

Overwhelming backing for rail extension push

Crystal Fox

A campaign to extend the heavy rail to Coolangatta has received overwhelming support from locals, councillors and the airport who say it's a "no-brainer".

On Wednesday Member for McPherson, Leon Rebello, launched his 'Back the Track' campaign which called for federal funding to produce a detailed business case of the extension from Varsity Lakes to Coolangatta.

A Bulletin poll revealed 97 per cent of readers believed the line should continue on the extra 16km and connect the southern areas of the city to Brisbane.

Councillor Josh Martin "welcomed" Mr Rebello's campaign and urged the federal government to "properly investigate the missing link".

"Many locals I speak to cannot understand why the line just stopped at Varsity Lakes and never carried through to the Gold Coast Airport," he said.

"It would give not only southern Gold Coast residents, but people across the city, a direct connection to the GC airport, better access to Brisbane and a genuine public transport option to key destinations such as Robina Stadium for major events, helping take cars off the M1."

The stops originally proposed by Queensland Transport and Main Roads when it reserved the rail corridor in 2008 included Tallebudgera, Elanora, Tugun and the Gold Coast Airport.

Queensland Airports Limited chief executive Amelia Evans said the airport "consistently supported multi-modal public transport to strengthen connectivity for visitors, workforce and the broader community".

"This is aligned to the vision within our 2024 master plan, positioning the airport as a connected, accessible and growing gateway for the region," she said.



Member for McPherson Leon Rebello (left) has launched his 'Back the Track' campaign, which calls for federal funding to produce a detailed business case of the extension from Varsity Lakes to Coolangatta.



"We look forward to seeing how the outcomes of the Member for McPherson's campaign help shape future transport planning conversations."

Councillor Gail O'Neill said the heavy rail should "definitely" be connected to the Gold Coast Airport via Elanora and Tugun.

"It was extremely disappointing that neither side of politics at the federal or state level pushed for a business case to be completed over the last 10 to 15 years," she said.

"Heavy and light rail provide different services and I believe we need both but disappointingly I am not seeing either of these much needed services being given priority through either the state or federal governments for the division that I represent."

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Amelia Evans
Queensland Airports

Gold Coast resident Rex Gunton said while the extension was a "no-brainer" it required transport planning vision from both the state and federal government.

He added the extension would connect the Gold Coast to northern NSW suburbs and

make it easier to get down to popular hubs such as Byron Bay.

Resident Sand Postle said it felt like the city has been in limbo waiting for the extension.

"We cannot get to the airport without alternate transport and our roads are busier than ever," she said.

"Where is the sense in waiting. Our growth is astronomical and becoming more so. Let's face it, people want to live here. Get the job done, I say."

Others said they have seen tourists traipsing their luggage onto a bus, then a tram and sometimes onto a train to get to their destination from the Gold Coast Airport.

"It's long overdue because it's for locals and tourists," Heath Worrall said.

Resident Lee Shipp-Hillier said the extension was crucial for future proofing the city and

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Councillor Gail O'Neill

its soon-to-be one million residents by 2046.

"I think we need both heavy rail and light rail connecting to the airport," she said. "For a city that's quadrupled in population, having both makes perfect sense ... It's about building a transport network that's fit for the Gold Coast's future."

WHAT YOU SAID...

That should be a priority over a tram to a shopping centre at Harbour Town for crying out loud. Connects Brisbane and everywhere in between to the GC Airport and same the other way! It's an absolute no brainer and would be the best piece of infrastructure seen in a very long time. Do it...yesterday!
Bradley Beckerleg

As long as a corporation doesn't own it and then charge exorbitant fees to use it!
Nathan Chambers

Hallelujah. This is the difference between strategic planning and simply building because we can. Great cities aren't defined by how much infrastructure they have, they're defined by whether that infrastructure enhances the places people already love. Connect the region. Protect the communities. That's a vision worth backing.
Vanessa Hammond

Yes get it done!! If the powers to be had expansive forward thinking they would get that train all the way along the coast to Sydney... how would that be for tourism??
Carmel Milne

I will always ask the same question. Do you see GC Airport as being the airport for the Coast, or Brisbane's version of Avalon? If it's the GC's airport, then light rail gets priority. If you want to use it as an overflow for BNE, then the heavy rail wins. Oh, and currently about 90% of traffic through GC airport is tourism.
Michael Tree

This is not a new idea, make it happen, should have happened during the past 7yrs of upgrading the M1 from Robina to Currumbin.
Gopal Lloyd

Finally some common sense.
Bruce Vesey-Brown

Great. Here in NSW we are working towards extension up to Coolangatta from Byron Shire.
Richard Staples

The question I would be more in tune with is: "What area of land space Varsity to Coolangatta would it use".
Peter Allen

\$1.55bn Gold Coast Light Rail Stage 3 to open on Sunday

Ashleigh Jansen

Gold Coast Light Rail Stage 3 will officially open to passengers this Sunday – connecting Broadbeach and Burleigh Heads for the first time.

The extension will add a further eight stops to the light rail network, providing stations at Mermaid Beach, Mermaid Beach South, Nobby Beach, Miami North, Miami, Chris-

tine Ave, Second Ave and Burleigh Heads.

The Stage 3 trams and lines had to undergo months of testing prior to services going live.

Minister for Transport and Main Roads Brent Mickelberg said with permanent 50 cent fares, the major milestone will further provide locals with affordable, convenient and connected public transport network.

"Today is about delivering for

the Gold Coast and finally opening a project that local residents have been waiting far too long for," he said.

"This extension will better connect communities, support local jobs and businesses, and make it easier for people to move between some of the Gold Coast's most popular destinations."

Construction of the city's \$1.55bn light rail extension to

Burleigh began in July 2022, with dozens of businesses along the corridor forced to shut down after enduring years of what some described as "brutal" light rail works. Member for Burleigh Hermann Vorster said it was great to see the light at the end of the "figurative tunnel" after years of disruption.

"Burleigh locals have endured so much disruption, and they'll be breathing a sigh of relief with ser-

vices now just around the corner," he said.

"There's a lot of excitement about what this project means for new and improved connecting services, and I can't wait to share more with locals in the months ahead.

"As the Burleigh MP, I've no hesitation in claiming the best Light Rail stop on the network – and I know thousands of Gold Coasters can't wait to

come and support our local clubs and traders."

Sunday's opening will extend the Glink network by 6.7km, allowing commuters to travel from Helensvale in the north to Burleigh Heads in the south.

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