



Media release

From the Premier of Victoria and the
Federal Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development

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WORKS START ON MAJOR PROJECT TO BUILD WODONGA BYPASS

Work will begin today on the Wodonga Rail Bypass, marking the start of an historic \$501.3 million Rudd and Brumby Government project to revitalise Victoria's north-east rail corridor by creating an interstate rail freight super-highway and delivering major passenger rail service improvements.

In Wodonga, Victorian Premier John Brumby and Commonwealth Infrastructure and Transport, Minister Anthony Albanese turned the first sod on the Wodonga Rail Bypass project, the first major works in the North-East Rail Revitalisation Project.

"We are taking action to ensure our regional communities are well-equipped to grow and thrive and the Wodonga Rail Bypass project will create new jobs and drive new investment in this already dynamic regional city," Mr Brumby said.

"Removing the rail line from the centre of Wodonga will open it up to major commercial opportunities, rejuvenate the city centre and is central to the urban development of Wodonga as a vibrant regional hub.

"The start of works today follows months of negotiations between the Commonwealth and Victorian governments on nation-building projects that will secure the future prosperity of Victoria's north-east and represents one of the single-largest government investments in this region. I am delighted to be here today to celebrate this important milestone with the Wodonga community."

The Wodonga Rail Bypass project is the first major step in the \$501.3 million North-East Rail Revitalisation Project. The North-East Rail Revitalisation Project will construct a rail bypass of Wodonga and convert 200-kilometres of broad gauge track to standard gauge to deliver a first-class passenger and rail link between Australia's economic hubs, Melbourne and Sydney and improved passenger rail services between Melbourne and Albury-Wodonga.

"This project is great news for people in regional centres such as Seymour, Wangaratta, Benalla and Albury-Wodonga who will have access to both V/Line and interstate CountryLink services once a new standard gauge track is constructed – that's five return services each day along the north-east rail corridor that will be faster, more comfortable and more reliable," Mr Brumby said.

Mr Albanese said the freight route between Melbourne and Sydney was Australia's busiest with freight volumes forecast to increase by 70 per cent in the next 20 years.

"New rail freight infrastructure gets goods to markets more efficiently, helping to alleviate the capacity constraints on our economy. That's why our Government is making major investments to boost the nation's rail freight network," Mr Albanese said.

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“This project is part of the \$2.4 billion being invested by the Australian Government and the Australian Rail Track Corporation in a better east coast rail freight line.

“When this investment program is complete, train travel times between Melbourne and Sydney will be slashed by 20 per cent from 13 hours and 30 minutes to just 10 hours and 40 minutes.

“The five-kilometre Wodonga rail bypass alone will cut 10 minutes off an interstate train trip. It will also improve safety for the community by removing 11 level crossings in the centre of town.

“That’s why our \$45 million investment in this project is so worthwhile, and a key part of our nation building infrastructure agenda that will remove capacity constraints, fight inflation and secure Australia’s future prosperity.”

The Wodonga Rail Bypass Project will involve the construction of a single-track, five-kilometre rail bypass of Wodonga and a new passenger railway station in west Wodonga. It will remove 11 level crossings from Wodonga, improving safety for rail passengers, pedestrians and motorists.

The first stage will involve construction of a road diversion of Melrose Drive to facilitate construction of a bridge over the new railway line. Works to upgrade and standardise the north-east rail corridor will commence towards the end of this year.

The North-East Rail Revitalisation Project is being delivered by the Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) under the Southern Improvement Alliance as part of a 45-year lease agreement with the Victorian Government.

ARTC chief executive David Marchant said the agreement would allow the ARTC to deliver significant infrastructure works to the Victorian standard-gauge rail network and sufficient time for the planning and implementation of practical, long-term improvements.

“This new partnership will see valuable long-term improvements in the Victorian standard-gauge rail network that will breathe new life into rail freight in Victoria and marks a significant step forward in improving the entire rail corridor from Melbourne to Sydney,” Mr Marchant said.

“The ARTC has a proven track record in delivering vital rail projects and managing rail infrastructure across Australia. The new lease will allow the ARTC sufficient time to plan and implement practical long-term infrastructure improvements to the rail network in Victoria.

“As part of upgrading and standardising the North East rail line, the ARTC will also invest in the Portland-Maroon line to upgrade and maintain it to make it more attractive for future growth. We have also contributed towards the \$50 million Port of Melbourne rail access improvement projects which will further enhance rail connections into the port.”

The North East Rail Revitalisation Project is jointly funded with the ARTC contributing \$285 million, the Victorian Government, \$171.3 million, with \$45 million from the Commonwealth Government through its AusLink program.

The project includes:

- Construction of the Wodonga Rail Bypass to remove the rail line from the centre of the city and build a new, single-track, five kilometre bypass of Wodonga;
- A major upgrade of the 200-kilometre broad gauge track between Seymour and Albury including conversion to standard-gauge;
- Upgrades to the standard-gauge line between Melbourne and Seymour, including the construction of new passing loops as well as upgrade works already being undertaken by the ARTC;
- Three V/Line passenger locomotives and 15 passenger carriages will be refurbished and converted to standard gauge to operate on the newly-converted rail line;
- New platforms along the north-east rail line to service the new standard-gauge locomotives.

The North-East Rail Revitalisation Project will be completed in 2010.

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