

New fast Perth-to-Bunbury train to open up State's South-West

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Should Perth be linked to Bunbury by a high speed intercity passenger rail service and if so, when?

These are two questions to be answered by a feasibility study into a potential new fast rail service from Perth to the Bunbury CBD announced by Premier Alan Carpenter today.

“The study will look at a modern diesel train that would use the new electrified line from Perth to Cockburn Central, then proceed down the median of the Kwinana Freeway and the new Perth-Bunbury Highway,” the Premier said.

“The new and more direct route terminating in the Bunbury CBD could reduce travel time by at least a third, to about one and a half hours, based on train speeds of up to 160km/h.

“This compares with about two and a half hours for the current Australind train, which is restricted to maximum speed of 110km/h and terminates about 3km out of the Bunbury CBD at Wollaston.

The Premier said there was potential in the longer term to expand the service southward as population and demand grew.

Planning and Infrastructure Minister Alannah MacTiernan said that past consideration had focused on a faster service on the existing Perth-to-Bunbury line.

“However, previous studies show that very little time improvement could be achieved on that route, even with considerable capital upgrade,” Ms MacTiernan said.

“The existing Perth-to-Bunbury line was designed to accommodate heavy, relatively slow traffic and is growing in importance as a freight line.

“Another alternative, which would be to extend the electrified metropolitan passenger network south to Bunbury from Mandurah, would not be the most cost-efficient way to provide an intercity service.”

Ms MacTiernan said the needs of communities currently served by the Australind would be protected.

The feasibility study will select the best routes through Bunbury City Centre and give the community an opportunity to comment on the proposal. It will also provide the Government with a clearer view of the costs and viability of the proposal and will be undertaken by the Public Transport Authority, with assistance from the Department for Planning and Infrastructure.

The study is expected to be completed in the first half of next year.