



RAIL

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BACKGROUND

The North Coast Line, Blackwater System, including the (Central West Line) and Yeppoon Line serve the area with mainly freight transport, along with some long distance passenger train services.

NETWORK DESCRIPTION

The North Coast Line north of Rockhampton is a single track. It is the primary freight system in the network, and is also used for long distance passenger services.

South of Rockhampton the line from Rocklands to Gladstone is overlapped with coal traffic from the Blackwater System.

The Yeppoon Line connects Yeppoon and Rockhampton via a spur line through Cawarral and Mt Chalmers. It is a single line between Glenmore and Yeppoon. Trains no longer operate along this line beyond Field's Siding.

RAIL FREIGHT

The North Coast Line services the Central Queensland coalfields and rural industries such as cattle, wheat, cotton and sheep. The rail line has substantial capacity for short haul freight movements from Kunwarara to Stanwell, and from the Stanwell industrial area to Rockhampton and the Port of Gladstone and all east coast destinations connected by the North Coast Corridor.

The Blackwater System and Central West Line primarily services Central Queensland coalmines. Trains carry product (about 3.5 million net tonnes) through to Stanwell Power Station, Gladstone Power Station and the Port of Gladstone via the North Coast Line. A balloon loop services the Stanwell Power Station, designed principally to deliver coal from the Central Queensland coalfields. The system carries about 39 million net tonne of coal to the Port of Gladstone per year. This Blackwater System and the duplicated section of the North Coast Line (between Rocklands and Parana) does not receive any operating subsidy from the Queensland

government and generally, any network extensions and capacity increases required for new traffic are either funded by Queensland Rail and the developer, or recovered through access charges. The remainder of the rail network in the study area does receive funding support via Queensland Transport's transport service contract with QR.

The Yeppoon Line was used to carry seasonal pineapple traffic. The first section of the Yeppoon Line is used for cattle trains to the meatworks and quarry products from CSR's Nerimbera quarry.

PASSENGER SERVICES

There is no commuter rail service in the area. The Tilt Train Services (between Rockhampton and Brisbane, and Cairns to Brisbane) and Tourist Train Services (on the North Coast Line and between Rockhampton and Longreach) provide long haul passenger services.

The first Cairns Tilt Train service set off from Cairns on June 15 2003. The Cairns Tilt Train takes 25 hours to travel from Brisbane to Cairns, significantly reducing travel time along the Queensland coast. The tilt train will provide three services each way per week, and has the capacity to seat 173 passengers and can travel at speeds of up to 160km/h. The service will deliver not only a new experience for people travelling to and from Cairns, but is expected to follow the trend already set by the Rockhampton Tilt Train.

The Brisbane to Rockhampton Tilt Train service commenced in November 1998, cutting travel time between these centres from some nine hours down to seven hours. This service provides a faster link with Central Queensland and has enhanced the tourism industry and created numerous new business opportunities. The Rockhampton Tilt Train provides six services weekdays with two additional services over the weekend, from Brisbane to Rockhampton and one service daily to Brisbane from Rockhampton. The train provides 290 seats and patronage is generally high.



QR runs other tourist train services that allow for Rockhampton to be used as a destination or stopover point for tourists. These services include:

- Sunlander* - Brisbane to Cairns
- Spirit of the Outback* - Brisbane to Longreach
- Tilt Train* - Brisbane to Cairns

Service	Destination – North	Frequency	Destination - South	Frequency
Sunlander	Cairns	2	Brisbane	2
	Townsville	2	Brisbane	2
Spirit of the Outback	Longreach	2	Brisbane	2
Tilt Train	Rockhampton	7	Brisbane	8
Tilt Train	Cairns	3	Brisbane	3

Times effective from the 15 June 2003

Rail passenger services on the circuitous line to Yeppoon was discontinued in 1978.

PLANNING PRINCIPLES FOR RAIL

The *Rail Network Strategy for Queensland* provides a framework for the strategic development of the state’s rail infrastructure. It includes the following actions:

- Enhance the role of the rail network in implementing government’s objectives and priorities
- Develop a reference framework for the investments made by the state in the rail network
- Encourage innovative private sector investment in the Queensland rail network
- Obtain the maximum benefit from National Competition Policy (NCP) for the state’s rail network
- Gain acceptance of and encourage joint Commonwealth-state partnerships in developing Queensland’s nationally significant rail corridors
- Develop strategic, rail-based linkages between individual regional transport plans
- Control and manage rail corridor land effectively
- Promote the concurrent use of rail corridors for both rail and non-rail purposes.

Three fundamental principles support each of the objectives:

Safety - The rail network in Queensland must be safe for operators, users and the public. Legislation, together with appropriate accountability mechanisms, must require and enforce safe practices on and near the state’s rail network

Ecologically sustainable - The rail network will support and promote initiatives introduced by the state to provide a transport system that provides net benefits to the environment

Financially responsible - Rail investment decisions must be informed, prudent and responsible. Decision-makers must base their investment decisions on a detailed analysis of costs and benefits of all practicable infrastructure and non-infrastructure options.

RAIL ISSUES

A number of rail infrastructure and service issues have been raised to date. These include:

- the impact of railway operations on residential amenity (noise/lights)
- integration with other modes of transport such as buses (future transit centre)
- improvement of transit times
- investment in rail infrastructure (for future industrial developments)
- need for a local commuter and tourist rail service
- safety (Denison Street).





While upgrading of existing infrastructure, including improved alignments and track structure, has the potential to improve transit times and support the future viability of the rail network, such upgrades often represent considerable investments and can only be considered when increased rail demand can justify the investment.

Journey times can be further improved by considerable improvements to the existing poor alignment. Level crossing protection, signalling works and fencing would also be required to control risks associated with increased speeds.

Several submissions were made to Queensland Transport to introduce a commuter/tourist train service from Rockhampton to Yeppoon, to access all rural communities adjacent to the line. It was suggested that its use by commuters travelling to work in Rockhampton would alleviate traffic congestion by road. While it may be possible in the future to reutilise this line for commuter/tourist transport, it is unlikely to be economically viable until considerable population growth and higher residential densities are achieved in the Yeppoon to Rockhampton corridor. The alignment of the corridor does not provide direct access to major commuter destinations in Rockhampton City such as Central Queensland University. Preliminary assessments by QR and Queensland Transport indicated that a commuter option is not feasible.

The existing rail line from Yeppoon to Rockhampton is no longer used to carry freight. Pineapples will in the future be transported from Yeppoon by road rather than rail. As such, future use of the Yeppoon railway station site and corridor is being investigated.

Several representations have been made to investigate the feasibility of a commuter rail line between Gladstone and Rockhampton. The outcomes of the Gladstone Growth Management Initiative indicates that the demand for travel between Gladstone and Rockhampton will be low. Preliminary investigations into a commuter rail service between Rockhampton and the Gladstone State Development areas at Aldoga and Yarwun indicated that it is not viable in the short/medium term. Further options need to be investigated.

RAIL NETWORK AND SERVICE IMPROVEMENT OPTIONS

The primary focus for the rail system in the area, consistent with the Rail Network Strategy for Queensland, is to provide a safe, reliable, cost-effective, efficient and robust transport option and to enhance the competitiveness of rail. An action in the Rail Network Strategy is to undertake a rail corridor directions study for the North Coast line. This will be initiated by Queensland Transport to identify current capacity, future demand and options to meet that demand. The outcomes of the study will guide government investment decisions on the North Coast line, including the section within the study area. Local branch lines will be included in this study.

QR's Network Development Plan 1999-2009 (June 1999) provides a strategy and direction for the development and management of QR's rail network from an operator's perspective. The plan was also developed to assist Queensland Transport to meet its obligations under the *Transport Infrastructure Act 1994* to undertake strategic planning for infrastructure in Queensland. It provides global, network element and operational system strategies, but does not provide a financial commitment to implement those strategies.

QR is currently carrying out major upgrades of track and bridges to enable 20 tonne axle loads to travel over the corridor from Rockhampton to Cairns. This project is on target and, when completed, the improved alignment will enhance safety, freight capacity, speed and service standards for both passenger and freight transport to, from and through the area.

There is scope in the regions for future investment on the rail network where it can be shown that rail is a viable and attractive alternative for freight, other than the coal-carrying corridors. Although the tonnages on the North Coast Line have remained relatively constant, some constraints exist on the branch lines. The upgrading of the North Coast Line is well advanced and is sufficient for the operation of the new diesel-powered Cairns Tilt Train which commenced operation in 2003.



The Blackwater system is managed to ensure that it is able to cope with traffic that may be interchanged from the Goonyella system.

Integration with other services should be encouraged. Bus, taxi and hail-and-ride facilities are currently provided at the Rockhampton railway station. However, there is a need to upgrade these facilities.

Some of the options to improve and rationalise rail infrastructure and services in the area include:

- The capacity of the Alexandra rail bridge to accommodate trains with certain loads and heights may be a restriction in the future. An option exists to construct a rail bridge at the end of Stanley Street to improve load and height limits (this option has been identified in the Rockhampton Transport Study). The construction of such a bridge would alleviate the current train traffic through Rockhampton City (Denison Street). This is considered a long-term project

- Public access across rail lines at several locations is considered unsafe. The Open Level Crossing (OLC) asset strategy within Queensland Transport's Transport Services Contract (Rail Infrastructure) has promoted enhancement to OLCs. This is based on recognised safety needs and is assessed by QR according to a prioritised matrix
- Options to improve rail services to industrial areas such as Stanwell and Parkhurst should be investigated
- Options for intermodal facilities at locations such as the south and north side of Rockhampton City should be investigated
- Options to improve service delivery to regional and rural areas to reduce impacts on the road system should be considered.





ACTIONS FOR RAIL (FREIGHT & PASSENGER)

Action	Timing	Responsibility
Ra1 Investigate options for risk mitigation in Denison Street.	Short term	RCC, QR
Ra2 Investigate the viability of alternative commercial and community options of the Yeppoon to Rockhampton rail corridor.	Short term	LSC, QR, QT, DMR, Fruit Growers
Ra3 Investigate feasibility of a multi-modal freight facility at Yeppoon, Parkhurst and Gracemere.	Short term	LSC, QT, DMR, FSC, RCC, Fruit Growers
Ra4 Develop a strategy to provide safe public access across and under rail (see Ra11).	Short term	Councils, QR, QT, DMR
Ra5 Complete feasibility study into the provision of an intermodal interchange at Rockhampton Station and other sites.	Short term	RCC, QR, QT
Ra6 Undertake a rail corridor direction study for the North Coast line (will include consideration of capacity of existing rail systems to cater for future freight from industrial and mining development in the area).	Short term	QR, QT
Ra7 Investigate opportunities to provide rail access to industrial parks.	Medium term	RCC, FSC, QR
Ra8 Investigate an alternative rail bridge river crossing at Stanley Street	Long term	RCC, QR, QT
Ra9 Preserve future transport corridors e.g. Stanley Street.	Long term	RCC
Ra10 Protect the existing rail corridor to Port Alma.	Long term	QR, QT
Ra11 Investigate future planning and funding of grade-separated rail and road crossings to minimise the risk of collision and traffic delays.	Ongoing	QR, DMR, Councils, QT

CAPITAL PROGRAMS FOR RAIL

Project	Lead Agency	Est. Cost	Timing (Term)	Funding Status
CRa1 Rockhampton – Ogmoo (North Coast Line) track upgrade.	QT	\$77M	Current	Funded
CRa2 Security fencing (section Rockhampton to Ogmoo).	QT	\$3.97M	Current	Funded
CRa3 Timber bridge replacement.	QT	\$8.11M	Current	Funded
CRa4 Level crossing protection.	QT	\$2.29M	Current	Funded
CRa5 Infrastructure projects (various).	QT	\$30M	Current	Funded
CRa6 Traveltrain accessible stations.	QT	\$1.96M	Current	Funded

Note: The above rail infrastructure improvement programs are demand driven and could change



