

Adelaide Rail Freight Movements Study

DRAFT DISCUSSION PAPER – OCTOBER 2009

I would like to make the following submission in relation to the ARFMS Discussion Paper released for public comment in October this year.

In recent times there have been many arguments advanced supporting the relocation of the Adelaide-Melbourne Freight Line away from the Adelaide Hills. I say “in recent times” because I think it is safe to say that, prior to the standardisation of the freight line in the mid-nineties, very few people living in close proximity to the corridor would have considered there was a problem.

With the introduction of the national standard gauge however came issues previously unbeknown.

Issues like:

- the unbelievably excruciating squeal from many of the wagon wheels
- the thundering noise from the huge locos hauling long, heavy loads through the hills
- the interruption to one’s sleep pattern (particularly on summer nights when windows are open)
- the constant inconvenient build-up of traffic at level crossings during peak times
- the fear by nearby residents that further derailments could occur (similar to the ‘04 Glenalta incident)

In addition to these community-based concerns about the deterioration of social amenity and quality of life it surely stands to reason that, economically, a new freight line traversing relatively flat land mainly in straight lines must overwhelmingly outweigh the upgrade of a line that was built in 1887.

We must look to the future when arriving at an appropriate recommendation.

An upgrade of the existing route (Option 1) which according to the Discussion Paper suggests would only meet projected demand for a further 10 years, must be ruled out. Assuming that the infrastructure could be upgraded to accommodate longer (1800m.) trains by reconfiguring tunnels, bridges etc. the line would not be able to be straightened appreciably to allow for faster freight movement. It would also mean the whole line would need to be closed to freight traffic whilst work was being carried out – not to mention the total inconvenience to people living along the corridor, or those needing to cross the line at numerous locations.

Furthermore freight traffic between Melbourne and Perth/Darwin, most of which is not even destined for Adelaide, would still be forced to travel slowly through the suburbs.

Heavy freight trains travelling through the hills are a constant bushfire hazard. We have personally witnessed the result of sparks from the wheels of a freight train igniting adjacent grass and holding up the daylight Express from Melbourne while the fire was extinguished by CFS volunteers.

Option 4 (the southern bypass) is nothing more than a dream – completely unrealistic! The cost alone should rule this Option out but there are other negatives which surely don’t support this proposal. Exiting on the south side of Cross Road (Westbourne Park) for example will only further compound the huge build-up in traffic that is occurring on a regular basis today.

Therefore I would strongly support the recommendation of the City of Mitcham’s Rail Freight Sub Committee that of the Improvement Options being considered to date, Option 4.3.4 (Northern bypass – south of Truro) be pursued.

This Bypass Option can be constructed without interfering with day to day freight movement. It would also allow for faster trains and double stacking in line with the National Freight line strategy.

Whatever the estimated cost of construction today, this amount must surely escalate if there are further delays.

Geoff Bartlett

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]