

Action Plan 3 Rail

STRATEGIES:

- 3.1 Maintain and improve current strategic networks to appropriate standards
- 3.2 Encourage new rail initiatives to improve freight and passenger services, and foster economic growth

RECOMMENDED RAIL CAPITAL PROGRAM

EASTERN DOWNS
INTEGRATED
TRANSPORT PLAN



Action Plan 3 - Rail

The Western (Charleville) railway and the South Western (Goondiwindi and Dirranbandi) railway both converge at Toowoomba. Toowoomba is also linked by rail to Brisbane, which provides access to the sidings at Acacia Ridge, Redbank, Mayne and to the Port of Brisbane.

The main impediment to the movement of road and rail traffic in the region is the Great Dividing Range. This limits the movement of larger vehicles such as B-Doubles. The range is also a significant impediment to the efficiency of rail services due to its effect on journey times. However, rail still plays a significant role in the movement of bulk freight in the region.

The rail network is important for the movement of grains, oilseeds, rural supplies, coal and, to a lesser extent, livestock. Many grain silos including Malu are located on the Western line between Oakey and Jondaryan. The South Western railway passes through Warwick, Clifton and central Toowoomba, which is an indirect route for livestock and freight movement from south west Queensland to Toowoomba and Brisbane.

The main rail routes through the Eastern Downs region currently carry in the order of 2 to 3 million net tonnes of freight per year. Where demand for the movement of freight is sufficiently high, rail can be a very efficient mode of transport. Overall, there are significant benefits to be gained from increasing the amount of freight transported by rail.

With the exception of scenarios involving strategic rail infrastructure initiatives that link the Queensland network with New South Wales, rail freight is unlikely to increase its freight haulage share in the region compared to haulage by road. Long-term initiatives, such as the proposed Australian Inland Rail Expressway, may create a more favourable environment for rail freight haulage.

Rail infrastructure is expensive to provide unless it is well utilised. The effective use of rail to transport freight depends on having direct access to rail and minimising the costs of modal transfers. If this can be achieved, then rail can play a significant transport role, and therefore help reduce the number of heavy vehicles on roads in the Eastern Downs region.

Key routes for both road and rail pass through the heart of urban Toowoomba, creating traffic congestion. Significant transport costs could be minimised if road and rail freight was able to avoid congestion in Toowoomba, and travel more rapidly up and down the range.



Railway Management

Queensland Transport's Rail Network Strategy is the first overarching state-wide network strategy for rail. This document identifies specific strategies relating to policy and planning for the future of Queensland's rail infrastructure and rail corridors.

The strategy's objectives have been drawn up in an operating environment which has recently incorporated the introduction of third party railway managers to the state-based railway network and the corporatisation/privatisation of railway operators. These reforms have seen the responsibility for railway policy and planning in Queensland move from QR to Queensland Transport. However, QR will continue to manage its existing track infrastructure and plan for future investments.

The Rail Network Strategy is concerned with the land and fixed rail infrastructure forming the rail network. These assets include some structures such as catenary and signals above ground level, but which are commonly referred to as "below rail" assets.

The current approach with respect to track upgrade and maintenance involves increasing the proportion of both steel sleepers and long welded rail. This upgrade project would enable enhancements to the operation of the railway increasing train reliability (less likelihood of minor derailments due to track instability) and reducing speed restrictions due to deteriorating track conditions.

Proposed rail upgrade projects aim to ensure an appropriate standard of infrastructure for reliable and effective operations is maintained, particularly to cater for current and expected future freight. Should the condition of rail infrastructure deteriorate, the costs of both above-rail operations and below-rail infrastructure maintenance would be expected to increase, impacting on the rail's viability in the transport market and potentially requiring more significant future investment to upgrade to appropriate standards.

Rail Passenger Service

Rail passenger service in the Eastern Downs region is limited to the Westlander service. This twice-weekly service journeys west from Brisbane through the rich farmlands of the Darling Downs and Toowoomba, on to Roma and Mitchell and its end destination of Charleville. The Westlander provides comfortable, fully air-conditioned travel in a choice of first and economy class sleeping compartments and economy sitting cars.

The Great Dividing Range crossing makes the travel time between Toowoomba and destinations east of the range impractically long for commuter travel, at approximately 3.5 hours from Toowoomba to Brisbane. High speed passenger travel between Brisbane and Toowoomba would improve the accessibility of the region to Brisbane. This may have implications for residential growth in and around Toowoomba.

The Toowoomba Range crossing reduces the ability to provide efficient freight and passenger transport. The primary benefit of constructing an upgraded crossing is for the transport of freight. Any passenger services on the proposed link would be secondary to freight operations.

Gowrie to Grandchester Rail Corridor Study

The Gowrie to Grandchester Rail Corridor Study is investigating the Gowrie and Grandchester sections of the Ipswich to Toowoomba railway corridor. The purpose of the study is to define a corridor for a possible future high speed (200 km/h where feasible) railway that would cater for future track duplication, provision of dual gauge and the transport of double stacked containers.

The study was announced by the Minister for Transport and Main Roads in March 1999. It was conducted in two parts to enable more focused consultation and to deal with the technical issues on the Little Liverpool and Toowoomba Ranges. The first section was from Grandchester to Helidon and included the Little Liverpool Range. The second section, which included the Toowoomba Range, was from Helidon to Gowrie.

Reports for the relevant sections provide details of public consultation, cultural heritage assessments, strategic environmental investigations and technical aspects required to determine the preferred corridor.

The recommendations for the Gowrie to Grandchester Rail Corridor Study are currently being finalised.

Melbourne – Darwin Inland Railway proposal and other proposals

Many rail investigations are currently underway on a national scale.

The Melbourne – Darwin inland railway proposal (Australian Inland Rail Expressway) is a significant private sector proposal by Australian Transport & Energy Corridor Ltd (ATEC). ATEC propose to construct a high speed railway between Melbourne and Darwin with links to Brisbane and Gladstone. The proposed route passes through the Eastern Downs region. The viability of the Melbourne-Darwin inland railway proposal has yet to be demonstrated. If the proposal progresses it may have a significant impact on freight haulage in Queensland.

As of June 2003, the proposal remains as a private sector initiative and there is no firm commitment by government to construct the railway. No construction work for the railway has commenced nor has approval been given to commence any construction or use any existing infrastructure.

A number of other proposals for improved rail services across the country are also being undertaken. The future of these proposals is uncertain; however, there will be significant impact on the Eastern Downs transport network if any of the proposed rail initiatives go ahead.

The EDITP Implementation Group will monitor the progress of these rail proposals and their potential impacts for the region.

Rail Corridor Direction Proposals

Rail Corridor Direction Proposals have been prepared for rail lines in the region. The Rail Corridor Direction Proposals provide a vision for the management and ongoing development of the regional rail network.

Key Rail Issues

Key rail issues in the Eastern Downs include:

- lack of connectivity to bulk freight opportunities in northern New South Wales
- maintenance of existing rail lines
- access to rail freight terminals
- the safety of level crossings in the region
- the Australian Inland Rail Expressway proposal and other proposals for improved rail service
- long travel times between Toowoomba and Brisbane
- the need to appropriately service new industry in the region such as the Charlton/Wellcamp Integrated Employment Area.

Freight movement within and through the region is inhibited by aging rail corridors with poor alignments. Necessary maintenance must be undertaken to uphold the standard of rail lines in the region for current and future freight volumes. It is also important that lines in the region are maintained or improved to cater for traffic resulting from potential new rail initiatives if they proceed.

It should be recognised however, that the need for augmentation and enhancement of the freight rail network is subject to industry demand. Finding of the required enhancements will be subject to commercial arrangements between railway managers, railway operators and the proponents of major industry projects.

Some level crossings in the region have a high risk of accident because of poor alignment, visibility or safety features. These need to be maintained to an appropriate standard and upgraded if necessary to mitigate this risk.

Access by road to the rail freight terminal in Toowoomba City is very restricted. A suitable location for a new rail freight terminal needs to be located and preserved.

The provision of appropriate links to proposed industrial areas such as Charlton/Wellcamp Integrated Employment Area is required to establish an efficient freight movement capability in the new areas.

Strategies for Addressing Key Rail Issues




Two strategies have been developed to address rail issues within the Eastern Downs Region:

- 3.1 Maintain and improve current strategic networks to appropriate standards.
- 3.2 Encourage new rail initiatives to improve freight and passenger services, and foster economic growth.

The actions and recommended capital program developed to support these strategies are provided in the following tables.






STRATEGY 3.1:

Maintain and improve current strategic networks to appropriate standards






	Action	Timing	Lead Agency <i>Collaborating Agency</i>	Supporting Documents
Action 3.1.1 	Maintain and upgrade operating rail corridor infrastructure to appropriate standards to cater for demand and safety requirements.	ongoing	QR QT	RCDP
Action 3.1.2 	Continue to monitor rail/road conflict within the Eastern Downs region and plan for remedial action where necessary	ongoing	QR DMR LG QT	OLCS
Action 3.1.3 	Identify a suitable location and plan for the relocation of the Toowoomba rail freight terminal	short - medium term	QR <i>Toowoomba SC</i> QT	

STRATEGY 3.2:

Encourage new rail initiatives to improve freight and passenger services, and foster economic growth.

	Action	Timing	Lead Agency Collaborating Agency	Supporting Documents
Action 3.2.1 	Consider the impact of any future rail proposal on rail corridor planning in the region .	ongoing	QT <i>Private Investors</i> QR LG	RCDP
Action 3.2.2 	Complete the Gowrie to Grandchester Rail Corridor Study.	short term	QT QR	GGRCs
Action 3.2.3 	Implement recommendations of the Gowrie to Grandchester Rail Corridor Study.	medium – long term	QT QR	GGRCs
Action 3.2.4 	Encourage private investors to construct high speed rail line alternatives which support economic development in the Eastern Downs region.	medium – long term	EDROC QT DSD	EDRTF
Action 3.2.5 	Undertake a planning study to determine an appropriate future rail connection into the proposed Charlton/Wellcamp Integrated Employment Area.	short - medium term	QT QR <i>Jondaryan SC</i> DMR	EDRTF

RECOMMENDED RAIL CAPITAL PROGRAM

	Action	Timing & Threshold	Lead Agency Collaborating Agency	Indicative Cost	Funding Status
Action 3.3.1 	Maintain and upgrade operating rail corridors to meet safety and efficiency objectives.	ongoing	QR QT	\$0.3m/year	Funded
Action 3.3.2 	Continue strategies to remove rail/road conflict within the Eastern Downs region through initiatives such as QR's level crossing upgrade program.	Dependent on Action 3.1.2	QR DMR QT LG	\$0.5m/year	Funded
Action 3.3.3 	Construct a spur line to access the Charlton/Wellcamp Integrated Employment Area.	long term Dependent on development of the Charlton/Wellcamp area, detailed planning and Action 3.2.4	QT Jondaryan SC QR	TBD	Beyond current funding programs
Action 3.3.4 	Upgrade the link between Gowrie and Grandchester.	medium – long term Subject to industry demand including the development of the Charlton/Wellcamp area, sourcing of funding, government policy and Action 3.2.2	QT QR	\$800m	Beyond current funding programs
Action 3.3.5 	Partial track upgrade (rerail) between Goondoowindi and Toowoomba	short term	QT	\$14m	Funded