



AUSTRALIAN RAIL TRACK CORPORATION LTD

Sydney Commuters Should Support Dedicated Freight Rail Lines in Sydney

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The single greatest priority to improving freight transport on the East Coast of Australia is the construction of dedicated freight lines rail lines through Sydney that separate freight trains from urban commuter trains.

This would seem to be of little concern to the thousands of Sydney commuters who simply want better commuter services; more train paths to more destinations and an end to the four-deep waiting lines on Sydney stations..

However what many Sydney commuters don't realise is that the construction of dedicated freight lines through the city will actually free up capacity for more urban commuter trains to be introduced.

So far the job is only approaching halfway.

Currently there exists a curfew on freight movements in the southern and northern metropolitan areas. These curfews substantially restrict freight capacity as no freight is allowed on the urban system in the peak hours from 6am to 9 am and from 3pm to 6pm on weekdays.

Construction of the Southern Sydney Freight Line commenced in late November.

In 2009 construction will be in full swing, with completion targeted for January 2010. This line will separate freight from the urban passenger system in Sydney from Chullora to Macarthur and will overcome the curfew on freight movements in the southern metropolitan area.

The line will be connected to the freight line from Chullora to Sydney Ports which will also be separated from the urban passenger system.

Importantly for Sydney commuters, the Southern Sydney Freight Line has the potential to free up capacity for around 100 train paths a day for passenger trains on the urban network. In real terms this could result in dozens of new passenger services for Sydney commuters travelling to and from South Western Sydney.

The next greatest rail infrastructure priority for Sydney, NSW and the entire East Coast is the development of a dedicated freight line North out of Sydney.

With an initial investment of around \$800 million followed by progressive investment over ten years, a dedicated Northern freight line would separate freight trains from passenger trains from Sydney through the Central Coast and to Newcastle.

Similar to the Southern Sydney Freight Line, construction of a new Northern line would also free up capacity for more than 100 new passenger train paths to and from Sydney especially from the Central Coast through Hornsby.

The successful development of a Northern Sydney Freight Line will hinge on the cooperation between the Federal and NSW governments, as well as the injection of capital.

There are suggestions that in the current economic climate large outlays on infrastructure projects are unwise and may hamstring the federal budget surplus.

This short sighted view led to a significant deterioration in vital rail freight infrastructure in Australia over the past three decades.

History has shown us that economic downturns come and go, however the demand on the freight logistics market increases every year. Investment in infrastructure must be a long term priority of any nation.

The current economic climate will change. The need for more goods to travel by freight rail will increase and as our population grows, Sydney's passenger rail services will be put under increasing pressure.

Planning 'smarter' as well as planning 'larger' rail infrastructure means investing in freight and urban rail infrastructure that work together, where dedicated freight rail lines free up more urban passenger paths.

Sydney will remain the central freight hub on the Australian East Coast. Decisions made by governments and planners in the near future will determine whether freight rail compliments moves to take the pressure off Sydney's crippled metro system through dedicated freight lines or whether it adds to the growing congestion of Sydney's Rail and Roads.

David Marchant, CEO, ARTC