

Jenny Aitchison

Minister for Regional Transport and Roads

Stephen Lawrence

Duty MLC for the Dubbo and Barwon electorates

**Media Release****Trial bridging digital divide for outback bus passengers****Monday, 9 October 2023**

Passengers on the Dubbo to Broken Hill NSW TrainLink coach service can now stay connected thanks to a trial of free satellite-based Wi-Fi and technology to boost mobile phone signals.

Multiple cellular repeaters have been installed on board the coach that makes the daily return journey through the outback. The repeaters will boost mobile signal in areas of low coverage by retransmitting mobile signals for Telstra, Optus and Vodafone customers.

In a further boost, free Wi-Fi is being provided in non-coverage areas through the use of a Low Earth Orbit (LEO) in-motion satellite network which allows customers free access to up to 600MB of data.

The trial will last just over a month and is the result of collaboration between Transport for NSW, NSW TrainLink and the NSW Telco Authority.

NSW TrainLink will use the trial as proof of concept to see how passengers are using the technologies and whether it might be rolled out on more services across the regional coach network.

The return coach services between Dubbo and Broken Hill are provided by Bus Biz. Stops along the way include Narromine, Trangie, Nevertire, Nyngan, Cobar and Wilcannia.

Quotes attributable to the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads Jenny Aitchison:

"The trip between Dubbo and Broken Hill takes around nine hours each way through remote areas rife with black spots, meaning mobile phone reception could be patchy and phone data-based internet connectivity unreliable.

"Regional and remote communities are sadly often stuck on the wrong side of the digital divide but this exciting trial aims to reduce that divide while delivering a better, more convenient public transport experience in the outback."

Quotes attributable to Stephen Lawrence MLC:

"While this trial is underway tourists will be able to plan ahead and make bookings while on board, families can stay in touch and passengers can catch up on work, news, social media or enjoy streamed entertainment.

"The potential benefits are immense and the trial is another example of how NSW TrainLink and Transport for NSW are continuing to explore new ways of improving services for people in the bush."