



AUSTRALIAN RAIL TRACK CORPORATION LTD

MEDIA RELEASE

ARTC releases Liverpool Ranges Study

“The potential growth of coalmining from the Gunnedah Basin has moved the option of a new Liverpool Range rail route firmly onto the planning agenda.” David Marchant Chief Executive of Australian Rail Track Corporation Ltd (ARTC) said today when releasing the ARTC’s study into a new alignment across the Liverpool Range in the vicinity of Ardglen in the Hunter Valley.

“The purpose of the study was to provide the coal and rail industry with options and an information base to assess whether a new alignment should be proceeded with. ARTC will now be consulting extensively with the industry to determine which option, if any, should go forward.” Mr Marchant said.

The study identifies six route options. These comprise two surface alignments that would continue to use the existing tunnel at Ardglen, and four options that involve a new, longer tunnel through the Liverpool Range.

Each of the new alignments would allow the elimination of the use of “bank engines” currently required to assist heavy coal and grain trains up the steep ascent to Ardglen.

“The different alignments have different operational and cost implications. The study outcomes provide the necessary information for the industry to make informed decisions that will affect their transport costs well into the future.” Mr Marchant said.

The options range in capital cost from \$167m to \$465m and from an operational savings for coal trains from \$0.37 cents per tonne to \$1.18 per tonne.

While the study identified a number of specific route options, a final alignment would be subject to extensive review and consultation during an environmental assessment process.

“The route options provide an understanding of construction costs and operational outcomes at a level appropriate for this stage of the process.” Mr Marchant commented. “In the event that a decision is taken to proceed, there will need to be considerable further development and review to finalise an alignment.”

“ARTC is looking for feedback to its reports. Specifically, ARTC is seeking the coal industry response and commitment to an option. No development will take place unless the coal industry supports and underwrites the option to be developed.” Mr Marchant said.

The study outcomes are available on the ARTC website www.artc.com.au under “Investment Strategies”.

