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# ELECTRIC DREAMS

## Council's push for eco-bus service between airport and CBD

A PROPOSAL for a new clean, green public transport system is getting a renewed push with the promise of the global tourism hub casino development adding to its viability.

Cairns Regional Council will tomorrow debate the merits of the so-called Cairns Metro system – an electric bus route ferrying visitors from the airport to the CBD.

Mayor Bob Manning pledged ahead of the 2016 local government election to get a green light rail system off the ground in Cairns. It has failed to move ahead, with a 2017 study commissioned by the council finding it would not make financial sense to launch a city loop shuttle bus.

However, a Cairns Post reader survey last year found people wanted drastic action to be taken to fix the city's ailing public transport system. A resounding 69 per cent believed light rail should be pursued.

Cr Manning said he learned Transport Minister Mark Bailey had committed money towards an electric bus trial to be run in Townsville and got on the phone and made a pitch for Cairns to get similar treatment.

"It just stacks up – we've got an international airport and we are moving about 5.5 million pax per year," Cr Manning said.

"We said we would like a cut of the action and Cairns would be a much more compelling proposition.

"The minister or one of his officers came back and said they would make staff available to look at this with you."

Cr Manning said tomorrow's council meeting would vote on a business plan for the airport link shuttle.

"We know this has been looked at before and it didn't stack up," he said.

"But at that time we were trying to work in a loop bus.

"We need to do a desktop business plan."

The mayor is now a member of the State Government's global tourism hub tourism advisory panel but said he still had little detail on what the casino project would look like.

However, with a potential \$1 billion spend and the influx of customers necessarily involved in making the project viable, public transport would be a key consideration.

"Everything is connected to everything," Cr Manning said.

"It would essentially need to stack up with the airport to give itself a chance."

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