

NEWS POST

RAIL FUTURES INSTITUTE INC - MEMBERS QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

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WAURN PONDS UPGRADE COMPLETE



Finally completed and commissioned late May, 2022 the second platform and passing loop at Waurm Ponds station.



Also commissioned late May three position signalling and CTC control of signalling between Waurm Ponds station and Warncourt Loop on the Down side of Birregurra station.

CONTRIBUTING TO RFI NEWSPOST

Members are invited to submit news articles and opinion pieces, plus reports of construction activities on transport projects. Submissions should be no more than 800 words. Members photos of current rail / tram activities are also welcome in jpeg or png format. Contributions may be edited to fit the available space. RFI reserves the right to edit / decline articles it considers not appropriate. Please forward all submissions to: secretary@railfutures.org.au

Opinions expressed in RFI Newspost are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the rail futures Institute (inc) . (RFI)

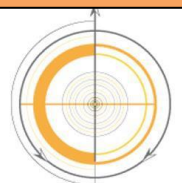
Editor - Val Sands

Publisher - David Hardy

1922 - A CENTURY APART - 2022



Looking up Bourke Street towards Parliament House





PRESIDENT'S WORDS - John Hearsch

“If V/Line is to continue operating these longer distance services, what should its responsibilities be?”

The recent announcement that V/Line intends to no longer provide on-train refreshment services on its long-distance trains provokes questions as to the role of a regional passenger railway and the expectations of those who it intends to serve. From this announcement, and actions which have gradually degraded the quality of V/Line's longer distance services, one might conclude that its operational comfort zone does not extend much beyond the cordon of its commuter zone framed by the Regional Fast Rail project of the early to mid-2000s.

The forbearance of many passengers who experienced the non-availability and then only spasmodic provision of on-train catering during COVID-19, the “temporary” use of VLocity sets to Bairnsdale until the Avon River bridge was rebuilt, plus frequent substitution of trains with coaches, perhaps lulled V/Line into believing that the service, once permanently withdrawn, would not be missed.

V/Line's commuter zone boundaries, which happen to coincide with availability of the MYKI ticketing system, comprise Waurin Ponds, Wendouree, Eaglehawk/Epsom (to become Huntly), Seymour and Traralgon. Other places within around 2½ hours travel time from and to Melbourne are also generally suitable, passenger amenity-wise, for our standard VLocity diesel multiple-unit sets. These comprise Ararat, Maryborough, Echuca (at a stretch) and fairly soon, Shepparton, noting that, for less than obvious reasons, passengers travelling to and from these places are denied access to MYKI.

That leaves the longer distance services to Warrnambool, Swan Hill, Albury and Bairnsdale. Melbourne-Albury seems to have been treated as a special case, but only because the line's appalling track condition up to a year or so ago, led to tough negotiations with ARTC. This resulted in an agreement for ARTC to invest \$250m to fix the track issues and for Victoria to provide six standard gauge VLocity sets (18 cars in total) suitable for longer journeys with better amenities and a “café-bar” facility. We know that design and construction of the café-bar facility added several millions of dollars while this, and a more spacious layout, entailed a loss of 74 seats in a 3-car set.

We could discuss the inept decision to only have 3-car sets instead of a mix of 3-car and 4-car sets, but that would repeat what RFI members have heard over the years. However, the issue has special relevance for the Albury line



as the reduced capacity of 148 seats compared with the previous 4 or 5-car N sets with 289 and 377 seats respectively, means that many trips now need to be operated with a double (6-car) VL consist. In practice, only one café-bar is being staffed at a time and there is no ability for passengers to move from one 3-car set to the other, except at station stops.

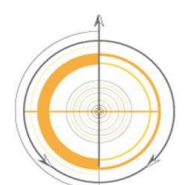
If V/line is to continue operating these longer distance services, what should its responsibilities be to its passengers, particularly the elderly and infirm, adults with young children and those with special needs? Management will always proclaim safety as their number one priority, but safety goes beyond the basics of protecting people from serious harm. It also goes to its duty of care in meeting basic human needs including amenities such as toilets, comfortable seating and food and drink when the latter cannot otherwise be obtained for hours at a time.

Further, it questions how anyone in need of assistance during the journey can communicate with the Train Conductor who may be positioned, perhaps for an hour or more, in a different 3-car set from the person in need. This is accepted as a reasonable risk on shorter trips with frequent stops, but longer distance travel imposes different requirements now that 6-car VLs are being operated to Albury and prospectively, on the other long distance corridors.

Apart from the basic necessities, what about the marketing and promotion of these services to encourage patronage growth in competition with private car use? Again, V/Line seems to treat these services in the old CSO (Community Service Obligation) mode, providing the minimum required by government and doing so at least inconvenience to itself.

When on-board catering facilities were installed in every N and Z carriage set in the 1980s, we did so in the knowledge they would never cover their incremental costs. But the aim was to drive patronage and revenue growth, including First Class travel at markedly higher fares, and this strategy was successful. Now, as we slip back to the basics, First Class on regional trains will soon pass into history.

Overall, it seems that the quality of regional travel, especially for longer distance trips, is to be at the lowest common denominator – no frills and minimal on-board amenities. More enlightened rail managers, both in Australia and overseas, provide services that help maximise passenger satisfaction and revenue. Rail Futures will continue to advocate to this end.





HAVE LEVEL CROSSINGS NOW GOT THE VOTE ?

Recently NSW announced that it would be contributing \$500 million (along with a matching Federal contribution) toward higher speed trains between Sydney and Newcastle (164 km via the existing railway). Here is a dollar amount equivalent to perhaps 7% of the cost of the Inland Railway over a track length of perhaps 9% of the length of that railway. Sounds about right!

But wait, the actual program seems to be all about adding two tracks to the double track section between Tuggerah and Wyong (2.5 km apart), north of Gosford. Quite possibly it will include new stations at one or both locations, but it can only make the most marginal of gains in terms of alignment improvements, since this stretch is already part of the northern speedway which runs from Lisarow to Morisset (36km) which has a curve of 2000 m radius in its midst through Wyong. In other words, the billion dollars are going to add a short bit of capacity to the otherwise no faster than now route. Maybe this is just a first part of a longer term upgrading plan to get faster trains between Sydney and Newcastle, but if that is the case why not let us know about the longer term plan and how this immediate project fits into that long term plan?

In the same media release mention was made of 1 hour to Newcastle (164km), 25 minutes to Gosford (81 km – same as Geelong via RRL) and 45 minutes to Wollongong (83 km). None of these genuine fast times have anything to do with the rather flaccid billion dollar works that are the subject of the recent release. Maybe there are some subtleties that mere mortals have yet to be appraised of? If so, why hobble the veracity of what is proposed with a cute and coy evasive document? Maybe the writer was, typically, under informed and decidedly inexperienced (as is now the case all too frequently) and simply got their concepts and buzzwords all tangled up – a *they know not what they know not* situation.

Little wonder that these people are called spin doctors – spinners of varieties of fabrication rather than honest attempts to inform voters of what is going on. Intentionally or otherwise the politicians who put their name on this puerile stuff tar themselves with the same brush. But maybe it is all quite intentional – the politically driven imperative to make a wedding cake out of a mud pie. This sort of thing is now all too common even to the extent that it becomes a mantra of sorts – think about Victoria anthropomorphic level crossings that are both dangerous and congested. Somehow imbued with almost human qualities, other than the ability to vote!

In a similar vein the new bridge at Stratford (Gippsland) could save up to 5 minutes per train – 10 minutes on a round trip – yet the almost hysterical media release for

that project was full of Ministerial joy because people going to East Gippsland could now enjoy longer holidays or more time at home. A whole 10 minutes, really?

One of the issues that seems to have been lurking in the recent Federal election was an intolerance by voters of the antics and dysfunction of our elected representees – confrontationist and aggressive behaviour, duplicitous utterings and the conspicuous display of either self-seeking decisions or extraordinarily poor judgement. In the pecking order of public trust I would hazard a guess that politicians (as a tribe) now fall somewhere below used car salesmen or land developers.

It would seem that repeating the manufactured gobbled-gook often enough makes the whole thing believable – at least in the minds of this who put this stuff out into the public domain. Even to the extent that reliable information within their own departments is ignored in favour of created fictions.

I could be wrong but I get the impression that the dissemination of information is done far better in Western Australia than elsewhere, possibly because they know what they are talking about and have no need for specialists in weasel words. Ever since the Perth suburban rail revival projects (Joondalup, Mandurah) under Alanah McTiernan's watch there seems to have been a far more moderate and informative approach to the pronouncements about projects in W.A. and significantly to management and execution of projects.

If only these attributes could somehow travel across to the East Coast! We might have a quality standard gauge freight network instead of the enforced dysfunction of a poorly scoped and extraordinarily badly executed Murray Basin project and the subsequent withdrawal of any political interest in gauge or rail freight in Victoria ever since. We might have a cohesive plan to improve the 'suburban' part of the rail network west of Melbourne rather than the on again – off again promises to do with electrification, capacity amplification and facilitation of works that might improve the work - life balance for the newly domiciled masses. We might be able to better than returning to the past with a Geelong faster train proposal that is listed as achieving the same times as used to be achieved a couple of decades ago by what are now regarded as *passe* 'classic' trains. If only!

- Max Michell



New NSW Inter-capital & Inter-City train type from Spain





MTM TRAINS - ENERGY STORAGE PILOT PROJECT

ABB has completed a pilot project to install a 1.5kV dc Enville Energy Storage System (ESS) system, which stores energy gathered as trains brake as they enter a station, before feeding power back into the grid as the train accelerates out of the station. The pilot project was undertaken as part of upgrade works on the Hurstbridge Line. The energy redistributor was installed as an alternative to building and connecting a new rectifier sub-station on the line.

Metro Trains tendered the project after experiencing frequent voltage drops around Diamond Creek, between Wattle Glen and Eltham on the Hurstbridge Line. The traditional solution in such circumstances has been to put in another rectifier sub-station, to improve the electricity supply dip.

The energy-management system was found to be more cost effective in terms of both land use and construction. It has also resulted in a 15% reduction in carbon emissions and supplemented electricity drawn from the grid.

To ensure a higher level of safety for maintenance employees, automatic earthing switches have been incorporated in the installation. Installation and on-site testing were impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, with ABB initiating a virtual commissioning process to allow all parties, including Overseas experts in Poland, to work remotely.

The system was commissioned in the first half of 2021, when the ESS was connected to the Hurstbridge Line's network



Innovative energy storage system as installed on the Hurstbridge line between Wattle Glen and Eltham.

Photo- Courtesy ABB

This article appears courtesy of www.railjournal.com

HEYWOOD - Mt. GAMBIER LINE RE-ACTIVATION

Since early 2021 RFI has been working in conjunction with Regional Development Australia Limestone Coast (RDALC) on progressing a listing with Infrastructure Australia (IA) to re-activate the former 81 kilometre railway between Heywood and Glenburnie on the Eastern side of Mt.Gambier.

The RFI Team working with RDALC is made up of David Hardy, Max Michell, Mark Williams, Frank Lander and Robin Walpole; who have all visited Mt Gambier and the Port of Portland over multiple occasions over the last 18 months Covid-19 restrictions permitting.

The recent change of Government in South Australia has elicited a fresh interest in that State in re-activating the railway as the Green Triangle sends out a huge volume of freight all by road as it has no Intermodal terminal within the huge catchment area. In 2020 the CSIRO identified a need and justification for an Intermodal to be established on the Eastern side of Mt Gambier at Glenburnie.

RFI in conjunction with RDALC is now progressing a Stage 1 submission to Infrastructure Australia to get the rail re-activation listed with IA as a project of National Importance. The joint support of the Federal and Victorian / South Australian Governments is being sought to re-activate the railway and establish the Intermodal terminal at Glenburnie.

Estimated costs of the project are around \$ 130m including full re-sleeping with concrete sleepers and gauge conversion to standard gauge.

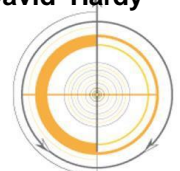
- David Hardy



RDALC (Rear) & RFI (Front) teams meeting, May 2022.

RDALC - Alan Richardson, Lyn Howes, David Wheaton

RFI - Mark Williams, Frank Lander, David Hardy





MELBOURNE CBD & INNER AREA - TRAM ENHANCEMENT PACKAGE

The Problems Defined

- The existing CBD tram network has missing track sections in Victoria Street (CBD), and Park Street (South Melbourne), preventing continuous tram operation along both streets, and therefore introduction of new cross CBD tram routes, so as to transition the CBD tram network away from a radial to a grid network of tram services designed to increase public transport usage.
- With massive growth in the Western end of the CBD in recent years there has been little done to enhance the frequency of tram services in William and Latrobe Streets, or to extend the tram network further west into the Arden and North Melbourne station precincts.
- Despite the pending opening of the Metro 1 rail tunnel and a new station in the Arden Precinct, there has not been any action to connect either the Arden Precinct or North Melbourne station to the CBD tram network, or provide a tram link between North Melbourne and Arden stations (both stations serving different line groups)..
- The CBD tram network retains its largely radial network structure of the 1950's and has failed to introduce key new routes offering a wider range of trip choices both tram/tram and tram/train within the CBD and immediate inner suburbs.

Proposed Project Responses

- Install missing twin trackage in Victoria Street (City), to allow a new cross northern CBD tram route from North Richmond to the Arden precinct, connecting with multiple radial rail corridors and 15 other tram routes.
- Install missing trackage in Park Street (South Melbourne) so as to allow trams from Anzac station to also enter the CBD via Clarendon and Spencer Streets to Southern Cross , North Melbourne and Arden stations.
- Boost CBD tram frequencies in William and Latrobe Streets and restore a continuous tram service along Spencer Street.
- In conjunction with the opening of the Metro 1 tunnel restructure the CBD tram routes to offer a number of new route choices to travellers additional to the existing route structure.

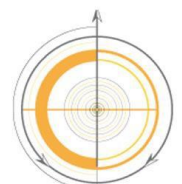
Proposed Project Scope

- Install 310m of double track in Park Street South Melbourne between Kingsway and Heather Streets
- Install 750 m of double track in Victoria Street (City) between Latrobe and Swanston Streets.
- Install double curve pairs at Park & Clarendon Streets (South Melbourne), Victoria & Church Streets (North Richmond), and cross connections in Victoria Street at Swanston and Elizabeth Streets (CBD).
- Extend the CBD tram network from the Remand Centre via Spencer, Abbotsford and Adderley Streets to North Melbourne station. Then continuing via Railway Place and Laurens Street to terminate at Arden station.
- Install 350 m of new double track in Arden Street linking Arden Station to the existing tram network at Abbotsford Street.

Operational Considerations

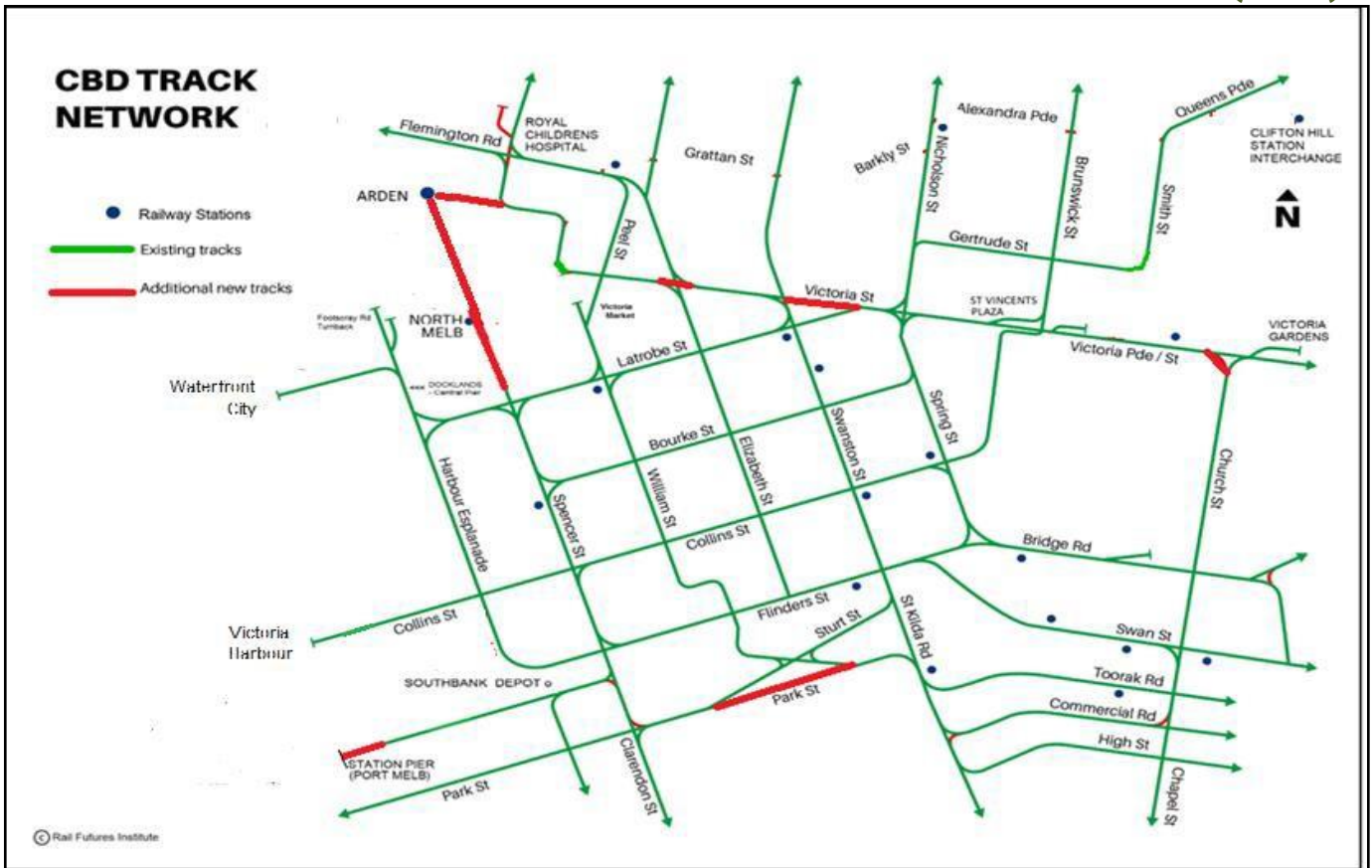
- The proposed extensions as detailed on pages 2 & 3 plus re-structuring of the CBD tram network on completion of Metro 1 will require an increase in fleet size overall which can potentially be accommodated short term by further increasing the annual delivery rate of the new G class trams coupled with a program to extend the life of the existing B2 class trams.

See concept maps on next page - 6

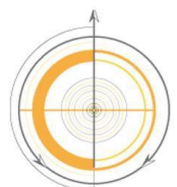
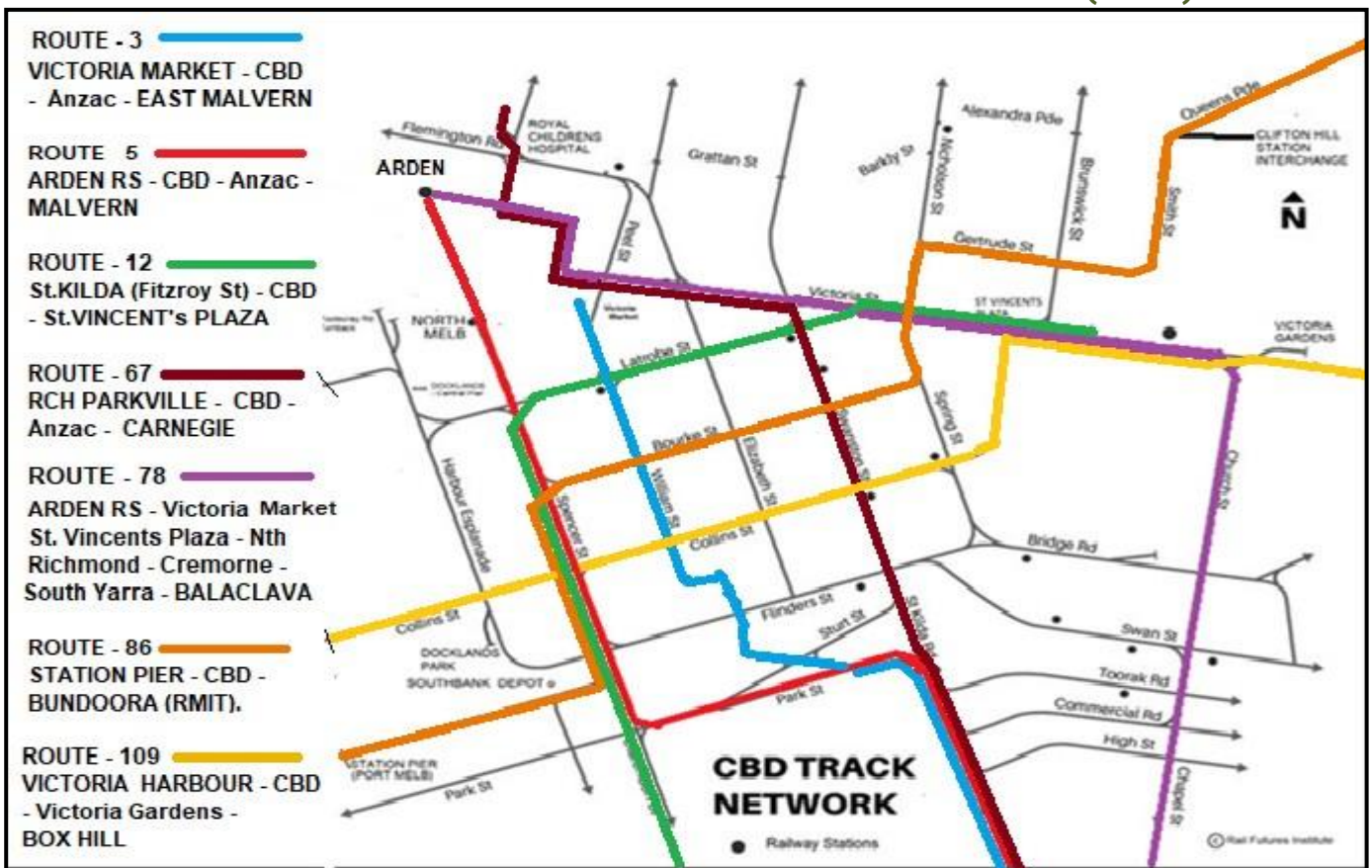




SHOWING EXISTING & MISSING TRAM TRACK SECTIONS IN THE C.B.D. AREA – (Below)



SHOWING NEW CROSS CBD TRAM ROUTE OFFERINGS (Below)





BENDIGO CORRIDOR / BENDIGO METRO ENHANCEMENT PROJECT

The Problems Defined

- Slow running of Bendigo trains when intermixed with Metro trains between Sunshine and Sunbury.
- Inadequate rail infrastructure, especially between Kyneton and Bendigo, to support desirable improvements in Melbourne to Bendigo peak and off-peak train service frequency.
- Population growth and future development west of Bendigo around Maiden Gully and extending to Marong requires a public transport response linked to the Bendigo CBD, preferably rail based.
- Inadequate infrastructure to operate additional freight services on the Bendigo line corridor, including during late evenings and overnight.

Proposed Project Responses

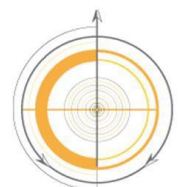
- Re-activation of existing dormant railway between Eaglehawk and Marong for passenger services.
- Extension of Bendigo Metro passenger services to Maiden Gully and Marong.
- Staged provision of a non-electrified bi-directional third track between Sunshine and Calder Park.
- Enhanced track and signalling infrastructure between Kyneton and Bendigo for improved passenger service frequency.
- Enhanced track and signalling infrastructure between Sunbury and Kyneton to support freight services and to increase resilience and reliability for passenger services.

Proposed Project Scope

- Construction of 5km of non-electrified bi-directional third track (Stage 1) between St Albans and Watergardens.
- Installation of double high speed (80km/h capable) crossovers at Woodend and Clarkefield.
- Subject to detailed investigation, re-instatement of second track for around 2.5 kms on the Down side of Kyneton.
- Extension of the existing Castlemaine Loop by around 2.5 kms at the Down end.
- Restoration of 500 m of missing second track between Golden Square and Bendigo station platforms.
- Upgrading of signalling over the Kyneton – Bendigo section to maximize throughput of both passenger and freight trains on the enhanced track infrastructure.
- Reactivation of existing dormant rail line between Eaglehawk and Marong for fit for purpose 100 km/h operation with VLocity trains and new stations at Maiden Gully and Marong.
- Motorization and remote control signalling of the existing junction at Eaglehawk.
- Increase line speed between North Bendigo Junction and Epsom to 100 km/h.
- Extended passenger service Eaglehawk to Marong potentially be worked with Electronic Train Orders (ETO)
- Install boom barriers at 3 unprotected level crossings, and upgrade 1 level crossing from flashings lights to boom barriers between Eaglehawk and Marong.

Operational Considerations

- Bi-directional third track in the metro area will be used to support overtaking movements by Bendigo line trains during AM and PM peak periods and as required for passenger and freight train movements at other times.
- Intermediate crossovers at Clarkefield, Gisborne and Woodend will be used to facilitate mixed operation of express and stopping passenger services and to accommodate freight services during periods when passenger services are operating.
- The extended Marong services both Peak and Off Peak can be operated as extensions of existing Eaglehawk services and should not require additional rollingstock resources.
- Platforms at both stations to be 180 m length allowing for operation of 6 car VLocity train consists
- Off Peak frequency alternating between Huntly and Marong to be determined by what the infrastructure on the Down side of Bendigo will support allowing for train turnaround times. (The aim should be for an alternating 1 hr 20 min frequency from both Huntly and Marong.)





COMMONWEALTH GAMES ENABLER - GEELONG - BALLARAT - BENDIGO

The Problems Defined

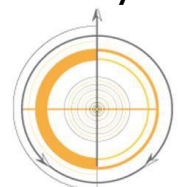
- Existing cross country passenger services between Victoria's three major regional centres of Geelong, Ballarat and Bendigo are infrequent bus services operating via indirect routes with extended travel times that are not competitive compared to car travel times. As such the existing V/Line services offer unattractive travel options, and are consequently poorly patronized. (Prior to the 1980's Geelong, Ballarat and Bendigo were all linked by cross country rail passenger services offering better service frequencies and travel times than those offered today, albeit the populations of all three major centres were much lower 40 years ago than in 2022.)
- Early figures from the most recent 2021 Federal Government Census indicate Victoria's three major regional centres of Geelong, Ballarat and Bendigo now have a population total of over 506,000. (Compared to a total population of 370,000 for all major regional centres on rail beyond Geelong to Warrnambool, Ballarat to Maryborough and Horsham, Bendigo to Swan Hill and Echuca, and beyond Traralgon to Bairnsdale.)
- The opportunity for towns like Bannockburn, Lethbridge, Meredith, Creswick, Clunes, Talbot, Maryborough, Dunolly, Llanelly, Inglewood and Bridgewater to accept a controlled increase in population is not able to be exploited in the absence of quality rail passenger links to the adjacent major regional hubs of Geelong, Ballarat and Bendigo, and also offering those towns direct rail access to Melbourne with a single change of train at either North Geelong, Ballarat or Bendigo.
- The townships at Bannockburn, Maiden Gully and Marong are all predicted to realize substantial residential growth in the immediate future, requiring rail passenger access to Bendigo and Geelong and onward connections to Melbourne.
- Longer distance trans regional passengers from the South West, West and North of the State are forced currently to travel into Melbourne by train and then out again because of this absence of direct cross country rail passenger services between Geelong, Ballarat and Bendigo.
- The tourism potential of the expected World Heritage Listing of areas served by rail in multiple Central Victorian municipalities will not be able to be fully realized without restoration of passenger rail between Ballarat and Bendigo.
- Given the strong on-going growth and current populations of Geelong, Ballarat and Bendigo and with all three centres to be key host cities to 2026 Commonwealth Games events, there is an early need to upgrade passenger services between the three cities. Enhanced V/Line services will be integral in maximizing the success of the 2026 Commonwealth Games, but also in leaving both corridors the legacy of improved passenger services leading to further population growth along the two corridors radiating from Ballarat, south to Geelong and north to Bendigo.

Proposed Project Responses

- By early 2026 restore rail passenger services on a permanent basis between Geelong and Ballarat with a single Diesel Multiple Unit (DMU) train running a frequent daily shuttle service between Geelong and Ballarat.
- During the 2026 Commonwealth Games period increase train sizes to cater for the anticipated Games period traffic between Geelong and Ballarat both by Victorians and Interstate / International visitors. Also increasing weekend service frequency.
- By early 2026 upgrade the existing Ballarat – Maryborough rail service offering to operate to a higher Weekday service frequency, coupled with a new connecting V/Line SMARTbus operating with limited stops between Maryborough and Bendigo via Maldon.
- During the 2026 Commonwealth games period supplement the normal timetable with a third Maryborough train each way on Weekends, and an enhanced frequency offering on the through Ballarat – Maryborough – Bendigo train/coach service. Again, during the games period to cater for Ballarat – Bendigo travellers plus Victorians and Interstate / International visitors.
- Moving progressively in stages between 2023 and 2030 to re-instate DMU rail passenger services in order:
 1. By 2026 between Eaglehawk and Marong,
 2. By 2028 between Maryborough and Dunolly,
 3. By 2030 between Marong, Inglewood and Dunolly;

thus allowing continuous Ballarat – Maryborough – Dunolly – Inglewood – Eaglehawk – Bendigo services by 2030.

Continued on page – 9 >>>>





COMMONWEALTH GAMES ENABLER - GEELONG - BALLARAT - BENDIGO

Proposed Project Scope

- By mid 2026, re-activate existing dormant rail line between Eaglehawk and Marong to fit for purpose passenger operation at 100 km/h with stations at Maiden Gully and Marong. (Refer attachment "A".)
- Extend existing Melbourne - Eaglehawk passenger services to terminate at Marong, offering ideally a minimum 80 minute frequency at Off Peak times, and every 40 minutes at Peak times.
- By early 2026 restore rail passenger services between Geelong and Ballarat operating as one dedicated DMU train set running 4 return shuttle trips on Weekdays, (Fridays 5 return trips), and Weekends 3 return trips. (Refer attachment "B".) Fit for purpose 100 km/h broad gauge line speed.
- By 2026 increase Weekday train service frequency between Ballarat and Maryborough to three return services.
- Complemented by new V/line SMARTbus link between Maryborough and Bendigo via Maldon by 2026.
- During the 2026 Commonwealth Games period, offer enhanced service frequency between Ballarat – Maryborough and Bendigo. (refer Attachment "C".)
- By 2028 extend selected existing Ballarat – Maryborough train services to Dunolly. (Refer attachment "D".) so as to provide initially a day return service 7 days a week from Dunolly to both Ballarat, and Melbourne, and a Weekend return service from Melbourne and Ballarat to Dunolly.
- By 2030 re-activate existing rail line between Marong, Bridgewater and Inglewood. (Refer attachment "E".)
- By 2030 restore through passenger services linking Ballarat via Maryborough, Dunolly, Inglewood and Eaglehawk to Bendigo. Indicative minimum 3 -4 services each way on Weekdays and 2 – 3 services minimum on Weekends.

Operational Considerations

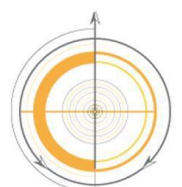
- Re-activate Eaglehawk - Marong – Inglewood line in stages (refer Attachments A & E.)
- Upgrade Geelong – Ballarat line for 100km/h DMU passenger operations (refer Attachment B.)
- From 2026 Geelong – Ballarat timetable to be structured so as to connect at North Geelong with existing services between Geelong and Southern Cross. (See attachment "B".)
- From 2026 as far as possible maximize connections from/ to Geelong/Ballararat services at Ballarat with services to/from both Ararat and Maryborough
- From 2026 as far as possible maximize connections from / to Ballarat/Geelong services at Geelong with services to / from Warrnambool.
- From 2030 as far as possible maximize connections from/to Ballarat services at Bendigo with services to/from Swan Hill and Echuca.
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IN THE SPRING - 2022 EDITION OF RFI NEWSPOST THE FINAL TRIO OF RFI STATE ELECTION PRIORITIES

A NEW EAST < > WEST METRO RAIL FOR MELBOURNE

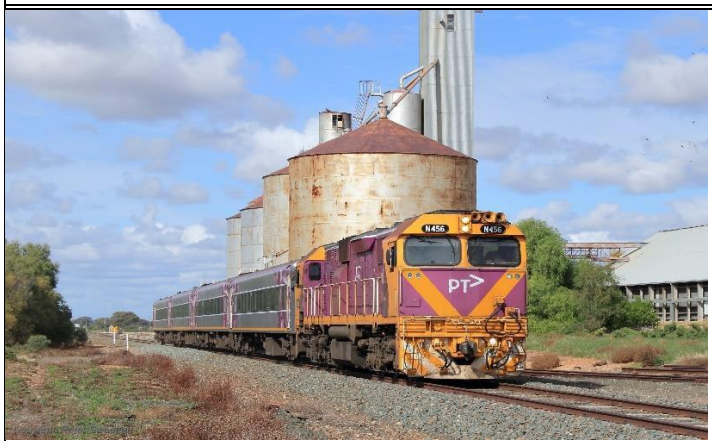
REJUVENATING VICTORIA'S GRAIN FREIGHT RAIL SYSTEM

EXTENSION OF ELECTRIFICATION - CRANBOURNE TO CLYDE





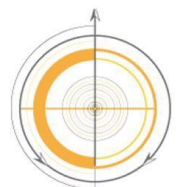
Above and below – Four photos of the new crossing loop at Murchison East with a centre crossover so a goods train can be put away whilst two passenger trains also cross.. Photos- courtesy of Rail Projects Victoria.



Down Swan Hill Pass at Lake Boga – Peter Sweeten

Twin standard gauge VL sets at Seymour – Scott Martin

Below: Left - MTM train departing Werribee on the Up beneath a new road overpass which spans three tracks and replaces a level crossing with complex road intersections on both sides of the rail corridor. Photo – Jonathan Scutt
Right – Upgrading Echuca line north of Goornong June, 2022 for 100 km/h DMU line speed. Photo – David Hardy

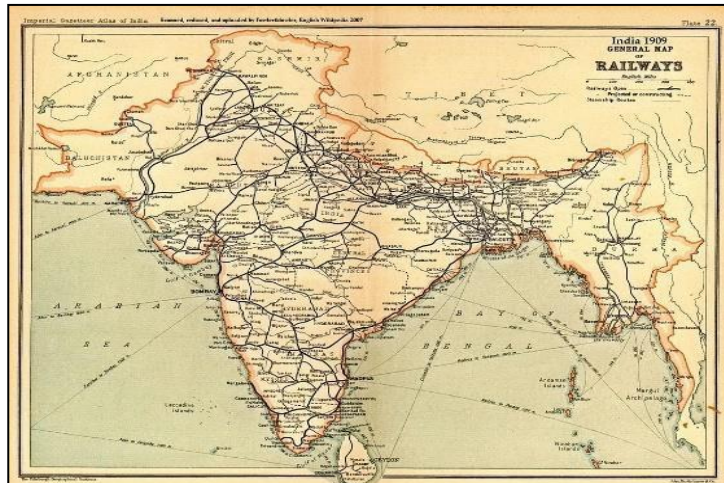




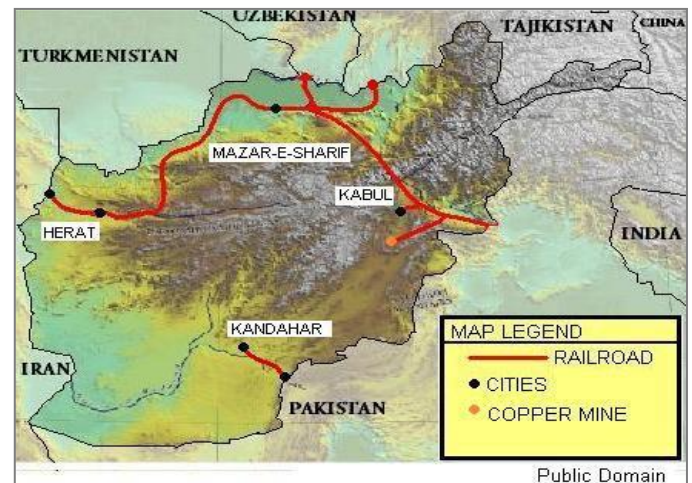
PROPOSED RAILWAY CONSTRUCTION IN AFGHANISTAN

Jackie Fristacky - Committee

As can be seen from the map below, India and Pakistan benefit from an extensive rail system constructed under the British Raj. Adjacent land-locked Afghanistan with its impenetrable terrain and often impassable roads would clearly benefit from a rail system to connect its 34 provinces and access the country's rich mineral and other resources. Mineral deposits include copper, gold, oil, gas, uranium, bauxite, coal, iron ore, rare earths, lithium, chromium, lead, zinc, gemstones, talc, sulphur, travertine, gypsum and marble.



Rail Network across India-Pakistan



Afghanistan: planned rail, only sections constructed as below

Apart from recent lines in the North (2013 Uzbekistan border 75km to Mazar-e Sharif to Tajikistan border) and West (2002-2020 225 km Iran to Herat), Afghanistan is at present almost completely without railways. This lack reflects a history of conflict and opposition by Afghan leaders fearing foreign power use of railways to threaten their independence.

Attempts by the British in the 19th Century for rail lines constructed in the North West Frontier to continue into Afghanistan though the Khyber or Bolan Passes were rebuffed by Afghan rulers. Deep sensitivities remained from repeated Anglo-Afghan conflicts.

Afghan Amir, Abdul Rahman, ruling from 1850-1901, banned railways. He even forbade Afghans to travel on the British line in the North West Frontier territory from Quetta to Charman on the border and refused extension to Kandahar.

"There will be a railway in Afghanistan when the Afghans are able to make it themselves", declared the Amir. Construction of the line to Chaman on the Afghan – North West Frontier Border, the Amir said, *"just like pushing a knife into my vitals."* An Afghan Army manual covered how to destroy railway tracks to avert risk of invasion!

Construction in 1907 of a Kabul River rail line commenced in the Peshawar Plain in the North West Frontier of what later became Pakistan, following an Anglo-Russian Entente signed in St Petersburg. The line was dismantled in 1909.

Progressive Afghan King Amanullah Khan ruling from 1920, sought to modernize Afghanistan building a 7 kilometre railroad in downtown Kabul. This operated for just 5 years ceasing after the King's exile in 1929, with its locomotives later relocated to the Kabul Museum.

In 1920, work also started on 52 kms of a North West Frontier Khyber Pass Railway built through 34 tunnels from Peshawar to Landi Kotal at the western edge of the Khyber Pass 5 kms from the Afghan border. Formally opened in November 1925, it was in 1926, extended to Landi Khana just 3 km from the Torkham border crossing into Afghanistan, 230kms from Kabul. But just 6 years later in 1932, at the insistence of the Afghan government, this extension closed.

Proposals have recently re-emerged to build a Khyber Pass railway from the Pakistan border to Jalalabad and Kabul. A Chinese-Afghan agreement was signed in 2010 to investigate constructing a 700km railroad from Mazar-e Sharif to Kabul to serve a Chinese copper mine lease south of that city and also link to Pakistan rail at the Torkham border. This appears to have been superseded by a February 2021 agreement between Uzbekistan, Pakistan and Afghanistan to construct the line from Mazar-e-Sharif to Kabul and then to the Torkham border into Pakistan to Peshawar then link via Pakistan railways to the Port of Karachi.





A proposed 100km line from the Spin Boldak Pakistan border to Kandahar is also still to be progressed, as a 657km complex extension of the Herat line agreed with India and Uzbekistan in 2017-2018 east across Afghanistan to Mazar-e Sharif.

India also agreed in 2016 to construct a 900km rail line from the Arabian Sea Port of Chabahar in Iran to central Afghanistan's mineral rich Hajigak region near Bamiyan. This area has Asia's biggest untapped iron ore deposits over which India had a mining lease. The state-owned Indian Railways subsidiary, Ircon was tasked to build this north-south rail corridor.

Currently the future of such rail proposals is uncertain under the Taliban regime in Afghanistan.

Yet Afghanistan with its strategic location between Iran, China, Russia, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Pakistan and India, is a critical hub for regional economic integration and transportation. The aborting of many proposals for railways, the absence of a passenger rail system and limited telecommunications due to cost, conflict, uncertainty and security risks, hampers economic integration.

Complications further arise from reconciling multiple gauges: Russian gauge in the north (1,520mm); Iranian gauge in the west (1,435mm) and Indian-Pakistan broad gauge in the east (1,676mm).

Barriers in transport and communications constitute major impediments to trade and governing Afghanistan's 34 provinces remote from Kabul irrespective of who is in power or their governing capacity. Rail has the potential to form the basis of the country's transformation. But astute local leadership is critical to direct this transformation beneficially for Afghans.

*Updated extract (pages 34-35) from a biographical work by Jackie M Fristacky on her family in Afghanistan:

“My Mother and the Prince: Jana Shindler Fristacky in Kabul 1946-1952” (December 2021). The book is available (retail \$ 30) at Readings in Carlton, and also from Royal Historical Society of Victoria (RHSV) Bookshop, in A'Beckett Street , City.

ALBURY GOES ALL INTER – CITY V/LOCITY from late August, 2022.



Standard gauge 3 car V/Locity set VL-93 seen here crossing the historic Murray River rail bridge early in 2022.

