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\$4M INVESTMENT IN NORTH EAST LINE 17-19 MARCH

The Australian Rail Track Corporation is investing in more than \$4m worth of infrastructure renewal and annual maintenance improvement works across North East Victoria the weekend of 17-19 March, ARTC's Group Executive Interstate, Jonathan Vandervoort said today.

Nearly 40 projects targeting everything from track resurfacing to bridge upgrades and level crossing improvements are part of the works package planned to be delivered over a 60 hour period, Mr Vandervoort said.

"Every year, we conduct targeted maintenance works during a 'shutdown' period – where fewer or no trains are running – this allows project works to be delivered far more safely and efficiently."

"Planned months in advance, the works will support the reliability of our passenger customers and growing freight operations along the rail network.

"It is important we approach maintenance in a careful, staged and planned manner in the context of all rail operations and the needs of the entire network," said Mr Vandervoort.

"This is particularly relevant for North East Victoria which serves valuable freight and passenger services operating across the national interstate rail freight network, from Melbourne to Albury and beyond."

"A new freight rail customer operating out of Logic intermodal hub has already gone from three services to five services per week in under a year, demonstrating continued confidence in the rail network meeting customer needs," Mr Vandervoort said.

"We also work closely with our passenger customers including NSW TrainLink and V/Line when approaching these shutdowns to ensure the planned works are as targeted as possible and align with their customer needs and service requirements."

The \$4 million renewal maintenance in March includes \$3 million for replacement of seven bridges, which is part of the scope of works for the Federal Government's \$100 million committed to the North East Rail Line. With the scope nearing agreement, ARTC will work alongside Victorian agencies to talk with the community about the detail of the scope, with additional work likely to begin in the middle of the year.

Works Scope

- Approximately 40km of track will be re-surfaced (tamped and regulated/compacted)
- 7 existing bridges are planned to be upgraded with new concrete ballast top decks replacing aging timber decks and transoms
- 5 level crossings will have track re-conditioning and road re-surfacing works undertaken improving ride quality for both road and rail users (note there will be some road closures)
- Approximately 500 metres of mud holes will be removed
- V-crossing build ups and replacements will be undertaken to increase asset life and improve ride quality

- Inland Rail will perform early phase geotechnical investigations at Murray Valley Highway near Barnawartha
- VicTrack will commission into use 2 new level crossings with boom protection

“We would like to ask the community and motorists to be cautious around work sites in the rail corridor and level crossings as there will be additional movements of trucks in these areas leading up to, during and after the works,” Mr Vandervoort said.

“We also apologise for any disruption or inconvenience caused as a result of the work and thank the community for its support and patience while these essential projects are taking place.”

Passenger service operations will be transferred to coach during the weekend to allow these essential works to take place. Please visit www.vline.com.au and www.transportnsw.info for further information.

Coaches will replace Albury trains for the entire journey to and from Melbourne from Saturday 17 March until the afternoon of Monday 19 March.

ENDS

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Background

- The North East Victorian section of the Melbourne-Sydney railway line is a critical part of the national freight network; carrying valuable freight to destinations around the country.
- More than 20 freight and passenger trains run across this network every day
- ARTC’s network operations and maintenance is funded commercially. The vast proportion of revenue used to pay for the management of the line is through rail freight services.
- We continue to perform well against our lease requirements and meet all of our lease obligations with the Victorian Government
- The maintenance work we do between Melbourne and Sydney is in line with the rest of the network, and is based on a planned, annual maintenance program.
- Temporary speed restrictions (TSRs) are low and at sustainable levels that allow train services to run on-time and that there are a broad range of causal factors contributing to V/Line’s poor performance.
- Dependent on direction of travel these currently impact services with delays of between 4 and 9 minutes – these are well within thresholds to still allow trains to arrive on time and many services arrive early with the current TSRs in place currently.
- A range of factors can influence train punctuality, including: passenger disturbance and other related passenger delays, vandalism (e.g. signal wire theft), weather conditions (extreme heat, lightning strikes, flooding), trespassing, signal failures and/or telecommunications faults, delays on adjacent networks.
- V/Line services run at 115km/hr because they are a locomotive hauled train – essentially like a freight train. The track runs services up to 130km/hr and does so, including NSW TrainLink XPTs today.