

Fast Rail Business Case – Sydney to Wollongong

State/Territory: New South Wales

Proposed AG funding: \$8.0 million

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This project will develop a business case to determine the infrastructure and operational requirements to provide fast rail services from Sydney to Wollongong. The business case will undertake an options analysis to determine the optimal rail solution, determine requirements for integration with the existing rail network, and provide patronage assessment, economic appraisal, and funding and financial analysis.

Improving transport connections between our capital cities and their regional centres has the potential to support the economic and population growth of the regions. In particular, fast passenger rail links can strengthen economic ties and connect people en masse to housing, jobs, lifestyle amenity and services. The business case is expected to be jointly funded on a 50:50 basis with the New South Wales Government, and/or the private sector.

PROBLEM DESCRIPTION

Wollongong has a population of 298,400 with average annual population growth of 1.1 per cent over the last decade. It is a strong regional economic centre with a Gross Regional Product of more than \$14 billion, which is underpinned by an established business environment alongside advanced manufacturing, trade and logistics.

The rail corridor between Sydney and Wollongong is approximately 83 kilometres. Passenger rail services in the corridor are operated by NSW TrainLink. Between Sydney and Thirroul, the corridor runs along an often steep and tightly curved alignment, severely limiting track speeds in both directions.

The corridor is also constrained by suburban rail operations on the Sydney metropolitan rail network, limiting the number of passing opportunities and impacting journey times. The current rail journey time between Sydney and Wollongong is approximately one and a half hours.

A fast rail connection between Sydney and Wollongong would consolidate the corridor's significant role in the nation's economy, and unlock more affordable housing opportunities in the region by reducing journey times between Sydney and Wollongong from approximately one and a half hours to just over half an hour.

PROJECT BENEFITS

- **Improve travel times and service reliability.**
- **Improve passenger rail services.**
- **Increase connectivity.**
- **Ensure forecast population-driven increases in travel demand are met.**