

# Knock-on effect of light rail delay

28/Jan/2014

Anne Gartner, Guardian Express

DEVELOPMENT in inner-city Perth will be stifled because of the delay to light rail, according to a Perth progress advocate and a sustainability expert.

Committee for Perth chief executive Marion Fulker said light rail was the missing link in Perth's transport network, which would encourage development around lines.

"Mass rapid transit systems move through denser inner-city areas and create urban environments around stops and routes," she said. "There would be no point in more people living in the urban core and just driving cars."

Last year, the State Government announced it would delay its \$432 million light rail project by three years as a way to reduce the State's debt.

But Mrs Fulker said recent increases in residential and commercial development in inner-city areas had created a need for more transport options.

"There comes a tipping point when you need a support structure to make higher density work," she said.

"Perth is just going to forever sprawl unless we do something different."

Mrs Fulker, who has completed study tours of light rail in the UK and Portland, USA, said light rail created "destinations" along the routes, which would help make many areas more pedestrian friendly. She said Perth's reliance on cars, with only buses and trains as public transport options, was not sustainable.

"The primary job centre is the CBD, we need a congestion alleviator and light rail is that," she said.

Curtin University Sustainability Institute professor Peter Newman said Perth would continue to grow at its "fringes" without light rail.

"It is a much bigger problem than just preventing a transport option, it is also preventing the sensible land development option relating to transit-oriented development," he said. "Perth will become even more divided, with the wealthy only being able to afford to live in the inner circle and the poor only being able to live in the outer fringe."

Professor Newman said transport options in Perth needed to include walking, cycling and transit.

"Most of all we need to reduce the distance needed to travel by redeveloping sub centre in the inner and middle suburbs, especially around new rail lines," he said.

"Buses are needed but cannot cope with the demand. Light rail and heavy rail capacity are 3 to 10 times as good as buses in the same space."

Mrs Fulker and Professor Newman said private investment in light rail should be investigated as a means of funding.