



Mildura Rural City Council

Submission

National Land Freight Strategy

Barkindji Corridor Transcontinental Rail Link – Mildura to Menindee

28 April 2011

The Link

This submission is made with the objective of having a new rail link from Mildura to the transcontinental rail line from Sydney to Adelaide/Perth/Darwin included as a potential future rail freight corridor in the National Land Freight Strategy.

The project involves the construction of a new rail corridor from Mildura to Menindee (200km), bypass of Mildura's urban area and standard gauging of existing broad gauge track from Mildura to Geelong.

Previous Submission to Infrastructure Australia

In 2009 the Mildura Development Corporation lodged a submission with Infrastructure Australia seeking support for the Link as a national priority project. The submission was supported by a Technical Pre-Feasibility and Economic Analysis prepared by consultants GHD-Meyrick dated January 2009. After consideration by Infrastructure Australia the project was listed as an "Early Stages" project in late 2010.

Benefits

The Pre-Feasibility identified the following benefits. The Link:

- Allows diversion of a large portion of East-West freight traffic Melbourne to Perth and Darwin by providing an effective bypass of Adelaide resulting in improved transit times and train efficiencies brought by double stack capability.
- Avoids the need for ARTC to invest in the East West route with extra and lengthened passing loops and measures to address noise complaints in the Adelaide Hills.
- Provides an alternative train path to the north, east and west in times of national emergencies eg: floods.
- Stimulates growth in mineral sands development and production (Iluka and Bemax) by providing standard gauge rail freight access to Hamilton, Port of Portland, Port of Geelong, Melbourne, Broken Hill and beyond.
- Stimulates investment in mineral sands mining in the Barkindji Corridor plus other export produce (wine, feedstock) in both Victoria and NSW.
- Improves Defence logistics to the north.

Bankable Feasibility Study

The next step in the project is to undertake a Bankable Feasibility Study to prove up the merits of the Link for inclusion in the National Land Freight Strategy and the Government's list of pipeline priority infrastructure projects.

The study would provide:

- Detailed market evaluation taking into account increased freight volumes stimulated by the Link
- Detailed route definition
- Geotechnical survey
- Heritage/indigenous survey
- Environmental survey
- Preliminary design to permit feasibility costing to P90 level.
- Definitive analysis suitable for consideration by IA and the Government in forward look budget processes.

The cost of undertaking a Bankable Feasibility Study was estimated in 2009 to be \$2.8 million.

Stakeholder Support

Preliminary discussions with former ARTC CEO, David Marchant, in October 2010 indicate that ARTC would support a Bankable Feasibility Study being undertaken to prove up the Link to a level of confidence that would merit its inclusion as a national infrastructure pipeline project.

The Minister for Regional Australia has received an initial briefing on the positive regional transformative impacts for Victoria and NSW. The Victorian Department of Transport and the Regional Office of NSW Premier's Department are supportive of a Bankable Feasibility Study being undertaken.

Inclusion of the Link in the National Land Freight Strategy

Reasons why the Link should be identified in the National Land Freight Strategy as a future rail freight corridor worthy of further investigation are:

- The Link will provide a viable freight option for shipment of significant mineral sands resources to ports for export. Bemax has indicated it will open up two mines in the Pooncarie region, the Yabbie and Atlas sites which have an estimated 70-80 years of resource, if the rail link is established.
- The Link will provide a cost effective alternative to investing in the Adelaide corridor to address impending capacity and noise challenges in the Adelaide Hills area.
- The Link will create the opportunity for double stacking efficiencies to be gained between Melbourne, Perth, Darwin and inland regional areas.
- The Link will provide security for heavy rail freight operations in the event of major natural events such as floods, and for Defence logistics
- The Link will provide sufficient economic, social, environmental and security benefits to outweigh the effect of dilution of freight density on the Melbourne to Adelaide rail corridor.

