



# Light Rail (UK)

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The retail sector in Burleigh Heads and elsewhere at the southern end of the Gold Coast is tipped to pick up after stage three of the light rail line is completed. Photo: iStock

## Retail at southern end of Gold Coast set to soar following new light rail extension

The retail sector at the southern end of the Gold Coast is tipped to soar when the next stage of the city's light rail project is completed.

The federal government last week announced an extra \$157 million for stage three of the light rail network, which will see trams extend from Broadbeach South to Burleigh Heads. This adds to the \$351 million that the state government has promised for the next stage and \$92 million from the council. Work is expected to begin straight away.

Stage one was completed in July 2014, from Gold Coast University Hospital to Broadbeach South. Stage two was a 7.3-kilometre extension from the hospital to Helensvale Station in the northern Gold Coast and opened in December 2018.

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Knight Frank associate director retail leasing Tanaka Jabangwe said the new light rail extension would encourage more tourists to venture south from the traditional retail precincts of Surfers Paradise and Broadbeach.



Tourists and locals alike have embraced the Gold Coast's light rail network. Photo: Glenn Hunt  
Disruption from construction of the project was likely to be less pronounced than the first stage, given the lower density of retail in the southern Gold Coast region, he said.

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“The stage 3A extension of the light rail will be a vital piece of infrastructure for the Gold Coast as it will connect heavy rail from Helensvale Station to the precincts of Southport, Surfers Paradise and Broadbeach, and all the way south through to Burleigh Heads,” Mr Jabangwe said.

“Ease of access across the city will generate economic growth for retail businesses in the southern Gold Coast catchment.”

He said local retailers would be able to claim a bigger slice of the estimated \$5 billion spend that comes from nearly 13 million domestic and international tourists to the Gold Coast each year.

One of the big winners from the project is expected to be Burleigh Heads, according to Herron Todd White valuer Ryan Kohler.



The new light rail line is expected to bring more tourists to Burleigh Heads. Photo: Supplied  
He said the suburb’s retail sector was currently performing well because of strong local patronage but was likely to strengthen further following the project’s completion.

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Mr Kohler said local retailers should be positive about the extension, but they might expect some disruption during construction.

“The light rail will galvanise the long-term relevance of these areas, making access more convenient for those from further afield and will also encourage tourists to venture further south,” he said.

“From a town-planning perspective, it is not unreasonable to expect there will also be some long-term benefits as well, as council may be supportive of higher density development around the future stations.”

Brodie Millwood, general manager of popular Burleigh Heads eatery Justin Lane, said the light rail was a positive for the retail sector, but he had concerns about the impact of construction on local businesses.

“The Gold Coast is growing up, there’s a huge number of people moving here. We need a public transport system that can deal with this. This is a step in the right direction,” Mr Millwood said.

“The major concern prior to completion is the impact that the construction will have. For us, at least, I believe that the construction is on the other side of the road, so potentially we may be protected from its negative impacts a little.”

JLL Australia retail investments senior director Jacob Swan said the Gold Coast light rail project had generally helped to increase foot traffic as well as drive new retail openings along its corridor.

He said more tourists and international students as well as events and festivals had been coming to the Gold Coast following the launch of the project.

“The dedicated Gold Coast light rail corridor has been a catalyst for development, with the ‘light rail growth corridor’ driving growth in capital values and higher levels of redevelopment activity,” Mr Swan said.

“Transport infrastructure projects can have a very positive impact on retail real estate values by improving connectivity and access for consumers.

“It typically spurs investment and development for surrounding property and drives a revitalisation of an area.”

Courtesy: **NICOLA MCDUGALL**

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