



SUBMISSION BY THE RAIL, TRAM AND BUS UNION (QLD BRANCH)

TO

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE
FOR AN EIS INTO THE CROSS RIVER RAIL PROJECT

MAY 2010

Introduction

The Australian Rail, Tram and Bus Industry Union (RTBU) welcomes this opportunity to contribute to the Department of Planning and Infrastructure's draft terms of reference for an environmental impact statement into the Cross River Rail Project (CRR).

The RTBU is a federally registered union of employees with a membership of 35,000 members, of which 4,000 are in South East Queensland. The RTBU has members employed in the provision of:

- Passenger rail
- Freight rail
- Infrastructure and maintenance

Members of the RTBU perform a range of functions – operations, maintenance and administration. As the representative union of most employees in passenger and freight rail transport, the RTBU has a vital interest in promoting the social and economic importance of rail infrastructure to the public.

In particular, the RTBU and its members have long involved themselves in the broader environmental issues of urban planning, efficient passenger and freight transit, energy use, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and social justice.

This submission is part of that ongoing and important community discussion on the many dimensions of urban passenger and freight transport.

The RTBU firmly believes that the broader outcomes to the community and economy of - effective and efficient transport networks; safe and viable transport services; and environmentally sustainable transport infrastructure – need to be comprehensively covered in an terms of reference into an environmental impact statement for the CRR project.

This submission will identify perceived weaknesses in the draft terms of reference.

In light of the RTBU's unique understanding of rail industry operational and technical issues, it would be willing to accommodate any request for further input as the CRR project proceeds.

The RTBU would also be grateful for the opportunity to be formally involved with any formal advisory bodies that may provide ongoing advice on planning, implementation, operational and/or technical issues in the future concerning the CRR project.

For further information about any matter contained in this submission, please do not hesitate to contact me on (07) 3839 4988.

Yours sincerely

OWEN DOOGAN
SECRETARY

Background

In its submission to the Department of Planning and Infrastructure's Draft South East Queensland Regional Plan, the RTBU has vehemently advocated for significant investment in rail infrastructure for the region.

The RTBU has previously been concerned about the vast imbalance in funding as between road and rail modes. Such investment has skewed the nature of urban development, increased the costs of transportation (both commuting and freight) and decreased the amenity of urban environments.

With that in mind, the RTBU believes that it is imperative that the EIS comprehensively analyses the 'on-costs' to the economy, and community, of any substantial increase in population in South East Queensland – without a concomitant commitment to the CRR project.

The EIS must analyse whether travel demand will increase with population growth and economic activity, and if inaction will cause the cost of urban traffic congestion to increase significantly. Obvious avoidable costs include extra travel time, greater oil dependency, lower economic growth, poorer air quality and a lost opportunity to effectively redevelop existing inner-city areas.

Therefore, recommendations contained within this submission are framed with a view to ensuring the EIS satisfactorily inquires into the social, economic and environmental benefits of an integrated approach to transport and land use planning.

The RTBU is specifically interested in the broader questions of how the CRR project will:

- Build a productive city with a more efficient transport network
- Build a more liveable city, and
- Build a more sustainable city

Such an approach will ensure a proper inquiry is made into how the CRR project will promote Brisbane's role in the national economy and provide better places for living, working, shopping, education and other community and recreational facilities.

These concerns will be drawn out in the context of the relevant terms of reference.

Recommendations

3.1 Transport

In recent years, the issue of road congestion has become a serious concern. At this point, the problem is only getting worse, and building more roads is no longer a solution.

It was recently stated by the Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Development and Northern Australia that "the expansion of the urban passenger rail networks in the various major cities is also critical to the alleviation of congestion with its attendant economic and social costs"¹.

¹ Speech by the Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Development and Northern Australia, the Hon. Gary Gray to the Australian Rail Summit, Sydney, 2008.

With the population of the South East Queensland region expected to double over the next 50 years, it can only be anticipated that the projected traffic growth for the region, and annual economic cost of congestion, will significantly increase.

It is also noted that traffic congestion could exponentially lead to other externalities in the region including increased fuel usage, poorer air quality, noise pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, greater accident costs and poorer health².

It is submitted that the EIS must undertake an analysis of how the CRR project will reduce congestion (including its social and economic costs), improve air quality and road traffic noise in the 5, 10 and 15 years following completion of the project – compared to a ‘do nothing’ approach.

3.5.1 Effects of the operating project

The major constraints to capacity and performance of rail network services are flat junctions and crossovers where inbound and outbound services converge. This is particularly the case where passenger and freight train services share a common network – as in much of the SEQ network.

Given the CRR project covers a critical part of the region’s freight network, a whole of network solution must be found to accommodate the anticipated growth in passenger demand and freight traffic.

The RTBU believes the current proposal of a tunnel from Fairfield to Exhibition only provides a short term resolution to constraints at Park Road, Merivale Bridge and the junctions west of Roma St.

Furthermore, other SEQ major junctions that need to be addressed include Salisbury, Yeerongpilly, Corinda, West of Roma St, Exhibition/Mayne/Bowen Hills and Northgate.

It is submitted that the EIS is right to investigate the effects of the current CRR project on capacity, levels of service, freight operations and patronage.

However, the RTBU submits that the EIS should also investigate capacity/freight operation/efficiency and patronage effects of a variation to the CRR project which: extends the southern tunnel to avoid the Yeerongpilly junction (and possibly the Salisbury junction) and extends the northern tunnel to avoid the Mayne/Bowen Hills junctions.

The RTBU also notes the risks and consequences of the reference design’s provision of a short passenger only tunnel with steep grades. The potential negative impacts on the operation of trains, including existing rolling stock designed for lesser grades, is a strategic operational issue that should be investigated in this EIS.

An extension of the tunnels to the north and south would allow a lesser ruling grade which is preferable for the operation of all trains.

² See for example, Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport, *Australia’s future oil supply and alternative transport fuels*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, 2007.

It is the RTBU's view that the EIS provides an opportunity to evaluate the merits of extending the north and south tunnel portals to eliminate additional flat junction crossovers – and steep grades - which could constrain the long-term capacity and reliability of the network.

2.5.2 Construction

The RTBU notes community concerns and adverse publicity about the manner in which a number recent construction projects have been managed, including the Clem 7 tunnel and Airport link.

We therefore welcome a comprehensive analysis into options for construction and equipment storage areas, rail and road management plans for construction activities, spoil management arrangements including haulage routes; and the vehicles to be used for spoil transportation.

However, it is submitted that this analysis should compare the community impacts during the construction phase of the current tunnel configuration and the extended tunnel configuration advocated by the RTBU above.

The RTBU believes that extending the tunnels to the south to the Clapham industrial area and rail facility would allow for a construction site to be located in an industrial area – rather than a residential area. This would allow the added opportunity of using existing rail infrastructure to transport the high volume of excavated spoil to other locations while minimising the impact on the local road network.

Furthermore, an extension of the tunnel portal further north to the underutilised North Mayne railway yards would again provided the opportunity of using existing rail infrastructure to transport the high volume of excavated spoil to other locations while minimising the impact on the local road network.

In demonstrating that the likely total negative impacts of the preferred major worksites are not more than for other major worksite locations – the EIS must also have investigated alternative sites that may be made available should the tunnel be extended beyond that proposed in the reference design.

3.6 Air quality

As the use of the private motor vehicles is a major contributor to greenhouse gases, so is it a major contributor to other forms of air pollution. It is axiomatic that less vehicles on the road, as a result of the CRR project, means lower levels of air pollution. The current contribution of motor vehicles to air pollution will be exacerbated in future by further congestion.

It follows that the greater the use of public passenger transport as a result of the CRR project, the cleaner the region is likely to be.

Furthermore, according to a study by the Bureau of Transport and Regional Economics “in 2000, motor vehicle pollution accounted for between 900 and 4,500 morbidity cases – cardio-vascular disease, respiratory disease and bronchitis – and for between 900 and 2,000 early deaths”³. The report went on to make an estimation of the economic costs as between \$1.6 billion and \$3.8 billion.

³ Bureau of Transport and Regional Economics, *Health Impacts of Transport Emissions in Australia: Economic Costs*, Working Paper 63, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, 2005.

There is no doubt that the cost is substantial and that an increase in the availability and use of public passenger transport through the CRR project can make a positive contribution to reducing the incidence of health problems and their associated costs to the community.

The RTBU supports a comprehensive analysis into the corresponding reduction in vehicle exhaust emissions and any improvement in air quality in the years following completion of the project – compared to a ‘do nothing’ approach. Where possible, the EIS analysis should also investigate the corresponding health benefits following an improvement in air quality in the region.

3.7.1 Description of environmental situation – Greenhouse gas emissions

Transport is the third largest contributor to greenhouse gases in Australia. Of the total transport emissions, 89% come from road transport, 6% from rail transport and 5% from sea transport. Emissions from private motor vehicles account for 54% of transport emissions. On the freight side, road vehicles dominate with 87% of emissions⁴.

It is clear that climate change can't be addressed without addressing the sustainability of our urban transport networks.

A modal shift of freight and passengers from road to rail will contribute to the carbon pollution reduction effort. The Australasian Railways Association, for example, has noted that one freight train can take 150 trucks of the road, save 45,000 litres of diesel and save 44 tonnes of greenhouse gases⁵.

Given transport is one of the highest emitters of greenhouse gases, passenger and freight rail transport will be a key player in reducing emissions.

It is submitted that the EIS must provide a clear assessment of any projected reduction in greenhouse gas emissions in the 5, 10 and 15 years following the completion of the CRR project – compared to a ‘do nothing’ approach.

5.1.2 Potential impacts and mitigation measures – economic

The RTBU notes research by the Tourism and Transport Forum which suggests that there is often a rise in property values along new or improved transport corridors. It cites examples from the United States where land values within 800 metres of mass transit systems have risen by as much as 120%.

The paper refers to increases in house prices of 32 per cent near the Metrolink lines in St Louis, Missouri; 45 per cent increases in the value of apartments along the line in Santa Clara, California; a 120 per cent increase in the value of office space along the same line; and a 30 per cent rise in retail space values along the light rail system in Dallas, Texas.

The RTBU believes that the CRR project could have a similar effect in Brisbane and open the way for transit-oriented development.

⁴ Total Environment Centre, *The Contribution of Freight Transport to Australia's Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Outline of Strategy*, Total Environment Centre, Sydney, 2008.

⁵ Australasian Railways Association, *The Green Paper Completely Ignores Rail*, Press Release, Australasian Railways Association, Canberra, 2007.

It is submitted that the EIS should comprehensively investigate the CRR project's potential impact on: property values; the attraction of investment into the region; urban renewal; the creation of local jobs; productivity; reduced car dependency; and the region's long-term social and economic growth.