



Submission to Infrastructure Victoria – Automated and zero emission vehicle infrastructure advice

The Rail Freight Alliance (RFA) is made up of rural, regional and metropolitan Councils across Victoria. The Alliance membership has a strong belief that more freight on rail will add to the efficiency, productivity and prosperity of the nation.

Our Membership includes the Councils of Buloke, Central Goldfields, Ballarat City, City of Greater Bendigo, City of Melbourne, City of Wodonga, East Gippsland, Gannawarra, Glenelg, Greater Shepparton, Hindmarsh, Horsham Rural City, Loddon, Mildura Rural City, Moyne, Pyrenees, South Gippsland, Southern Grampians, Swan Hill Rural City, Warrnambool, Yarriambiack, Latrobe City, Northern Grampians and West Wimmera.

The RFA believes that the Infrastructure Victoria Report – Advice Automated and zero emission vehicle infrastructure advice is a comprehensive document within the scope requested by the Victorian Government. The RFA considers that the scope of the advice requested is only one part of the solution towards zero emissions and complementary infrastructure. Passenger and freight pathways and freight mode share must be overlaid to gain an accurate assessment of what infrastructure needed for a modern Victoria.

The Victoria's population is expected to grow by approximately 3.5 million people over the next 30 years (ref1). The overwhelming recipient of this population growth will be Melbourne. Freight Volumes in Victoria are predicted to increase from 360 million to nearly 900 million tonnes by 2051 (ref 1). This growth and increase in freight volumes will be great challenge to provide a liveable, affordable and productive state and economy, congestion, community safety, vehicle emissions, continued road depreciation and road way capacity are important considerations for Victoria.

The Rail Freight Alliance believes that maintaining the Liveability of Victoria, while continuing to increase imports and exports, a far greater share of the freight task will need to transfer from road to rail in the next 20 years. Rail provides a cost effective freight transport over longer distance, is a safe means of transport, reduces congestion and greenhouse gas emissions and prolongs the State and Local Government road networks.

Several issues need to be considered as part of an overall future for passenger and freight movements in Victoria. Victoria's predicted population growth and freight task is unprecedented. Being able to move people and freight while maintaining liveable, affordable and productive state and economy, congestion, community safety must be holistically planned

The Rail Freight Alliance lists the following considerations: -

A Transport Plan for Victoria

The Victorian Government has recently released "Delivering the Goods" a Victorian Freight Plan and established Freight Victoria. RFA believes that Victoria's growing freight task must be planned and interfaced with passenger movements. Both freight and passenger use road and rail infrastructure. The Alliance considers that both freight and passenger transport must be planned in unison when investing in Victoria's transport infrastructure.

First Mile Investment

The Victorian Government has supported several road projects that support moving freight to main roads, accumulation and or intermodal centres. Many of these projects have merit, however, they are not part of an overall investment in a transport plan for Victoria.

High Productivity Freight Vehicles (HPFV)

The Victorian Government has established a HPFV Network across Victoria. Most of these routes have access to rail. Trucks up to 30 metres in length and 68.5 ton in weight are permitted to travel along these routes. Regardless of the emissions of any future road freight vehicle a significant investment will be required in road infrastructure. For example, the main access to Melbourne from Gippsland is via the Monash Freeway, this route is currently gazetted as a HPFV route, creating further congestion on road pathway that is already at capacity. The Alliance considers that rail must be part of an integrated transport solution.

Corridor protection

There have been many examples of trying to create pathways through urban areas, the most recent being the sky rail project. Reengineering these pathways is expensive and creates community uncertainty and threaten social amenity. The areas identified for potential future development should be preserved. Corridors for rail shuttle linkages to Lyndhurst, Somerton, Dandenong and Altona must be planned and protected.

Ports and Connectivity

Connectivity to an existing or any new container Port will be essential to the liveability of Victorians. The Melbourne to Brisbane Inland Rail Project is scheduled to be operational by 2025. A Future Interstate Freight Terminal (FIFT), must be planned, designed and constructed and have connectivity to a Port Rail Shuttle and the Port of Melbourne and future second container port.

References

(1) Delivering the Goods, Victorian Transport Plan