankston line. It is very important coming out of COVID to have more social distancing and more frequency of services, both off peak and on peak. Yes, there may be a little bit of extra time to get on and off the train, but this is very much the feedback we have had from commuters. Indeed through the Department of Transport we are now advertising our upgrade. We are also advertising to wear a face mask, to sanitise and to keep a social distance. There is an unprecedented investment in services. The important thing to take out of this, though, is that we are for the first time delinking that conflict that has occurred between the Frankston line and the Dandenong line. It will be a game changer for years to come, and it will be something we refer back to as we refer back to the city loop in 50 years—‘Wasn’t that a marvellous investment, the Melbourne Metro Tunnel, and what it means for all those routes, particularly the Frankston line?’.

Mr RIORDAN: Our great-great-great-grandchildren might be able to have that conversation.

Mr CARROLL: In 2025?

Mr RIORDAN: For the city loop. Minister, I again refer to the timetable for planning output on page 127 of budget paper 3 and your media release of 1 December, which states:

Changing the stopping patterns of some—

Ballarat line—

trains will better service the growing communities on the line.

Minister, what range of additional time from shortest to longest will be added to the current average trip from Ballarat station to Southern Cross station?

Mr CARROLL: Thanks, Mr Riordan. I am happy you drew me to the Ballarat line, because if anything that is the line that we are probably, arguably, the most proud of of all the changes. Can you imagine being in Ballarat with a 20-minute frequency service coming to the CBD? The Ballarat line, the \$500 million investment in the Ballarat line upgrade, combined with the Cranbourne-Pakenham line upgrade, has pretty much given us the flexibility and the capability to then do the massive 450 additional services. You are going to have

duplication of 18 kilometres of track from Deer Park to Melton and a new station at Cobblebank with 350 car parks. Bacchus Marsh will have 100 car parks. Ballan and Wendouree are also going to have additional car parks—the game changer this is for residents in Ballarat. There is the Maddingley stabling station, the signalling and the tunnelling upgrades. Ballan and Millbrook will have new passing loops. So the Ballarat line is going to be unprecedented. We are literally bringing a city service to the regions.

Mr RIORDAN: What commitment have you got for people not to stand—to guarantee seating spaces and standing spaces? Have you got metrics on that?

Mr CARROLL: One hundred and twenty-five new services will see improvement, also including 45 during the peak. So there is going to be more space than ever before and a quicker service as well.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Mr Gary Maas, MP.

Mr MAAS: Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Minister, and thank you, departmental officials, for your appearance today. I would like to hop onto the topic of buses, Minister, and take you to budget paper 3, page 127. I was hoping you could explain for the committee how the government is improving bus services to provide better access for Victorians.

Mr CARROLL: Thanks, Mr Maas, for your question. It is a very important question when it comes to bus services. Bus connections, as we appreciate, are a mode of transport where rail cannot get to, and every dollar invested in bus services returns \$5 to the community. We also know through our rolling stock program—and I was down at Volgren just last week with the Member for Dandenong—and we have seen through COVID that many people have actually returned to buses and have seen them as a mode of transport that they really want to get on and support. So we have in this budget invested \$25.4 million in the bus network, and this will make really important changes across some of our growing suburbs, particularly in the northern suburbs, where you have got those really important growth areas such as Wollert West, and also to support the Craigieburn route.

But also, I was just recently down in Mornington and right down the coastal regions with Member Brayne. We are seeing a massive uptake of bus services and a demand. One of the data analogies we are getting out is that a lot of people do like to travel on buses. You can see how many people are on the bus before you get on it. We have also introduced rear boarding and cashless payments. So our bus service, the way it has come through COVID, is a compliment to all of our operators. It is also, as we know, an important service for our school students, and we are supporting them as well.

Mr MAAS: Thank you, Minister. To school students and bus services: how is the government providing transport options for them?

Mr CARROLL: Yes. Thanks, Mr Maas. There is a range of particular schools that we have worked with, and we have also consulted and worked with the Department of Education, that have a high volume of school students that use the buses—for example, Oberon High School, The Lakes in South Morang, St Helena college, Alamanda college and Officer Secondary College, but also in regional Victoria, including some of our primary schools and high schools in Horsham. We are providing new school bus services to them to give students more options to travel and for them also to get home safely. The introduction of enrolments for students at years 10 to 12 at The Lakes South Morang College, as well as that growing catchment area, has seen us provide additional services as well. We know for students the bus service is an important way of them maturing and growing up. It is also an important service—with my road safety minister hat on—that I am encouraging older Victorians to use as well.

Mr MAAS: Thank you. Your presentation made some reference to zero-emissions buses. Would you be able to let the committee know what the government is doing to transition to a greener bus fleet?

Mr CARROLL: This is an important question, Mr Maas, that you highlight. Essentially, right around the world there is a movement to zero-emissions buses, and Victoria should be a leader in the space. We have got the Hoddle grid, we are flat and our climate lends itself to it. While we have got what are called Euro 6 hybrid buses on the network now, we do now in 2020—in the 21st century—need to make that leap change. So this \$20 million investment will go well and truly above rolling stock to look at where we place the important infrastructure that comes with a zero-emissions bus fleet right through Victoria—so where in metro Melbourne, where in regional Victoria. Do you do it at shopping centres? Do you do it at train stations? If you look

overseas, all the countries that have shifted their fleets to zero-emissions buses essentially did the groundwork first on where the charging infrastructure goes before they rolled out their fleet. So I am very proud of this initiative. I should also acknowledge Minister D'Ambrosio for her leadership in this space and her important advocacy. But I think it is an exciting project, and I can also say cyclists too will be happy because they will not be getting the fumes when they are behind a bus and they are riding and things like that. It is just the technology that is here, and we need to adapt to it; we need to grab it. I think Victoria should be a leader in zero-emissions technology, and the bus fleet is where we should be beginning.

Mr MAAS: Thank you. With the increasing popularity of bus usage safety obviously becomes an issue. Would you be able to inform the community what the government is doing to improve the safety and resilience of the bus network?

Mr CARROLL: It is another important question, particularly coming out of COVID. One thing, Mr Maas, I was mindful of is: in the UK, sadly, they had a real breakout of COVID amongst their bus drivers and that got pretty much international reporting. So we have been rolling out for some time now—and we have had the support of the Department of Justice and Community Safety—cashless payments and rear boarding but also better protection for the bus drivers, because they have been a vulnerable cohort that we need to be mindful of—they have kept apace in doing their daily job.

But also we are rolling out important fire protection systems for our buses. We know a lot of loved ones and school kids and the elderly use our buses. We do not only want them to be safe and secure, we also want to use our imaginations and work out a range of scenarios where all the protection is there—working with our bus companies and working with our bus depots to really make sure that the safety of our bus network and the resilience of our fleet is everything that it can be.

Mr MAAS: Thank you. I might move now to metro rail and budget paper 3, page 127. I was hoping you could explain how the government is planning to ensure that services respond to changing travel patterns.

Mr CARROLL: Thanks, Mr Maas. Essentially the goal I think in Victoria is to essentially have a turn-up-and-go service. When you turn up, the public transport mode is there, ready to take you, and—credit to the Premier and Minister Allan—on some parts of the network we are actually already getting to a turn-up-and-go before Metro has even been completed and finished.

Having said that, though, we are providing 700 additional metropolitan services. This has been an ongoing investment since the Andrews Labor government came to office in 2014. But we are also, as you would be aware, separating some of our busiest lines. I am on the Craigieburn line, and I know the Metro is going to be a real game changer for me. I was with the Chair only this week, seeing the outstanding Upfield line upgrades—separated bicycle infrastructure as well—the world's best city train stations are in the heart of Coburg and northern Melbourne. It is very exciting to see where the Metro is heading.

Mr MAAS: Excellent. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. Mr Sam Hibbins, MP.

Mr HIBBINS: Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Minister and your team, for appearing this afternoon. I just want to turn to budget paper 3, page 347. Now, you indicated in your presentation that there is an increase in services, but the total kilometres scheduled for metropolitan trains has remained the same for the last four years and is due to remain the same in the 2020–21 target. Why is that?

Mr CARROLL: One of the things we need to do more regularly is actually what I did recently, which is a new timetable upgrade. So that timetable upgrade necessitated the Big Build project, particularly the Ballarat line and the Cranbourne-Pakenham line. What we did, 450 services, was essentially the accumulation of several years work. There will be certainly more kilometres covered. I might ask Nick Foa, the head of transport services, to supplement my answer, but you are going to have 700 services added since 2014. But also, too, for a city of over—

Mr HIBBINS: I am just wondering why it is not captured in the budget, or why it is not captured in the total kilometres scheduled.

Mr CARROLL: Yes. So we can answer that. But one of the things is—and Daniel Bowen has highlighted this as well—when you are looking at services you have got to not only look at the peak services but you have got to look at the off-peak. And we know, coming through COVID, that that is where a lot of the demand will be. It is almost a bit like, ‘How are you cataloguing and how are you auditing the kilometres for the services?’. I will ask Nick if he wants to supplement my answer if he can.

Mr FOA: Yes.

Mr CARROLL: We can take it on notice as well.

Mr FOA: Yes, thank you. We would expect the next budget performance indicators to reflect the new services that have been added. The new timetable announcement was dependent upon the Ballarat line upgrade being completed, and that has recently been confirmed. So it is important to note that a range of really important infrastructure needed to be completed for the greenfield timetable to be put in place, and—

Mr HIBBINS: So just for clarity, the new timetable announcement was not actually included in these budget papers. It was not factored into these budget papers.

Mr FOA: So the performance indicators and the performance levels need to be updated, and we will update that in the next iteration.

Mr HIBBINS: Well if that could be taken on notice and the committee could be provided with the updated total kilometres scheduled for metropolitan train—and metropolitan trams as well, if there is any update there—and then the total cost of the initiative as well.

Mr CARROLL: Of the?

Mr HIBBINS: Increased services.

Mr CARROLL: Yes. It is a fairly modest figure. For the bang for your buck you get on the Big Build and then the additional services, I think it is around \$75 million. But to think of the passengers that it is going to transport, both off-peak as well as peak, and the regional emphasis that it will have, plus all those other lines, it is a very important investment.

Mr HIBBINS: Yes. Terrific. I agree. The new tram investment—over how many years is that investment?

Mr CARROLL: The new next-generation tram is a very exciting project. You would appreciate it will be good for the environment, less energy will be consumed, it will also be low floor—

Mr HIBBINS: We are in furious agreement, Minister.

Mr CARROLL: Yes, we are, but essentially we are hoping—

Mr HIBBINS: I am just keen to know the time frame.

Mr CARROLL: A time frame? Five years.

Mr HIBBINS: Five years.

Mr CARROLL: The department have done an enormous amount of planning work for this. Consultation with the disability sector is obviously critical—

Mr HIBBINS: So that is 20 trams per year, to clarify?

Mr CARROLL: and also making sure it meets those disability tram stops and things like that, but also too the support of our local manufacturing well and the jobs is a critically important component of it.

Mr HIBBINS: So that is 20 trams a year, the production rate?

Mr CARROLL: It may alter because we are still in the planning and design phase, so it could be more than that. It will take some time. But also too it is the important supply chain, once a contract is awarded, of the

additional jobs and the components that will go into that tram manufacturing that is critical. Melbourne is known for its trams, and this will be a real game changer and an important investment in addressing some of those issues we have around disability as well.

Mr HIBBINS: Can I get to the proposed X'trapolis 2.0 and just get some understanding as to what is the government actually funding? Now, my understanding is the government is funding some further design work.

Mr CARROLL: Yes.

Mr HIBBINS: Why does more design work need to be done? How long will that take? And of course if you have got the workforce, you are keeping the workforce, why don't you just build the trains?

Mr CARROLL: Yes. It is an important question because it does go to workforce employment and workforce jobs. You are right, the funding is still very much targeted at the designing and planning stage. I might ask Nick Foa to supplement my answer—or Paul can supplement my answer. We have a fully dedicated rolling stock strategy that is covering all the different modes of transport. We are proud in Victoria—unlike New South Wales, we actually do build trains, trams and buses here, and actually last week I saw some buses being built here that were going to New South Wales. But it is still in design, and there are some important elements from our learning experience that we are embedding into the design and the planning. I might ask the Secretary if he wants to add to those comments.

Mr YOUNIS: Yes. Thanks, Mr Hibbins. I think an important part of what we did in the development of the X'trap 2 was to work very closely with the industry and look really closely at the network and to identify a train configuration that responds to the network, so we were not trying to change the network to suit our new trains. We are still working through that with Alstom in particular about exactly the elements of this X'trap 2 that would support us not only now but going into the next 20 to 30 years in the network. That element of planning takes time. What we do want to do when government fund and we go out to the procurement process is be very clear about what the configuration and elements of the train are so that it responds—

Mr HIBBINS: Do you have a deadline for the completion of that work?

Mr YOUNIS: Sorry?

Mr HIBBINS: Do you have a deadline for the completion of that work?

Mr YOUNIS: We are working through that now. I have not got the exact timing for that, but we will be completing that work over the next—I think the timing was around the next six months or so.

Mr HIBBINS: Can I get finally, just on notice, an itemisation of the active transport cycling projects completed and the active transport pedestrian projects completed in 2020–21—this is on page 344—an itemisation of what those projects actually are? You can take that on notice.

Mr CARROLL: Do you want to ask that question in the next session? It comes very much under my roads portfolio.

Mr HIBBINS: Sure, no worries.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Hibbins. Mr O'Brien.

Mr RIORDAN: Highly efficient, Minister, highly efficient.

Mr D O'BRIEN: You are getting confident at this, Minister. Thank you, Chair, sorry. You mentioned, before, you undertook surveys of Frankston line passengers. Could we please have those surveys provided to the committee on notice?

Mr CARROLL: Look, we talk with our commuters often. I think one of the commendations of public transport and the department is the engagement with the public, whether it is the direct Frankston line, for example, or it is the impact of the Ballarat line upgrade.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Minister, you specifically referred to 62 per cent who said they only wanted to go to Flinders or Southern Cross. There must have been specific survey data. Can that please be provided to the committee?

Mr CARROLL: Yes, we can look at that and take that on notice and see what we can provide.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Thank you. If I go to page 127 of budget paper 3, it shows there is \$438 million allocated in 2020–21 for public transport coronavirus response. Can you tell me please how much of that actual expenditure was for 2019–20, given that part of the coronavirus period obviously happened in the previous financial year?

Mr CARROLL: Sure. I might ask the Secretary to supplement. That figure though, just to be clear, took in what was across the network but it also took in the cleaning regime, supported also some of the fare box loss but also supported Yarra and Metro to keep a full service going as well as staff employed. Also too, please be aware, Mr O'Brien, that under the contracts we have with Yarra and Metro, they are also required to pay a little bit of a dividend back to the state on meeting different targets. I do not know if the Secretary or Nick Foa wants to supplement.

Mr FOA: In the questionnaire, Mr O'Brien, we referred to a Treasurer's advance. That was for the end of the 2019–20 period.

Mr D O'BRIEN: That is what I am asking for.

Mr FOA: And this amount relates to 2020–21.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Yes, but what was the 2019–20 figure?

Mr FOA: That is in the questionnaire. I will come back to you.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Okay. I will keep going and you come back to me, Mr Foa. That would be great.

Referring to V/Line now and the new timetable; Minister, you have announced the timetable but none of us have seen it. Can you guarantee that no train services will be slower as a result of the timetable changes?

Mr CARROLL: In public transport language, 'frequency is freedom', so you are going to have more services and more trains coming than ever before across our—

Mr D O'BRIEN: Well, when you say 'you', that is actually an unfortunate use of the term, because I will not because there are no new services on the Gippsland line, but my question remains—

Mr CARROLL: No, but as you know we are working on Gippsland. Indeed, Minister Allan I think opened up the Avon bridge just recently.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Yes. It does not deliver any new services.

Mr CARROLL: But I do appreciate too your community interacts with the Dandenong line and we need to continue our investment there, and we will.

Mr D O'BRIEN: The question, though, was: will you guarantee that no services will be slower under the new timetable?

Mr CARROLL: This new timetable provides an unprecedented investment, but also, coming out of COVID, we have had to necessitate opening the doors for little bit longer, providing more access for people and more time for people to get on. Also I imagine too that people are going to want to wear a mask, they are going to want to sanitise, they are going to want to take their time to get on, so we have been very clear and up-front, Mr O'Brien, there will be on some routes a 1 to 2 minute delay, but that is reinforced by our infrastructure upgrades, our additional services and also more additional dwell time.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Just on the Gippsland line, you made announcements about it with respect to additional stops for the Traralgon line, which is presumably going to be Yarragon and Trafalgar, where it does not stop for

some services now. What is the average additional travel time for Traralgon to Southern Cross under the new timetable?

Mr CARROLL: Thanks, Mr O'Brien. As I was mentioning before with your line and the interaction with the Dandenong line, but also the upgraded VLocity, I might ask Nick Foa, who is across that project, to just add some comments.

Mr FOA: Thanks, Minister. Indeed the ability to now run VLocity trains on that line has meant that we have picked up time, so we have been able to put in—

Mr D O'BRIEN: No, I am talking Traralgon. I am talking Traralgon to Southern Cross. That has had VLocitys for a long time.

Mr FOA: Yes, that is the Traralgon line, the VLocitys on the Traralgon line—

Mr D O'BRIEN: We have had them for ages.

Mr FOA: and Trafalgar; Yarragon, Longwarry, Bunyip and Nar Nar Goon will get extra stops, as will Tynong. There are 22 extra services on that line.

Mr D O'BRIEN: So it is roughly 2 hours and 20 minutes now. What is it going to be under the new timetable?

Mr FOA: With the increased capacity and speed of the VLocitys, with the line upgrades that have happened we understand that, again, as the minister said, there will be some services that will be slightly longer but the majority will be the same or better.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Minister, the new timetable, will it deliver the nine services a day that were promised for the Shepparton line?

Mr CARROLL: On the nine services a day for the Shepparton line, there are a range of measures that are being put in place. With the new timetable it has necessitated a range of options that we have had to invest in. As you would appreciate, under the Big Build every regional passenger line is being upgraded—

Mr D O'BRIEN: Yes, I know that.

Mr CARROLL: and the additional Shepparton line services do come online though when the upgrade is completed. So—

Mr D O'BRIEN: So the nine services initially promised in 2018 are not going to be part of this new timetable?

Mr CARROLL: It is not envisaged at the moment, but following this major 450 additional services there is a whole program of essentially, you could call it, a stage 3 investment, where the work of the Big Build, our upgrades across the network to different suburban lines as well as regional lines will come online and be done. We can then work with Metro and V/Line and add the additional services, pretty much go through the process we have just gone through and hopefully make it a lot more frequent with less time delay than what we have just done. But Shepparton is a very important part of the state, and we know with intrastate travel people want to get there, they want to visit a museum and things like that, so we are very conscious of it.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Thank you, Minister. Back to the Gippsland line, is it the government's intention that Gippsland passengers will in the near to mid future have to change trains at Pakenham to go into the city?

Mr CARROLL: Mr O'Brien, as you are aware, Pakenham has seen a massive investment, and indeed there is a new fleet of trains that are pretty much being worked on as we speak. You would also appreciate the government has invested half a billion dollars in the Gippsland line, so—

Mr D O'BRIEN: Yes. And this has got people nervous. I just want you to rule out that Gippsland line passengers will have to change trains—

Mr CARROLL: Look, I should say too the Gippsland line reliability has been the best it has been—

Mr D O'BRIEN: Appalling.

Mr CARROLL: No, no. I have got the stats here—96.2 per cent.

Mr D O'BRIEN: By punctuality?

Mr CARROLL: It is up significantly—

Mr D O'BRIEN: Can you rule out—

The CHAIR: Mr O'Brien, your time has expired.

Mr CARROLL: We are very proud of the Gippsland upgrade, the 28 additional weekly services since 2015—

The CHAIR: Sorry to interrupt you, Minister, but the member's time has expired. I will pass to Ms Pauline Richards, MP.

Ms RICHARDS: Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Minister and officials, for your time this afternoon. Mr Maas was taking you to metro rail earlier, and in fact Mr O'Brien has led you to budget paper 3, page 127. I would like to look at what the government did to maintain public transport services and jobs during the lockdown.

Mr CARROLL: Thank you very much, Ms Richards, for your question. Look, this is one of the issues I think that the public transport family, if I could put it that way, are very proud of—that essentially they were classified as an essential service, because as we know, during the pandemic whether it was nurses, doctors or other staff, they needed to get to work, and there were schoolkids too, children that also needed to get to school. I think it is something we should be proud of in Victoria when you put public transport on that global level. We ran a full fleet of services. We added to the shoulder peaks. We also, though, like other jurisdictions, started investing in cycling infrastructure to encourage people out of cars and into other sustainable modes of transport. But we also made sure though that there were over 300 hand sanitisation products. If you get on a train you will hear essentially the announcement, 'Please social distance, forward face if you can, take your time, wear a mask and certainly if you are feeling unwell do not get on public transport—go and get tested'.

So it has been a powerhouse of work from the Department of Transport as well as Metro, and I think at the moment we are at about 50 per cent. It is good to see, with the return of the private sector to work in the CBD, that public transport is gaining momentum. It is growing week on week, and I think it is very important. I am also proud just with the way we have come through and we have a sustainable public transport system as we speak. When you look overseas there are some really serious issues with their public transport, and I think we have done quite well, but we are not through it yet.

Ms RICHARDS: A lot to be proud of. Taking you to something that has been really important for so many in our community—that is cleaning, something we have all become much more focused on. What is the government doing to ensure the network is safe and clean? I know you touched on it a moment ago, but I am interested in getting a little bit more understanding and being able to of course provide that extra reassurance.

Mr CARROLL: Yes. Look, I feel, Ms Richards, that I have been speaking about cleaning as much as I have been speaking about services lately. Because there is no doubt—and the feedback, the emails, the social media you see—the public transport system is as clean as it has ever been. It is as clean as a whistle. We are talking hospital-grade cleaning—three cleans, a deep clean overnight and the high-touch points during the day also being sanitised. I should also say that part of the cleaning regime has also been putting many Victorians to work under a lot of the initiatives in Minister Pulford's area. And we have got to sustain this now. I think Victorians and the travelling public have got used to such an important clean service. I think that is one of the reasons we have seen the patronage come back to 50 per cent. Cleanliness is something that Victorians want, and it is something we are very committed to. We have still got additional hand sanitisation stations to roll out. It is very important to keep up that cleaning regime to get people back on the network.

Ms RICHARDS: Thank you, Minister. I am wanting to understand a bit more about the network safety and resilience and what the government is doing to make sure that we have that strong safety and resilience in place.

Mr CARROLL: Yes. It is a very important question. Just a couple of nights ago I was at the V/Line operations centre, and we are increasing our funding and support right across the public transport network. One of the things we are also rolling out, and this is one of the sad issues, is for the amount of growth in and what we have seen with trespassing. It is not only incredibly dangerous but it can shut down the whole network. When we were talking before about some delays and things like that, it is literally someone being very silly disrupting the whole network—for a social media post or what have you—that inconveniences everyone and puts their life at risk. So we are working through some real-time data with VicPol, Victoria Police. We are upgrading our CCTV to really try and capture people, get them, and make sure that they learn from their behaviour. Also, though, there are some important public relations measures to show just how silly it is but also how inconvenient it is—think about not only yourself and your loved ones but also imagine being a first responder to a train incident where there has been just the silly behaviour.

So it is a range of things we are putting in place. I must say the insight I got a couple of nights ago at the operations centre at V/Line—to see the back-of-house work that goes on, apart from the trains just being on the network, the monitoring of our system—was really tremendous. They continue to do a good job, but unfortunately they do have to be on the phone and get to police quickly and things like that regularly. It is just something we have to keep working on and keeping our education campaigns up.

Ms RICHARDS: Thank you, Minister. I am going to take you to public transport fares—page 127 of budget paper 3. Can you, in the time I have left, explain how the Andrews government is using fare settings to complement additional services funded in the budget to encourage—you know, from that graph—those Victorians back onto public transport?

Mr CARROLL: Look, we are always looking at how we can support our public transport commuters, but we also identify it as a very important equity issue as well. So we are always looking at different options to make it more equitable, and we recognise too that many Myki pass holders, whether they be weekly, monthly or annual, sometimes are unable to use their Myki passes due to the restrictions on movement. So we have put in place a lot of freezing of transactions, a lot of support. There is an opportunity like never before for any customer that has been inconvenienced with a charge that was not appropriate to get a refund. But also we have made, in addition to the refund process, amendments to the fares and ticketing conditions to ensure we do give PTV as well as V/Line more authority to act in a more agile way and really support the travelling public and make sure that they have got all the services and the support they need.

You would be aware that we made some important announcements overnight in relation to we know it has been a difficult year, to say the least, and fares will be frozen for next year, but also too we want to encourage people to come in to see the Myer windows and things like that. Free public transport on Christmas Day and Boxing Day and New Year's Day is also very much, I think, going to be welcomed by the travelling public.

Ms RICHARDS: Thank you, Minister.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. Mr David Limbrick, MLC.

Mr LIMBRICK: Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Minister and team, for appearing again today. In budget paper 3, page 349, there are a few KPIs here relating to Myki. I see that the speed of the Myki devices has increased due to an upgrade of some of the readers. One of the questions I wanted to ask, though, is: is any of the Myki data being used for contact tracing?

Mr CARROLL: Thank you for your question, Mr Limbrick. As far as I am aware, it is not, but I will ask Mr Foa to supplement my answer in case it is. We are mindful, though, that we want to make sure that the experience of Myki is as seamless and is certainly as best it can be. As in my presentation, essentially every day 2.2 million touch on with the Myki and we get all that data. We do know through some of our survey work where they are touching on and where they are touching off. Because I was not a COVID-19 minister, how that was related to contact tracing, I might ask Nick Foa if he can supplement my answer.

Mr FOA: Yes. Thank you, Minister, through you, Chair. The main thing with Myki is that it needs to be registered. Many, many Myki cards are not registered. Many people just choose to use the Myki money as opposed to a registered account. We are encouraging people, however, to register because there is a whole range of other benefits with the app if you do. We do share our data at a high level, but not at a personalised level.

Mr LIMBRICK: So like movement data?

Mr FOA: Yes, movement data—absolutely. So we are in constant dialogue with our colleagues at DHHS as well as VicPol and other agencies around our data at a macro level, but we are not using it how you would describe it down to a contact tracing level. But it is very valuable data for DHHS to be able to make some macro sort of analysis of the network.

Mr LIMBRICK: Thank you very much. Another thing relates to the usage. So in slide 2 there was the chart which showed the drop-off in usage and then it has come back to around, I do not know, 50 per cent now, it looks like, of its normal levels. Now, one of the budget points, in budget paper 2, page 71, mentions an expected recovery in public transport fare revenue from 2021–22 onward in the sales of goods and services. How are you adjusting your forecasting on expected demand? I did a bit of a look around and Monash University have started a project on this apparently, looking at long-term effects on public transport. There seems to be some uncertainty as to how many people will actually come back and start using public transport. How are you adjusting your forecasting for this sort of thing?

Mr CARROLL: Look, it is a good point, and we have also been doing a fair bit of looking around as well, including looking at overseas jurisdictions and things like that. We are at 50 per cent now. We are actually quite positive about that. We do believe people will return to public transport and we are forecasting, though. In combination with the 450 additional services to come online end of January we are also introducing a 30 per cent discount for off-peak services, which we also think will add to that bottom line and give another tick up to people coming back to the network. New South Wales have also got a 30 per cent discount rate in measures at the moment. The other thing also part of our forecasting measures, Mr Limbrick, is we believe Victorians will want to come back because of the car network. We are also trying to roll out and make it more seamless in the motor vehicle, but with traffic, we believe people will want to return. We also believe though when a vaccine does become available and people have had it that they will see a substantial return to public transport. We are forecasting that mask wearing will be a thing that is a common habit, as you have seen in many Asian countries, for the public transport network. So it is a range of factors that we are using. We are working with different tertiary partners, as you identified. For example, Arup consulting as well are doing a range of measures, and Melbourne University. I do not know if Mr Foa wants to say anything, or the Secretary, on that.

Mr YOUNIS: Look, it is a really interesting question, because it is modelling that we have not worked off before. So the work that Monash University does is also looking at some of the other macro policy settings that may be in place, like how many people will work from home and therefore what impact that will be. I think some of their projections are in the order that we could see a 4 to 6 per cent drop in public transport depending on the levels of work from home. So there are ranges we are working on.

Clearly these are forward projections beyond this budget paper period from 2020–21, because going forward we do not expect patronage to come back to that sort of level. As the minister said, a number of partners are working in relation to that, including Infrastructure Victoria, who are going to put out some work on this early next year; I think it is in January next year. We have been working with them to get some insight into that, because it does rely not only on how well we attract people back to public transport, which is incredibly important so that we can continue to have freight move around our network on the roads, but on what the macro policies are and the behavioural issues that people have, and some of those are really difficult to monitor and predict. But it is really interesting work that is being done across the world, and we are drawing on that.

Mr LIMBRICK: Thank you for that. You actually sort of touched on my next question. I have noticed that a large part of the usage of the network is people coming into the city to go to work, and a lot of companies have been saying, ‘Well, we’re just going to have a bunch of our workers work from home now; we’ve got all the infrastructure now to do it; it’s actually going to reduce our company’s costs’. Post pandemic they are signalling that maybe we will have a significant workforce at home. I suppose you might not know how that is going to play out yet, but I am concerned about the future viability of some of these projects and things that we have got. If we have got this expected demand that might not actually appear, how does that look in terms of revenue?

Mr CARROLL: We are essentially working, Mr Limbrick, to incentivise a return to public transport. You rightly identify the role of the private sector—the big companies, the big banks—in the CBD. You would be aware the Lord Mayor and the City of Melbourne are also doing some important collaboration to support a

return to the CBD. But it is really requiring us to closely monitor the situation. We also, though, have seen, particularly in the outer suburbs, that some of our tram routes, some of our bus networks in the outer suburbs, have been really big in terms of patronage compared to the metro train network, and we want to drive a lot of that response back to the metro train network to get people back into the CBD.

Mr LIMBRICK: Thank you very much.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Mr Tim Richardson, MP.

Mr RICHARDSON: Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Minister and department representatives, for joining us today. I will take you back to the public transport fares. But I have been very happy to hear the opposition MPs favourably talking about the Frankston line, given they opposed metro rail and wanted to remove Richmond and Flinders Street from the Frankston line. So it is great that they are on board, and they are welcome any time down our neck of the woods. Taking you back to budget paper 3, page 127, and the discussion about public transport fares and how the government will ensure that fares remain affordable for Victorians as we move to a COVID normal, Minister.

Mr CARROLL: Yes, it is a good point you raise, Mr Richardson. As someone who represents a community that relies on public transport—and in my previous role as parliamentary secretary I remember talking to your community about equity in public transport as well—we have done everything we can to pull some important levers from a legislative perspective but also to work with our operators to make sure we have an equitable public transport system right through to our fares.

We do know that often it is some of our most vulnerable Victorians that rely on our public transport system and indeed use it. It is an equity issue. If you do not have a car, the way you get around is through the public transport system. So we have put in a range of amendments to the fares and ticketing conditions, which I think has been a really important measure to make sure that PTV and V/Line are a lot more agile and have greater powers to issue replacements, refunds or reimbursements for any ticketing product for which refunds are not otherwise available. I think one of the frustrations sometimes if you have had disrupted travel—if it has not worked as you want—is you want that quick response. So we have been able to essentially support some really important reform for PTV and other operators to work with their passengers, their commuters, to give refunds whenever they are needed.

The other important thing I think to incentivise and to support the network is the freezing of fares. As you know, fares do go up. I think it would have been almost unconscionable to put fares up, and I think this is going to be a welcome initiative. As we know, in regional Victoria fares have been pretty stable for about five years. But for metropolitan Melbourne, which often has had fares go up year on year with CPI et cetera, the facts are that fares will not be going up. Even better than that, to encourage off-peak travel to spread the load—a bit to Mr Limbrick's question about people working a different work week or different working day hours—to have 300 additional off-peak services and to essentially be able to get a 30 per cent discount when you are travelling on those services is going to be vitally important for many Victorians getting to work or getting to where they need to go. I think that will help incentivise the private sector to work with us to really make sure that there are different opportunities available.

Mr RICHARDSON: I might take you now, Minister, to the topic of trams, and I again refer to budget paper 3, pages 127 and 132. For the committee's benefit, are you able to explain the steps the Victorian government is taking to ensure trams continue to play a central role in Melbourne's transport system?

Mr CARROLL: Thanks, Mr Richardson. Look, they are unique to Melbourne. One of the things I have come to really appreciate as a relatively still new transport minister is our predecessors who kept the tram network and did not rip it up in the 1950s when the automobile really took off apace. It is why we have got the biggest network. It goes right from the CBD out to my electorate in Niddrie, and it is something that is part of our social fabric I think in Melbourne. We need to invest in it though. A \$1.48 billion investment will ensure, I believe, that we are on a path to having not only the biggest tram network in the world but one of the best. I know Yarra Trams are equally as excited, as is the Department of Transport and as are some of our private sector manufacturers and indeed students out there that want to be working on the next generation of trams for Victoria.

Very importantly too—and Minister D’Ambrosio is very happy about this—is that they will be energy efficient and low floor. They will be really, I think, something the travelling public cannot wait to see. Our tram network has been around since before federation, and to see the Andrews Labor government making this investment I think is very exciting. It will really put us on a world scale when they refer to Melbourne’s tram network as a place to come and a place to see. I think people will get on our tram network just for the user experience once these next-generation trams are out in the fleet. But also too, I should say, the big thing about this is it will replace a lot of those older sorts of trams that are very much needing to be phased out because they have not been able to meet the disability needs of our travelling public in terms of the convenience of them and the air conditioning. They are very much getting to their use-by date, and this is why this investment is so much needed.

Mr RICHARDSON: Just taking you a bit further into your presentation, Minister, and the \$1.48 billion investment support—how is this going to support the continued development of a local rolling stock industry as well as with an ageing fleet?

Mr CARROLL: Yes. It does really help us to plan. One of the things when we talk to our manufacturers is they like to know what the vision is and what is the pipeline coming down, and I think it has been well known now that Victoria, as a manufacturer of buses, trams and trains, is really the Australian leader in this space. It is a credit to my predecessors that I think when we think about rolling stock, you look at how Victoria is so well placed to be a rolling stock hub for the manufacturing of trams, trains and buses. Coincidentally I was down at Volgren only last week to see buses for Transport for NSW being built in Victoria, which was quite amazing, and I think this is something we should be proud of.

As you would know, New South Wales have rolled out some trams. They have had a few issues with them, but we can build them here in Victoria. And as you see on the trams now that come around Spring Street and the CBD, there is that important signage of ‘Made in Melbourne’. I think coming out of COVID, supporting manufacturing, supporting jobs and keeping people in work is critically important. One of the good things about this next-generation tram, though, will be some of the industry partnerships that we have with our university and TAFE sector as well to really look at how we can support the qualifications. I know Minister Tierney is very excited about that as well.

Mr RICHARDSON: Fantastic. I might leave it there. I will not squeeze another one in. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Richardson. Ms Bridget Vallence, MP.

Ms VALLENCE: Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Minister and team, for appearing. Budget paper 3, page 127, in relation to timetable planning—the Lilydale line is consistently one of the worst performing lines on the Metro network, with poor punctuality, short trips, cancellations and station skips. To address this problem would be to duplicate the line between Mooroolbark and Lilydale. It is pretty well known that that is the cause of all of the problems—the single track there between Mooroolbark and Lilydale. Have you made any representations at all to finally duplicate this section of the track?

Mr CARROLL: Thank you for your question. You are right to identify the Lilydale line, and I could probably add to that the Glen Waverley, Belgrave and Alamein lines—all of those lines, they are essentially part of what we would call the Burnley group. They have been identified as needing investment and additional services. Again, it is not part of the 450 we have just announced to come online in January.

Ms VALLENCE: No, I know. Have you made any representations to duplicate that section of the line?

Mr CARROLL: I am always talking to the transport infrastructure minister, talking to Yarra Trams, and we are wanting to upgrade not only those but the Hurstbridge and, as Danny O’Brien acknowledged, the Gippsland, Bendigo and Echuca lines. We have got a whole program of upgrades we are working on, but we do want it to be targeted. It does require me working with the transport infrastructure minister as well as Metro to fit in with a lot of their strategic plans as well. The Burnley group that you rightly point out—and the Lilydale line—is very much in our thinking. I hope to be able to have more to say on this next year. But yes, I am mindful of the Lilydale line.

Ms VALLENCE: Thank you. Budget paper 3, page 127, also in relation to the bus service improvements—Minister, you were talking about it just before around bus services. You recently announced a Geelong-based

trial of a new technology to give real-time information involving a Consat Telematics product. How many buses are included in this trial, and what is the cost per bus for this trial?

Mr CARROLL: Thank you for your question. Performance of our regional buses at the moment is 100 per cent. Now, I also take it as a given that partly that is because we have come through COVID-19 and the pandemic.

Ms VALLENCE: I am just asking about the Telematics trial, so it is pretty direct: just that Telematics trial, just how many buses are included in the trial and what is the cost per bus.

Mr CARROLL: I will take that on notice about the amount of buses specifically, but what we do—

Ms VALLENCE: And the cost per bus?

Mr CARROLL: We are working with our bus private sector operators. Often the private sector with a lot of our trials contribute to it as well, whether it is student support and things like that. So what we are doing with our trial—

Ms VALLENCE: Student support.

Mr CARROLL: Yes.

Ms VALLENCE: So in terms of the cost of the trial, I am sure there will be a dollar figure for that trial. So if we can get as well the number of buses involved and the cost of the program, which by bus we would be able to ascertain. If we could have that on notice, that would be great. And how many Victorian jobs—

The CHAIR: Ms Vallence, if the minister could respond to whether or not that is something that he can provide now or on notice.

Mr CARROLL: Yes, we are happy to take that on notice.

Ms VALLENCE: Thank you, Minister. And how many Victorian jobs will be created to roll out this new Telematics technology?

Mr CARROLL: We are working, obviously, with the private sector, and the idea is that when the technology is rolled out it becomes a job creator. But in relation to the specific jobs, I will take that on notice, too, if I can.

Ms VALLENCE: Thank you. Were any other technology providers considered by the department—perhaps Secretary?

Mr CARROLL: I might ask Nick Foa to supplement my answer. When we do any trial and when we also look at technology, one of the things we do is consult across the board with tertiary partners, but we also have looked at what is happening in New South Wales as well. In relation to the specifics, we might need to also take that on notice, unless Nick Foa wants to add to that.

Mr FOA: Indeed. Thank you, Minister. The department has been running an innovation program whereby we invited a range of different companies—I think we had over 40 companies submit ideas. They went through a really rigorous assessment process and we ended up working with about six different technology companies. Some were bus focused, some were tram focused and others were in PT. But, yes, we are working really hard with them and one of the first products you will see from that is that—

Ms VALLENCE: I guess the answer, then, is yes, you did look at other providers. Were any of those providers Victorian? I am just trying to ascertain why we went with an offshore product.

Mr FOA: We have worked with a range of local companies. Out of the 40 I could not tell you how many were local, but there is significant local interest in that program.

Ms VALLENCE: Minister, 50 of the 100 new buses for Transdev have been ordered from Malaysia. How is this in line with the Local Jobs First policy?

Mr CARROLL: I think, just to clarify, the company you are referring to have an operation now in Ballarat. These are local industry, local manufacturing jobs. It is very important and I am very proud of what we have in terms of our bus manufacturing and—

Ms VALLENCE: But they are being built and they are being brought in from Malaysia with just some assembly—

Mr CARROLL: No, let us clarify—

Ms VALLENCE: Well, just some assembly, so—

The CHAIR: Ms Vallence, you have put a proposition to the minister. You need to allow him to answer it—or correct it when your proposition is incorrect.

Ms VALLENCE: Perhaps I will clarify, then.

The CHAIR: I do not think the minister misunderstood your question. He just did not have an opportunity to answer it.

Ms VALLENCE: Perhaps, then, in terms of that, can you list or detail what comprises the 60 per cent local content for these 50 buses from Malaysia?

Mr CARROLL: From Ballarat, you mean, I think.

Ms VALLENCE: Well, if the bodies and the parts to make up the assembly are coming from Malaysia and you are doing—

The CHAIR: Ms Vallence, you are putting a proposition to the minister and you are not allowing him the opportunity to correct your proposition where your proposition is wrong or to answer your question. Minister, would you like to?

Mr CARROLL: Yes. Look, it goes to a previous question, Ms Vallence, on our rolling stock strategy. I was actually previously the industry minister and was the one who helped draft the laws for our Local Jobs First policy.

Ms VALLENCE: Is it just the seats and decals only that are being applied in Ballarat? The full buses are coming from Malaysia and only the seats and decals are being applied—is that correct?

Mr CARROLL: Again, full buses are not coming from Malaysia. It is a very important rolling stock order, and also they are energy-efficient buses—and it is very important for regional jobs in regional Ballarat—that I know our bus industry are very much wanting to have on the fleet.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Ms Nina Taylor, MLC.

Ms TAYLOR: Thank you. I was just wanting to explore the tram network aspects of that a little further, having ridden many a tram myself as a true Melburnian—and love them ticking along. I am just wanting to know how the next-generation tram will improve accessibility across the network.

Mr CARROLL: Yes. That is a critical component, Ms Taylor, of the equation. The Auditor-General rightly did a recent report on our tram accessibility and correctly identified, it is argued, the two parts to the equation: the disability stops, but then also the rolling stock. The \$1.48 billion investment for the next-generation tram will provide a low-floor solution to make it very much disabled accessible, and it is going to be able then to go on to a range of trunk services where we know we have already rolled out disability stops but unfortunately have an old high-floor tram on that route. So it is those two parts to the equation to get the disability access right. I should say too, myself and the Secretary and Mr Foa recently have been meeting with members of the disability community, and I have got to say I was overwhelmed with the feedback we got on the process of the engagement for the HCMTs, and that learning we are going to now also embed with the next-generation tram to really make sure they are an important component with this, as we have with all of our upgrades to the PTV app and other infrastructure. It will have really important designs and technology, but most importantly, a low floor to make it properly accessible to meet those disabled-accessible tram stops.

Ms TAYLOR: That is excellent, very, very good, and also even for prams and all sorts of things across the board. Lots of benefits.

Mr CARROLL: Yes.

Ms TAYLOR: How are you ensuring the tram system is able to respond to demand?

Mr CARROLL: Yes, another good question in the sense that our tram network shares the road space, and that is one of the challenges we have—that the tram network does share the road space—and we are needing to see a lot more of the separations et cetera, et cetera. One of the important things is the next-generation tram will not only be more accessible and carry more passengers but it will have more modern heating and cooling to give passengers that more comfortable, seamless experience. But also too, to be honest, we need to retire some of our old fleet. We do not just want to bring in new trams and keep old ones there. Our oldest high-floor trams, that essentially do not meet modern disability needs, will be replaced. I think this will be welcomed by the Auditor-General, that did the recent reporting, and I think it will be a very important measure going forward. I think it will also continue to see a drive in patronage growth back to the tram network. We do need to be mindful too—for example, through COVID the Sydney Road tram route was quite strong. It was out in the suburbs, it was not in the CBD. Sydney Road is a pretty popular thoroughfare and it still had a lot of pretty good patronage on the tram network. So there is certain demand there. But we also know, with our different populations and ageing population and supporting our disability sector, that we need to make it convenient and accessible.

Ms TAYLOR: Very good. Now I would like to look at supportive infrastructure to encourage greater use of public transport. If I may refer you to budget paper 3, page 135, can you explain how the government is supporting jobs with public transport investment?

Mr CARROLL: I certainly can. As you would be aware from the previous presentation from Minister Allan, indeed an \$80 billion Big Build project has necessitated us to then add additional services. We supported both providers, Metro and Yarra. We have made it very clear in terms of workforce support, and I am very proud that our government investment has seen our operators continue to employ staff. But we have also seen some real innovative things come through too, like former Qantas pilots and pilots are now on our trams. It is a different mode of transport but a good story that shows if you put a little bit of investment in and you support your operators they will also think outside the box and also grab a good employee if they are going, particularly if they have got experience in transport but also experience in customer service.

So we are very, very keen to make sure, whether it is the Big Build, whether it is the rolling stock or whether it is just more general support for our operators, that we can support them and can continue to employ Victorians. One of the things, Ms Taylor, I know in this portfolio is the longevity of our transport people and families. Whether it is V/Line or Metro, 10–20 years—that is often the feedback I get. I think there is a term for them—gunzels—but they generally love their jobs, are multigenerational and want to do nothing else. Just at V/Line the other day I met someone that had been at Kmart for 25 years and wished they had got out of Kmart a long time ago and started at V/Line. That is often the feedback I get, and we want to keep those Victorians in work.

Ms TAYLOR: Excellent. Yes, that is certainly outstanding, that longevity. So exploring this concept further of accessibility upgrades with this investment, can you speak to that as well through the building works program?

Mr CARROLL: Yes, it is very important. As we know, in terms of keeping Victorians in work and in jobs and investing in local infrastructure, we know with our pedestrian streets and our summer streets—we have got a summer streets program—more and more Victorians are going to be dining out and using a cycleway or a cycle path. The Heidelberg cycleway is being built as we speak. I am aware of the pop-up lane infrastructure going up literally as we speak. These are little infrastructure improvements that we work with the local government sector on, and some of our road safety partners, but they are also important projects that keep people employed and also give people an alternative mode to get to work, to get to school or to get to wherever they need to go. So we have got to do, yes, the big builds, the big infrastructure, but we have also got to look at that grassroots level, whether it is disabilities and tram stops, whether it is separated cycle lanes or whether it is pedestrian safety for outdoor dining—how we can look at the streetscape and how we can value it differently, invest in it and really support that COVID recovery.

Ms TAYLOR: Excellent. I think we have got literally 15 seconds, so I might just leave it there.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Ms Taylor, and thank you, Minister. That concludes the time we have available for consideration of the public transport portfolio. Thank you to you and your officers for appearing before the committee today in this capacity. The committee will follow up on any questions taken on notice in writing, and responses will be required within 10 working days of the committee's request.

The committee will now take a short break before beginning consideration of the roads and road safety portfolio with you shortly. I declare this hearing adjourned.

Witnesses withdrew.