

# Dithering could spell end of plan

By KARA LOLLBAC

THE proposed \$600 million rapid transit system could be in jeopardy because of council uncertainty.

A council insider said the Gold Coast would be in serious trouble if councillors got cold feet on the issue, because the State Government had threatened to withdraw funding for the project.

"The transport minister John Mickel has already said publicly that unless he has the full support of the Gold Coast City Council he will have to reconsider," said the source.

But Councillor Peter Young, who has been dubbed the new powerbroker of the incoming council, said the council should not be held to ransom by the Government or forced into making a decision that wasn't

## Clarke says he won't take orders

RON Clarke said he will not take orders from anyone if he is returned as mayor.

With a shift in power from 'the bloc' after Margaret Grummit won back Division 4 and John Wayne picked up Division 2, former outsider Peter Young has been given the unofficial title of council powerbroker.

But Mr Clarke said it was a 'media myth' that anyone ever held control over the council or that anyone, including Cr Young, would in the future.

"I don't take orders from anyone," he said.

right for the community, especially when the estimated cost of the system was three times what the state had offered.

"We have to recognise that there is an offer on the table from the State Government, but we also have to recognise that it is a conditional offer," he said.

"The state is dangling the carrot, but we have to be confident we have all the analysis and can make the right decision."

Last week Cr Young said he would support an alternative system of transport, including more school buses and an east-west pick-up service, but now he says it would be a 'meantime thing'.

"Even if we made a decision on rapid transport tomorrow, it would take years to implement and there would be a disruption to traffic," he said.

Cr Young said he

would ultimately like to see a monorail system for the city, because it would not hinder normal traffic, as light rail would.

He said any decision on the rapid transport system was still months away.

Cr Young's suggestion that the council take a step back from the rapid transport issue attracted criticism from federal opposition MP Steven Ciobo.

"Five or six years ago, the then-mayor Gary Baidon said the Gold Coast desperately needed a form of rapid transport, and six years on, the community is still waiting for action," he said.

Cr Young, who has links to the ALP, said the Howard government had not offered to help fund the project but now the council would ask Kevin Rudd's government.

## New council means light rail notion is running out of steam

THE push for light rail may have run out of steam in city hall.

In the wake of the recent council election, Division 9 councillor Ted Shepherd now appears to be the only remaining light rail supporter.

Likely mayor Ron Clarke and

councillors Susie Douglas and Peter Young support a bus system.

Although the final decision on a rapid transit system will be made by the State Government, proponents of an improved bus network have been given renewed hope of success.

Bus rapid transit taskforce

spokesman Michael Apps said he was hoping to brief the new council as soon as possible.

He said an investigation of bus and light rail costs overseas found a Gold Coast light rail system would cost more than \$1 billion - a shortfall that ratepayers would be forced to cover.

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