

## **Rail Freight Alliance Submission to Goschen Mineral Sands and Rare Earths Project.**

### **The Rail Freight Alliance**

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 safety, efficiency, productivity and prosperity of all Victorians.

### **Victoria's Freight Task**

Rail Freight Investment for Victoria, like many states around Australia are preparing for an unprecedented increase in freight over the next 30 years. How this task is managed and what investments are made will impact the economic, environmental, and social outcomes of Australians for generations. By 2050 the freight task is likely to triple, and Melbourne is forecast to be the biggest city in Australia.

The Port of Melbourne is expected to increase its freight task two to three-fold from today's freight task. The challenge of moving this freight throughout Victoria and keeping people safe and providing a liveable state and keeping within designated emissions will be a challenge over the next decades. Congestion within Melbourne is now a major factor and the cost of using Victoria's toll road system continues to climb well above CPI. One in five vehicles on Melbourne's toll roads is now a heavy vehicle, this trend is not predicted to decrease. What is required to meet this growing freight task needs to be planned and actioned today as the "do nothing" approach will leave Victoria with a legacy that may never be rectified. Rail freight offers the ability to move large volumes of freight efficiently and cost effectively across intra and interstate network regardless of borders.

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 cost effective freight transport over longer distances, is a safe means of transport, reduces congestion and greenhouse gas emissions and prolongs the State and Local Government Road networks.

The Rail Freight Alliance has considered the Goschen Mineral Sands and Rare Earths Project and makes the following recommendations.

### **The Project**

The Goschen Mineral Sands and Rare Earths Project is located within two mining areas and is expected to yield five million tons of a variety of mineral concentrates.

Transport of products using sealed containers will commence on road to Ultima and then by rail to the Port of Melbourne.

### **Transport Task**

Assumption based on a deposit of 5 million tonnes, and extraction and processing of 100,000 tonnes annually.

A freight task of 100,000 tonnes equates to 4,000 Twenty Foot Equivalent (TEU) annually, being the equivalent of a 20-foot shipping container.

To manage a 4,000 TEU freight task it would require 2 weekly train services of 40 TEU per movement.

The total weekly tonnage would be 2,000 tonnes.

*4,000 TEU = 80 TEU per 50 weeks/year = 40 TEU per twice weekly*

*Currently there is a twice-weekly train service operating out of Ultima.*

### **Sustainable Maintenance**

The Ultima intermodal facility is located on the Manangatang Line. In mid-2019 the Victorian Government invested \$23 million to keep the Manangatang Line to keep the line open for the upcoming grain harvest. For the consistent and economic transport of rare earth to export this line needs to be maintained and not subject to intermittent capital funding from government.

#### **Recommendations**

- The Manangatang Line at a minimum be maintained at current standards.

### **Efficiencies**

Ton Axle Loadings (TAL) and Rail Productivity Higher axle loads are an important factor in improving freight train productivity.

There has been an increased investment in the High Productivity Freight Vehicle network and subsequent investment in road transport. Rail Freight has not had the same investment in new technologies.

Currently the line is gazetted at 19-tonne Train Axle Loading (TAL), this is the amount of weight the wagons are allowed to be loaded to. The track speed is gazetted at 40km/h between Boort and Manangatang, the balance of the line is gazetted between 55 & 65 km/h.

#### **Recommendations**

- Consideration be given to upgrading the line to 21 TAL
- Immediate works to the 146 km section of line between Manangatang and Boort, to increase train speeds to at least 65km/h.
- Consideration be given to increasing line speed to 80km/h

### **Interoperability**

Currently the Manangatang Line carries 2 weekly container services. Bulk grain is also freighted on this line; however, this traffic is not as consistent.

The challenge is operating a delivery and return services of bulk and container freight. An additional passing loop would allow greater interoperability on this line.

The Manangatang Line is a broad-gauge line, this severely limits the interoperability of this line and also reduces competition on this line.

### **Recommendation**

- Install an additional passing loop at Dunolly.

Consider standardising these sections of lines:

- Maryborough to Ballarat
- Ballarat to Geelong
- Korong Vale to Dunolly
- Sea Lake to Korong Vale
- Manangatang to Korong Vale

### **Safety**

Additional Train services will increase train presence on level crossings through local and state road networks.

Recommendation

- Conduct a safety audit of level crossings along this train route.
- Immediate consideration be given to upgrade the crossing on the Swan Hill Donald Road near Lalbert.

### **Complementary Road Networks**

An A Double truck can have a Gross Vehicle Mass (GVM) of 85.5 tonnes, with a payload of 54.7 tonnes. An A Double Skel truck could carry 2 loaded containers, meaning that the road network supporting the new mine would need to be upgraded.

Recommendations

The following roads be assessed for upgrading.

- Oppenlander Rd
- Donald-Swan Hill Rd
- Lake Boga-Ultima Rd

### **Rail Freight Vital**

The RFA considers that it is essential that the freight task from this project must utilise rail freight. The recommendations contained within this submission will not only improve community safety, it will create a sustainable rail freight option for the region.