

Manager

Inland Rail

Albury to Illabo section

INLAND RAIL WHERE TOO NOW – MAJOR CONCERNS AT THE CITY OF WAGGA WAGGA

A few months ago, a number of residents in the city of Wagga Wagga submitted a number objections to the Federal Minister for Inland Rail about the need to divert freight trains around the perimeter of the city in lieu of freight trains running through the centre of the city. The city of Parkes has an alternate route going around the perimeter of the city in lieu of travelling through the centre of the city. The alternate route for our city is to follow the floodplain along the Olympic highway and across the Murrumbidgee west of the city joining the main line near Kapooka. The Minister was asked to provide information on:

1. Costing for an alternate route for freight trains around the perimeter of the city. To my knowledge no alternate costing has been provided to make comparison with costs of raising bridges etc along the current railway line.
2. The current rail line provides a speed of 40kms per hour. It is believed that the 1.8km long freight trains will travel up to 80kms per hour on the same line around every 2 hours each day. There has been no mention on the integrity of the current rail line to take some many extra freight trains per day at double the speed. It would be logical to assess that the current rail line as it will deteriorate rapidly, and it will need replacing so why not have an alternate route for the freight trains north of the city along the river flood plain.
3. Freight trains holding up vehicle traffic at two major arterial routes for a duration of up to 5 minutes has not been addressed. The crossing in Bourke Street is a major concern for access to the two hospitals and the ambulance station. The closest arterial route from the south to the hospitals is via Bourke Street. If a critically ill patient is in an ambulance waiting for the freight train to pass up to 5 minutes, it could mean life or death for the patient. This scenario happened Coolamon about 10 days ago where the patient was held up going to a hospital due to a passing freight train and the patient stopped breathing.
4. In the case where an ambulance is going to an accident site or to a patient on the northern side of the rail line from the ambulance station, it would be held up at the Bourke Street site if a freight train is passing by.
5. The noise factor, vibration factor, traffic congestion, and pollution aspects have not been addressed. We have now learned that there will be significant traffic congestion problems in the construction phase, while after construction, delays at level crossings will increase by up to 18 per cent. Noise levels will have minor to moderate increases and, importantly, the number of homes potentially in need of mitigation will blow out from 19 originally identified to an unacceptable 1,285. Modelling shows a major impact on Wagga Wagga's air quality, and we now learn that nitrogen dioxide emissions will increase to more than double the relevant criteria, largely because of locomotives idling at passing loops.
6. Also, if a freight train became derailed in the centre of the city near the hospitals and there is a chemical spill that would mean the need to evacuate the hospitals and surrounding medical and care facilities as the rail line is next the regional medical and knowledge centre

of the city. This situation should never be allowed to arise, thus, the need to find an alternate route for freight trains around the north & west of the city.

7. The raising of the vehicle traffic bridge in Edmondson Street by 2.8M will create a safety hazard on the north side as it will be a steep decline to join with Edward Street /Sturt highway and a pedestrian crossing at the junction for primary school children. There is a need to decrease hazards not increase hazards for motorist.

The environmental impact report does not address the issues raised. The community requires a plan and costing of an appropriate BYPASS along the river floodplain PRIOR to any approval of using the current rail line route. Using the floodplain area for a NEW bypass for increased rail freight transport will provide a safer and less disruptive and likely to be less costly in the medium term. Also, a report on the INTEGRITY of the current rail line is a MUST because triple the rail traffic at up to double the speed will have a large adverse effect on the current infrastructure especially at the curves in the line and with double the height of shipping containers on the rail carriages which moves the equilibrium balance of the containers causing greater pressure on the rail line infrastructure.

The concerns raised by many residents of the city need to be addressed prior any approval. The information session held on the 28th November DID NOT quell the major concerns. Your consideration of our major concerns is requested as high priority.

Long term resident of the city which I am proud of.

Yours sincerely

James Hamilton

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