More than 80% of public buses will have security cameras installed in them this year following a $390,000 public transport upgrade announced today by Transport and Infrastructure Minister Chris Burns.

Closed circuit monitoring systems at bus interchanges and lighting at key shelters will also be upgraded as part of the overhaul, and security cameras will be installed on the Darwin-Mandorah Ferry Service.

Dr Burns said the measures are part of an overall public safety strategy that includes a strong relationship with the police. He said the NT Government’s overall Budget for public transport for 2004/05 is $22.8 million.

“Strong safety and security on public transport can really make a difference to the peace of mind of travellers and drivers,” Dr Burns said.

“Currently 14 out of the 54 public buses have security cameras installed – but by July this year 44 will be fitted with cameras … that’s 80% of our overall public bus fleet.”

Dr Burns said the Government had also reached agreement with existing bus operators on service provision in the Darwin urban area for the next five years.

As part of the agreement, the urban fleet will be upgraded with 13 new buses introduced in the next two years. The new buses will have the latest technology, low-floor easy access, air-conditioning and security cameras as standard.

“This will mean the Territory will have one of the best bus fleets in Australia,” Dr Burns said.

“At the moment 56% of public buses are low-floor access, but by the end of 2005 80% will have disability friendly access.

“And by the end of 2005 87% of all public buses will be air-conditioned.”