

Submission on the NSW Draft State Plan

by The Friends of the Northern Railway Incorporated

7th September, 2006

We have read the draft state plan document made available on the State Government web site and have prepared the following submission.

General Comments

It is commendable of the government to be addressing provision of services and environmental issues in a comprehensive plan.

In this submission we address matters that relate to planning of passenger rail services in regional New South Wales and we conclude with specific comments on the wording of some parts of the Draft Plan.

This submission does not generally address planning for railway freight, an equally important matter.

Planning for state-wide Passenger Railway Services

Good Management of CountryLink

A careful review should be undertaken with the goal of achieving better on time running for regional passenger trains and fewer failures and break-downs of service.

There is evidence of significant shortcomings in the maintenance of Xplorer passenger trains, particularly during the first half of 2006. Plans are needed to rectify this.

Promotion and advertising of CountryLink services can be improved.

Options for expanded or extended regional passenger train services

It was extremely unsatisfactory that CountryLink services were cut back in 2003 and 2004 at a time when the neighbouring states of Victoria and Queensland were extending their regional trains. In particular trains to Canberra were reduced and all passenger trains to the important Northern Rivers region were completely withdrawn. A journey to Lismore by train-bus now takes considerably longer than it did on the XPT in 2003.

Regional New South Wales is growing. Options for expanding passenger train services on existing railway lines should be under careful review, with the following aims in mind:

- ◆ to attract more passengers with greater choice of travel times
- ◆ to improve amenity for regional communities
- ◆ to assist regional development and population growth
- ◆ to provide more environmentally friendly transport

In particular, we recommend the following be planned for or investigated:

- ◆ **Sydney-Canberra:** plan for immediate restoration to full three services per day by the Xplorer and reduction in travel time.
- ◆ **Northern Rivers:** plan for the immediate restoration of the XPT service to the university city of Lismore and investigation of options for rail services through to Murwillumbah
- ◆ **Bathurst, Orange and Dubbo:** investigation of options for expansion to two services per day.
- ◆ **Mudgee:** investigation of options for reinstatement of passenger service on functioning railway line
- ◆ **Northern Tablelands:** investigation of options of expanding to two services per day to Tamworth and Armidale and option of extending the train to Glen Innes
- ◆ **North-West:** investigation of options for expanding to two services per day to Gunnedah, Narrabri and Moree.
- ◆ **Sydney-Brisbane:** investigation of options for expanding to full day and overnight through XPT services in both directions, like Sydney-Melbourne.

Following through on any of the above options will require significant investment in regional passenger train rolling stock. The current plan for \$130 million over four years for CountryLink trains is modest compared with investment in the City Rail system and in stark contrast to what is happening in other states. Many factors, social, environmental and economic, point to the need to plan for steady growth in regional passenger train services.

Further Comments on the Text of the Draft State Plan

on Page 23

The section on Transport appears to begin by talking about New South Wales, but the comment on “the rail network” in the second paragraph and following is really only about CityRail. What about CountryLink?

Further on in this section it says “\$130 million over four years for the country regional rail network”. How does this compare with metropolitan rail? Is the investment to be in track or trains or other infrastructure or staff?

on Page 27

The section on Transport sets a goal of improved on-time running for CityRail. What about improved performance for CountryLink?

on Page 29

In the Section on “Customer friendly services”, under the heading Transport, there is reference to a performance management program for CityRail, but CountryLink is omitted. What about customer friendly services for people who live outside the metropolitan area and travel by train?

on Page 41

The goal of shifting freight out of Port Botany off the roads on to rail is extremely important. We trust that practical measures will be put in place to achieve this.

This submission has been prepared for the committee of The Friends of the Northern Railway Inc.

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