

Chapter 9: Freight

9.1 Importance of freight

Transport links have a major influence on the ability of industries to compete in national and international markets.

Efficient freight transport is vital to the economic development of Queensland, and provides people with the goods and services they need. Major commodity flows occur within and through the region, particularly in association with the Port of Brisbane and other key industry areas.

The transport network for South East Queensland will support the economic development objectives of the *Regional Framework for Growth Management* by supporting value-adding industries with efficient transport links, and maximising the region's advantages as a Gateway to the Pacific Rim.

Increasingly, industries are moving goods on a 24 hour basis. Since freight traffic must often pass through urban areas, there is a high potential for conflict as 24 hour freight operations increase in the future.

And, as freight vehicles are usually much larger than private vehicles, many people feel threatened by their presence on the road system. The IRTP consultation process revealed significant public concern about the safety and impact of heavy freight vehicles mixing with car traffic and passing through residential areas.

In an integrated planning process, there is a risk that freight needs will be seen as less important than public transport and congestion issues raised by the general travelling public. Alternatively, freight transport might be unnecessarily penalised due to its perceived impact on the community.

Yet, if the needs of freight transport are neglected, everyone in the region will pay through higher commodity prices, the inconvenience of not being able to readily obtain supplies, loss in international competitiveness and reduced employment opportunities. To realise its full economic potential, the region must have a high quality freight transport system which is able to get goods to markets quickly and cost-effectively, while minimising the impacts on the community and the environment.

9.2 The freight task

Australia has one of the highest per capita rates of road freight haulage in the world, and the movement of freight in the SEQ region is consistent with this. In 1991/92, the total freight moved in the region was 123 million tonnes per annum shared by the following modes:

- 79% by road;
- 8% by rail; and
- 13% by sea.





Over 90% of freight movements are localised, moving goods within the region. Of these, over 95% are moved by road, and less than 5% by rail and sea combined.

The region has two major intermodal freight terminals: the rail-road interchange at Acacia Ridge; and the Port of Brisbane. Both of these require freight traffic to pass through urban settlement areas, presenting difficulties in upgrading road and rail links to support expanded activities.

The Rocklea markets in Brisbane are the largest single generator of freight movements, yet even these account for less than 0.5% of the regional total. Other key freight centres include retail distribution centres and major industries around the Port of Brisbane and in the Wacol/Acacia Ridge area.

Brisbane Airport is increasing its importance as a generator of truck movements, particularly of high value goods, though in tonnage terms it is relatively unimportant as a freight node.

Analysis of regional population and travel demand growth indicates that an increase in population of 60% on today's levels, would increase the freight task (measured by tonne kilometres hauled each day) by 80-120%.

9.3 Better planning of freight needs

Traditional approaches to transport planning have concentrated on moving general motor traffic. While the needs of freight were recognised, no clear method existed for ensuring freight needs received appropriate priority. Freight needs and demands should be considered in an integrated way with people movement as part of integrated transport studies.

The *South East Queensland Freight Study* is a major report on future regional freight needs completed by Queensland Transport in June 1996. Local government and the public were consulted during the study and the IRTP planning framework helped guide that study. The IRTP steering arrangements will be used to oversee the *South East Queensland Freight Study* implementation.

The IRTP identifies key freight transport needs and opportunities derived from assessment of future employment and industry development. It incorporates the key elements of the *South East Queensland Freight Study*, and supports its recommended strategy. Many of the study's recommended actions are local in nature and are not contained in the strategic actions of the IRTP. They are nonetheless important in supporting an efficient freight system.

The IRTP also strongly encourages local government to identify and prioritise freight transport infrastructure needs as part of local economic development strategies. In this way, appraisal of future transport investment options can fully consider the needs of freight transport.



ACTION:

A 9.1 Use IRTP steering arrangements to oversee implementation of the *South East Queensland Freight Study*.

9.4 Rail freight

Carrying additional freight on rail has been suggested by many people as a way to restrain the growth and impact of heavy vehicles on our road system. While it makes sense to maximise the use of the rail system for carrying freight, there is little scope for major changes in the modal split for the current freight task because of the short distances and volumes involved and local delivery nature of the intra-regional freight. Such markets are generally not contestable by rail.

There are however, significant opportunities for rail to gain additional market share of new products moved on long haul corridors including:

- development of the Darling Downs coal reserves at Macalister and Brigalow; and
- establishment of new extractive industry operations to the south and west of Brisbane.



A new rail alignment over the Toowoomba Range would provide for better grades and safer travel, improving the rail travel time from the Darling Downs to Brisbane by around 90 minutes. This will enhance the competitiveness of rail freight from the Downs and southern states. It would open up the opportunity for a future passenger rail service between Toowoomba and Brisbane to be more competitive with road transport.

New freight rail connections also need to be considered to support industrial growth areas around the region. These should be considered at Bromelton (west of Beaudesert), Yatala (south of Beenleigh) and Ebenezer (west of Ipswich).

However, a potential major constraint on the future growth of rail freight is the conflict between freight and passenger services in the metropolitan area. To achieve the improved public transport services required by the IRTP, much higher frequency passenger services will be required in all time slots. Freight trains are slower and longer than passenger trains, and have a lower priority. Freight traffic tends to be "squeezed out" of the suburban rail network in peak hours, further threatening freight rail viability.

The configuration of the current rail network through the metropolitan area also means:

- there are limited opportunities for high volume freight traffic travelling from Toowoomba to the Port of Brisbane to pass through the suburban network; and