

YOUNG SHUN BUS, TRAINS

MILES KEMP

A state government report into why young people don't use public transport has recommended free travel to and from school, sport and community activities.

Commissioner for Children and Young People Helen Connolly told the Sunday Mail her Safe and Sound report found much resistance to public transport use by South Australians aged 13 to 20.

"Free public transport to some activities would help young people from low-income families," she said.

"Doing so would help to significantly reduce the impact of transport disadvantage on the children and young people in these families."

As well as free transport for low-income families, the report recommends;

BETTER street lighting

BETTER safety lighting at shelters and near bus stops

MORE frequent bus, tram and train services

BETTER synchronicity of connections for safety

UPGRADING shelters

FREE wi-fi on all public transport and at train stations.

Survey respondent Denzel James, 17, said it could be tough for students to pay for public transport if both parents were on low incomes.

"Young people can struggle to even get to school by public transport in general as (they) don't have enough money to continuously refill cards," he said. "Sometimes you can find the bus drivers who are able to assist and let me catch the bus."

Ms Connolly said: "Young people's access to a full range of reliable, consistent and integrated transport options is not just a 'nice to have' – it is an essential component of their full participation in society as active and engaged citizens".

The survey, filled in by 1124 young people, found bad public transport

unfairly affected young women, LGBTQI+ people, and those living with disability. Young people also reported instances of sexual harassment, anti-social behaviour and crime, and wanted CCTV protection.

“With the cost-of-living pressures, many more families cannot afford public or private transport at the moment, which means many more children and young people are missing out on their education, sport, jobs, and other important activities,” Ms Connelly said. “The survey revealed just how reliant on others – parents, grandparents, siblings, friends’ parents – young people are for their transport needs.”

Transport Minister Tom Koutsantonis said: “The state government has taken positive measures geared towards encouraging children and young people to utilise public transport for their travel needs.”