

J. Luthman

25/7/05 *Supp. Sub.*

SUPPLEMENTARY SUBMISSION NO. 114



Submission on Freight and Port Links

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25 July 2005

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Introduction

The City of Casey welcomes the opportunity to provide this submission to the Inquiry into the Integration of Regional Rail and Road Freight Transport and their Interface with Ports. The City of Casey is located in the outer south east metropolitan Melbourne Growth Corridor. Freight movements from Gippsland and South Gippsland regions to both the Port of Melbourne and the Port of Hastings travel through the municipality. The movement of this freight has an impact on the economic and environmental sustainability of the municipality.

The issues raised are identified by number on the locality plans provided as Attachment 1 to 3.

Terms of Reference

The relationship and Coordination between Australia's road and rail networks and their connectivity to ports.

Arterial Road Freight Network

1. Princes Freeway/Monash Freeway

The movement of road freight from the Gippsland and South Gippsland regions, as well as the Port of Hastings, to Melbourne is currently focussed along the South Gippsland and Monash - Pakenham Freeways. The freeways merge together just north east of Dandenong, on the border of the Cities of Casey and Greater Dandenong. A high proportion of journey to work trips originating in the Casey-Cardinia Growth Corridor also use the same freeway network.

The freeway network has recently been upgraded with the completion of the Hallam Bypass and is planned for further upgrades with the Pakenham Bypass.

Since the opening of the Hallam Bypass in July 2003, traffic volumes in the vicinity of the freeway interchange have already reached in excess of 130,000 vehicles per day and traffic modelling indicates this could grow over the next decade to approximately 160,000 vehicles per day.

The interchange area suffers from extreme congestion particularly in the morning commuter peak. Additional traffic lanes will need to be provided if a reasonable level of service is to be achieved for commuter and freight movements. The ability to upgrade the capacity of the freeway is limited due to reservation restrictions.

Alternate arterial network links will be required to supplement the freeway operation.



2. Clyde Road – Alternate Route for South Gippsland

The *Cranbourne Township Bypass Study, VicRoads June 1999* identifies Clyde Five Ways–Clyde Road Route as a future alternate high standard arterial connection from Melbourne to South Gippsland.

The route would potentially supersede as an inter-regional link the current South Gippsland Highway connection between Cranbourne and the South Gippsland Freeway. Council supports the upgrading of the route however it has concerns over the likely time frame for funding to be made available.

Construction of the link to a suitable arterial standard will require considerable funding, potentially in excess of \$100M. The section of Clyde Five Ways Road from Patterson Road to South Gippsland Highway is of a poor standard in regard to width and vertical alignment. Whilst this section has recently had a Load Limit removed following minor rehabilitation works, the road is not suitable in its current form as a high volume freight link.

VicRoads have indicated a preference to divert the southern section of the route onto a new alignment. The timing for the diversion has not been announced. VicRoads needs to either commit to delivery of the southern section realignment in the short term, or undertake substantial works to upgrade the existing road for continued operation in the medium term.

3. South Gippsland Highway – Cranbourne Town Centre

The *Cranbourne Township Bypass Study, VicRoads June 1999* recommends the upgrading of Clyde – Clyde Five Ways Road as an alternate route from South Gippsland to Melbourne using the Monash Freeway at Berwick.

Whilst Council supports upgrading the road as an arterial connection, it doesn't support the assertion in the strategy that this would divert freight movements from travelling through the main shopping centre in High Street Cranbourne.

The Monash Freeway route will not divert freight movements travelling between South Gippsland and the South Dandenong and Braeside industrial areas, or East Link route. Connections through Cranbourne to either Western Port Highway or East Link will still be the most direct route for this traffic.

Freight movements such as the transport of mineral sands from Lang Lang area to Melbourne currently travel through the Cranbourne shopping centre, to the ongoing concern of the community. Heavy truck movements through the middle of the shopping centre detract from the retail/commercial amenity and causes safety concerns for pedestrians.

The Victorian State Government has an election commitment to introduce sprinter trains on the Leongatha Rail line beyond Cranbourne. However the current state of the tracks means the line is not in an operational condition and hence does not provide an alternate transport mode.



Council has identified a supporting grid of future arterial road which in combination will allow freight movements the flexibility to avoid travel through the town centre.

The identified future arterial routes in and around Cranbourne are a combination of VicRoads and Council responsibility. Construction of the "local" arterial roads will be part funded through Development Contributions. Upgrading of the local and state arterial roads to ultimate capacity will be a significant community cost that is currently unfunded.

4. Western Port Highway

The Western Port Highway provides an important link to the Port of Hastings. It is understood the Port Authority is about to undertake a study into the future transport linkage requirements for the Port. Duplication of Western Port Highway will be one of the options for maintaining transport capacity.

The areas east and west of Western Port Highway through the City of Casey are likely to be developed over the next 10 to 20 years. This will put further pressure on the Highway as a transport route. A balanced approach will need to be pursued between access new development (via controlled intersections) and the regional traffic function of the road.

Options for a rail connection from Dandenong to Hastings, generally along the Western Port Highway corridor are becoming increasing remote as development continues to constrain alignments.

The Victorian State Government Policy of requiring any new rail crossing to be grade separated further constrains a rail connection option due the significant increased infrastructure costs associated with grade separated crossings.

5. South Dandenong Bypass – Connection to South Gippsland Freeway

As part of the East Link Consortium road bid, the southern bypass of Dandenong is to be built along sections of the Dingley Freeway Reservation. This part of the project will be of great benefit in providing high standard road connection around the Dandenong District Centre. The road link combined with East Link will also improve access to the Dandenong South Industrial area.

The current project terminates its eastern end at the South Gippsland Highway. Extension of the road easterly to the South Gippsland Freeway or further to Hallam South Road would provide far greater accessibility to the freeway network and also open up connections directly into the Hallam industrial area.



Rail Freight Network

6. Standard Gauge infrastructure – Gippsland to Melbourne

There are no Standard Gauge rail connections east of the Melbourne Terminus. This limits the opportunity to link Gippsland, South Gippsland or the Port of Hastings directly by rail to the National Rail network.

Without a Standard Gauge connection, rail freight movements cannot compete with road freight due to the costs associated with double handling and time impacts.

Once a container is loaded onto a truck, it is far easier to complete the journey by road rather than transfer to rail and potentially transfer again between a Broad Gauge line and Standard Gauge line, with a further transfer to road for the final destination.

7. Capacity constraints on Dandenong - Melbourne Rail line

The Gippsland Rail line is suffering from capacity constraints particularly in the section from Dandenong to Melbourne. Passenger demand on this section already results in crowded trains. The capacity constraints limit the ability to increase train frequencies beyond Dandenong where the network splits into the Pakenham and Cranbourne lines. The same constraints limit the freight movements to off-peak times.

The Victorian State Government has committed funds to investigate the third rail upgrade of the line from Dandenong to Caulfield however timing of project delivery is undefined.

The City of Casey is experiencing growth in the order of 10,000 new residents each year. The Shire of Cardinia is also starting to experience high levels of growth. Public transport services in the growth area are very poor compared with Melbourne metropolitan services.

Upgrading of the rail line is required as a matter of urgency. If a third track was provided, the opportunity to include a dual gauge configuration should be explored as this would provide Standard Gauge rail freight links to the Dandenong / Hallam Industrial areas. It also maintains the opportunity to extend those links in the future along the Gippsland, South Gippsland and even the potential Port of Hastings routes.

8. Freight Interchange – Dandenong – Hallam Area

It is understood the Victorian State Government is investigating the potential to locate a rail freight terminus in the South Dandenong/Hallam area, either on the Cranbourne or Pakenham lines.

Council supports such project as providing increased freight access to these areas. As indicated above however in order to achieve greatest cost efficiencies in the operation of such a terminus, provision of Standard gauge connection would be essential in order to allow freight to be directly connected into the National Rail grid.



Otherwise, it would be as cost effective once loaded to simply transfer the container by road directly to a Melbourne terminus for transfer to the Port or the National Rail terminus.

9. Port of Hastings – Dandenong Rail connection

Any study into future freight connections to the Port of Hastings should investigate the options for a rail connection from Dandenong to Hastings. Provision for such a connection generally along the Western Port Highway corridor is becoming increasingly remote as development continues to constrain an alignment that might minimise acquisition of “urban” land.

The Victorian State Government Policy of requiring any new rail crossing to be grade separated further constrains a rail connection option due to the significant increased infrastructure costs associated with grade separated crossings.

Potential intrusion into “Green Wedge” areas could also be a constraint to achieving a viable alignment.

The role of the three levels of Government and the private sector in providing and maintaining the regional transport network.

Coordinated Government/Private Sector Approach

The management of freight movement by either road or rail, as well as the key port and transport terminals come under the control of a range of government and private agencies. An enormous level of investment has already been committed to the movement of freight in Australia, however continued commitment of funds is required to not only maintain but improve the delivery of freight.

Unless there is a coordinated multi Government/private sector approach, then investment by individual agencies is either compromised or in many cases nullified by opposing actions from other competing sectors.

Given the potential for competing interests in freight infrastructure delivery, coordination of freight strategies needs to be led by Government, with input from the private sector.

Local Government doesn't have the financial capacity on its own to fund infrastructure that has a broader community impact. Funding for these key links needs to be supported by both State and Federal Governments.



Member Council to SEATS – Supporting Submissions

The City of Casey is a member of South East Australian Transport Strategy Inc and supports submissions forwarded by other member agencies.



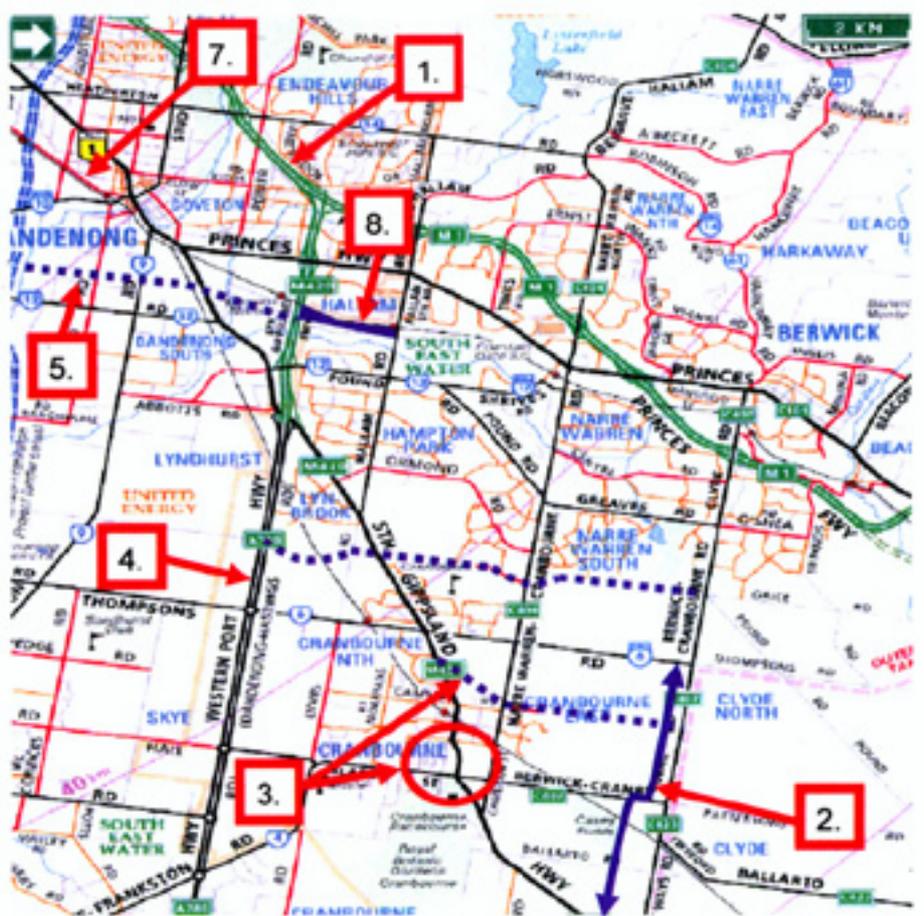
Attachment 1 – Regional Freight Links



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Attachment 2 – Locality Plan (North)



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Attachment 3 – Locality Plan (South)



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