



Chapter 17

Social Impact Assessment

17.0 Social Impact Assessment

17.1 Introduction and Approach

A detailed Social Impact Assessment was undertaken as part of the study in order to determine the existing social and community values of the study area as well as the potential for impacts on these values. The results of these investigations are reported in Technical Paper 11, in Volume 2 of the Draft Assessment Report. A summary of the findings of Technical Paper 11 are provided below.

17.1.1 Methodology

The social impact assessment (SIA) is intended to follow industry-accepted procedures to describe the existing social environment in areas surrounding the Corridor of Interest (the study area), to identify the potential impacts of the preferred alignment upon the existing social environment, and to explore mitigation measures to reduce these impacts. The following steps were undertaken to achieve this:

- Description of applicable Commonwealth, State, Regional and Local Government legislation and policies as they pertain to the social environment;
- Description of social environmental values, as they relate to the Corridor of Interest, including:
 - A demographic profile of the study area;
 - A summary of population projections for the applicable former local government areas;
 - A description of key settlements throughout the study area and wider region;
 - A summary of the community engagement process, and major findings from interactions with the community relating to their perspectives on the SFRC; and
 - Development of an assessment framework, based on the policy review, key social impact assessment variables initially developed by the International Association of Impact Assessment, and a literature review of transport infrastructure projects.
- Identification of potential social impacts likely to be caused by the preferred alignment upon the social environment described in the description of environmental values, and the identification of mitigation measures to reduce these impacts; and
- A conclusion summarising the most significant findings of the SIA.

17.2 Description of Environmental Values

The demographic characteristics of the study area (see Map 11.1) suggest that it contains an ageing population (though younger than Brisbane and Queensland generally) with lower average household incomes than more urbanised areas. Further, the average household size is larger than more urbanised areas and the average cost of housing is lower. Generally, a larger proportion of the workforce of the study area is composed of blue-collar workers, compared with higher proportions of white-collar workers in more urbanised areas.

All three applicable former local government areas covering the study area are expected to be characterised by an ageing population between 2006 and 2026 (most pronounced within the former Boonah Shire). All former local government areas are expected to experience a growth in population, with the former Ipswich City Council experiencing the greatest annual change (4.1%). The key locations for residential growth in the three former local government areas are likely to be located outside the Corridor of Interest. The SFRC is likely to facilitate employment growth for local communities, through acting as a catalyst and support for other development planned throughout the study area.

Key settlements within the study area and wider region (see Map 11.2) include:

- The primary service centre of Ipswich City;
- The secondary service centres of Yamanto, Jimboomba and Beaudesert;
- The townships of Rosewood, Peak Crossing and Harrisville;
- The emerging residential areas of Deebing Heights and Flagstone; and

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- The small communities of Amberley and Willowbank, surrounded by regional industry and other major land uses.

Community engagement has reflected a deep concern in the study area about the potential impacts of the SFRC upon a number of valued features, including the noise environment, property values and resumption processes, ecological processes, flooding, visual and scenic amenity and other social and cultural elements.

It is important to recognise that the broader community recognised the overarching need for the SFRC, and were more readily able to visualise the benefits expected to accrue from the SFRC, however landowners in the study area were concerned about the extent of impacts they would experience.

17.3 Potential Impacts and Mitigation Measures

A total of 105 properties are subject to land requirements for the project. A further 242 properties are immediately adjacent to these properties (see Map 11.3).

A number of potential social impacts as a result of the preferred alignment were identified. These include:

- Decreased accessibility to community services, facilities and key destinations in the study area through changes to access road arrangements. Mitigation measures include a commitment to providing alternative access where important roads are traversed by the preferred alignment. This is particularly important in the eastern end of the study area, where access to remote parts of the community is already problematic;
- Risk associated with the transportation of hazardous goods along the SFRC. Mitigation measures include commitment to ensure detailed design is according to current (or future) QR standards that promote safe, reliable train travel;
- Safety risks at level crossings. Mitigation measures include ensuring that level crossings are not included in the engineering design of the preferred alignment;
- Safety risks in relation to pedestrian access. Mitigation measures include fencing the preferred alignment with suitable fencing in densely populated locations;
- Safety risks with the potential for stock to wander onto the railway line. Mitigation measures include suitable fencing and appropriate stock management;
- Creation of a physical barrier leading to severance impacts on the local communities which currently experience strong social linkages. Mitigation measures include ensuring that the engineering design contains high quality vehicle and pedestrian crossings in key locations;
- Possible dislocation impacts resulting from residents leaving due to property acquisition and to avoid amenity impacts. Mitigation measures include implementing community building initiatives;
- Decreased localised amenity through the introduction of significant noise and visual intrusion into the rural landscape. Mitigation measures for each environmental element are contained within the relevant Technical Papers of this Draft Assessment Report;
- Decreased ecological values throughout the study area. Mitigation measures for the impacts to flora and fauna are contained within Technical Paper 2 – Nature Conservation; and
- Increasing property values throughout south-east Queensland prohibiting affected landowners re-entering the local housing market and replacing former properties with that of a similar standard. Mitigation measures include the investigation of community building initiatives and the payment of appropriate compensation for acquired land.

Potential social benefits identified with the project include:

- Possible reductions in truck volumes on major and local roads, leading to a safer road network; and
- Facilitation of regional development objectives, including the western corridor strategy contained within the *South East Queensland Regional Plan 2005 – 2026*, including significant future industrial land use in Ebenezer, and subsequent job creation.

17.4 Conclusion

The SFRC is likely to create a number of national, state-wide, and regional positive impacts, whilst also creating a number of localised negative impacts. The most significant social impacts identified in the SIA are:

- **Accessibility throughout the region:** There is a high level of concern related to changes in access as a result of the SFRC construction including road closures, route realignments and crossing constructions. Disadvantage is likely to result for the residents of many properties, who may experience longer travel times accessing important destinations such as family and friends, community services, facilities and shopping centres. The full extent of disadvantage cannot be assessed until the preferred alignment is discussed with individual landowners;
- **Amenity impacts:** Significant concerns were expressed regarding the potential amenity impacts resulting from the SFRC construction and operation, with perhaps visual intrusion and noise of greatest concern. Details of amenity impacts and mitigation measures are provided in the relevant Technical Papers of this Draft Assessment Report;
- **Change in character of the area:** There are many residents who were attracted to the study area for its lifestyle and amenity values. The SFRC is perceived to have high amenity impacts and may significantly change the valued rural character of this location;
- **Property acquisition and replacement:** There is a high level of concern and uncertainty regarding the acquisition of property and impact on property values in the vicinity of the preferred alignment. Whilst much of the concern is centred around property devaluation in the study area, there is evidence of escalating property values in the Ebenezer and Purga areas. Some landowners who have their property acquired may experience difficulties in re-entering the property market in a similar location, if property values have continued to increase throughout south-east Queensland;
- **Safety:** Concern has been expressed in relation to safety risks associated with the operation of the SFRC, specifically for people crossing the rail line in vehicles or by foot and livestock wandering onto the rail line;
- **Employment opportunities:** The SFRC will facilitate industrial development in the region. The related economic and employment growth is expected to have positive flow-on effects throughout the community; and
- **Uncertainty:** Uncertainty around the potential impacts of all aspects of the project (i.e. construction timeframe, and the complementary rail projects such as the Inland Rail) are causing levels of stress and unease with certain members of the community. Clear and transparent communication associated with the project will be vital in minimising speculation and misinformation.