



A NEW FREIGHT ACCESS ROUTE FOR SYDNEY

The Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) will invest \$192 million over the next five years to build a new southern Sydney access route for freight trains through the south-western Sydney metropolitan area from Macarthur to Chullora. The Australian and NSW Governments have agreed that ARTC will lease the state's interstate and Hunter Valley rail networks for the next 60 years. The \$192 million investment is part of the \$872 million that ARTC will invest over the next five years as part of the lease arrangements.

The corporation is owned by the Australian Government, and the lease means that ARTC will now have the authority to sell track access to train operators over the full length of the interstate mainline from Perth to the Queensland border.

Freight trains currently share the existing electrified track through the Sydney metropolitan area with passenger trains. Passenger trains are given priority on these tracks during peak commuter periods, which results in significant delays for freight. It is the biggest impediment to freight rail activity between Melbourne and Brisbane.

ARTC will construct a new line following the existing route from Macarthur to Sefton Park Junction. In conjunction with the project, ARTC has offered NSW a contribution towards the joint redevelopment of Cabramatta rail station to include an acceptable route for the line, which will be called the Southern Sydney Freight Line (SSFL).

The SSFL will include:

- A non-electrified single track next to the Main South Line between east of Sefton Park Junction and south of Macarthur;
- Speeds of up to 110km/h at 21 tonne axle load and 80km/h at 23 tonne axle load;
- Train control under the direction of ARTC;
- Train transit from south of Macarthur to Sydney via Sefton Park and Strathfield;
- Signalling capacity to accommodate forecast train and maintenance requirements; and
- A 1800 metre crossing loop close to midway between Macarthur and Sefton Park Junction.

The operation of the track will be conducted in accordance with a detailed agreement based on the following principles:

- Train access to the SSFL will be the responsibility of ARTC;
- ARTC will meet all costs of maintenance and train control;
- Train access to the SSFL will be subject to the Passenger Priority; and
- Principles applicable to the lease network.

The construction of the SSFL has the potential to benefit Sydney commuters as well as freight train operations. It will free up enough capacity on the electrified track to give NSW the ability to operate an extra 36 commuter trains a day. Non-electrified commuter trains from the Southern Highlands will also be able to use the new line as well as the XPT services to Southern NSW and Melbourne. The final details of the route will be subject to consideration by environmental and planning authorities.