



MILLTHORPE
HERITAGE WITH STYLE

Stop on Request Train Service for Millthorpe NSW

Prepared by the Millthorpe Village Committee Inc.

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Overview

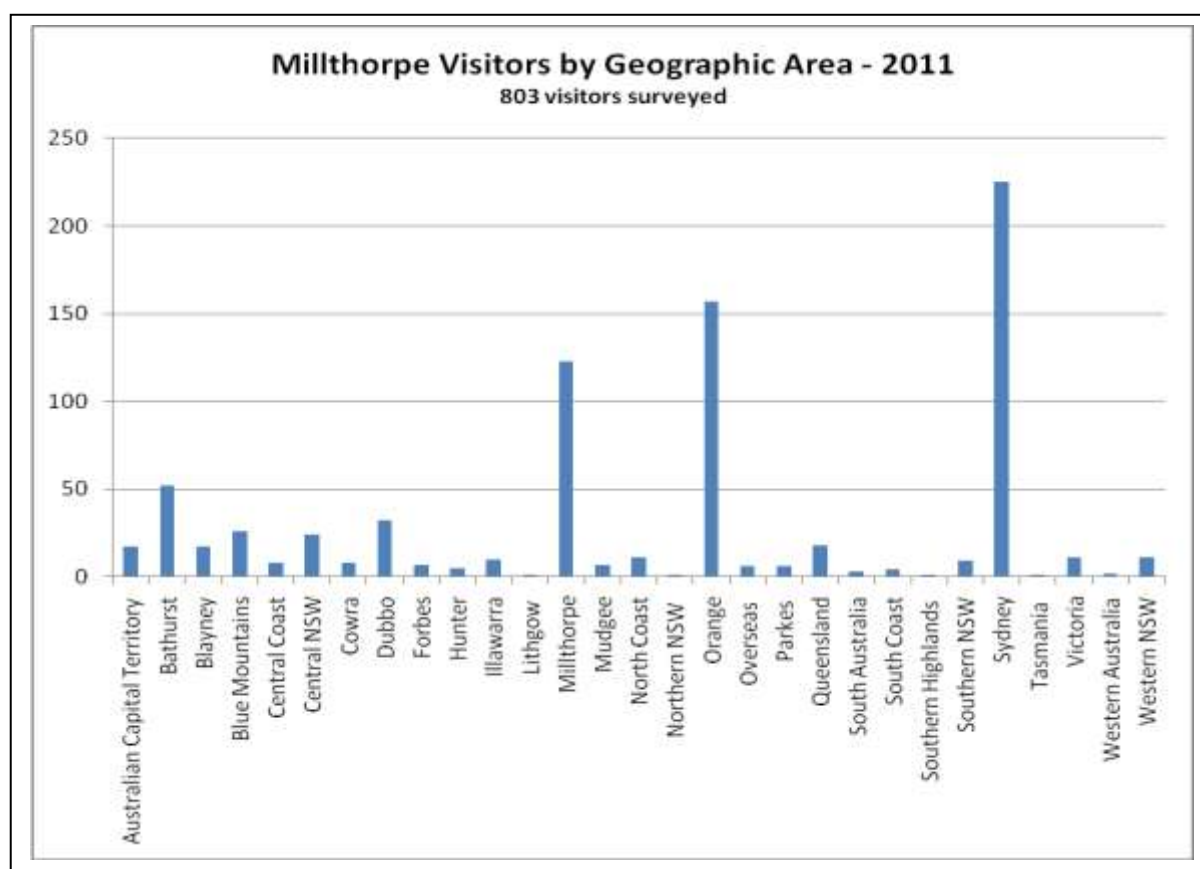
This paper forms a submission for a stop on request train service for Millthorpe NSW. The Millthorpe Village and Business Committees see this initiative as key to the future of growing visitation to the village and subsequently tourism, which is a primary target market of many business members in the village. The provision of an XPT service for Millthorpe will provide a commercial opportunity for CountryLink whilst opening up a new destination for travellers from Sydney / Blue Mountains, increasing overnight stays by tourists to the village as well as being of benefit to local residents and thus advancing regional development in line with the government's regional development policies. Those policies include the goal of Destination NSW in achieving the NSW Government target of doubling tourism overnight expenditure in regional NSW by 2020 and more recently the new management structure of CountryLink whose focus will be to encourage rural and regional transport.

Millthorpe is becoming a sought after tourist destination and to bring in visitors by rail will provide a much needed alternative to the only significant mode of transport which is currently by road, largely by private vehicle with limited bus services.

Visitation Patterns

The Millthorpe Business Committee undertook a visitation analysis survey of 803 visitors to Millthorpe over a six month period during 2011, which clearly demonstrates where our target market is from. These statistics (see graph 1 below) clearly support that a significant portion of our target market travel from Bathurst, Blayney, Orange, Dubbo, Blue Mountains and Sydney all of which are serviced by the existing Dubbo XPT CountryLink service. By providing a stop on request service, visitors from these areas have a regular alternative transport option (other than by car) to access Millthorpe.

Graph 1 – Millthorpe visitation for 6 months during 2011.



Transport Survey

The Millthorpe Village Committee conducted a public transport survey during October/November 2012 within the village and surrounding district. The survey was posted to approximately 750 residences with the key purpose of the survey being about public transport. Approximately 100 responses were received and all respondents were supportive of the campaign to improve public transport. In terms of the type of public transport 85% preferred a train service over a bus service with the remaining 15% preferring either a bus or train, both bus and train or just a bus service. 94% of respondents indicated they (or visiting friends and relatives – VFR market) would use the existing XPT service if it stopped in Millthorpe on its way from Sydney to Dubbo or return from Dubbo to Sydney.

Logistics & Access

We acknowledge that the track is no longer aligned with the platform at Millthorpe Railway Station however we would point to other instances of platform extensions providing access for passengers to board and alight at stations such as Zig Zag and Orange East Fork (see image below) and Summit Tank. Historically, short platforms such as those at Wondabyne and those used on the coal lines in the Newcastle area have long been a feature of railway operations in NSW.



The lessee of the station building (Millthorpe Wine Centre) and Blayney Shire Council are strongly supportive of the proposal to re-open the station noting the use of the platform for railway operational purposes is independent of the use of the building. The proposed arrangements would be similar to those applying at Bungendore which is served by CountryLink trains and has a functional retail outlet operating out of the station building leased to a third party. Further we do not foresee any difficulty in establishing a franchise in Millthorpe for the sale of CountryLink tickets at the local Licensed Post Office.

Some years ago the NSW State Government spent in the order of \$250,000 restoring the Millthorpe Railway Station building and this opportunity for a stop on request service would further capitalise on this significant investment. This architecturally significant building is the only surviving example of a symmetrically designed station with a graceful street verandah in country NSW. The station is in an ideal location for arrival to Millthorpe with the main tourism precinct at the doorstep.

Tourism Product

Millthorpe was recognised by TASAC (Tourist Attraction Signposting Assessment Committee) as a historic tourism product in its own right, in September 2010. TASAC consists of representatives from Tourism NSW, Roads and Maritime Services, Regional Tourism Organisations, Local Tourism Associations and a Secretariat. Supporting that application and subsequent recognition, the Millthorpe Business Committee runs a multi-faceted marketing campaign for the village to grow tourism to the village and surrounding region. A stop on request CountryLink XPT service will greatly assist in achieving growth and realising the benefit of the investment made in tourism marketing, \$15,000 of which has been funded by Trade & Investment NSW. A total of approximately \$60,000 from early 2009 to date has been expended on Millthorpe marketing promotions. We work closely with our Regional Tourism Organisation and Local Tourism Association to grow tourism to the village and surrounding district.

A stop on request service would also provide opportunity for tourism promotions for events such as the 2011/2012 Orange & District F.O.O.D week promotion 'F.O.O.D Train' in conjunction with CountryLink. Other important developments in the local area that encourage the use of public transport are the increase in the interest of bicycle groups in the area. Train services with regular stops at Millthorpe could also lead to activities such as the now famous Clare Valley Riesling Trail (rail-trail) in South Australia.

Population

In terms of passenger numbers and demand there are currently four communities served by the Dubbo XPT, being Rydal, Tarana, Stuart Town and Geurie, all of which are much smaller and to our knowledge would not have a significant and growing tourism industry as Millthorpe does. An increase in population growth is evident due to Newcrest Mining's Cadia Valley Operations with further mining expansion planned in the Kings Plains area. Further, growth in Millthorpe is gradually occurring due to a number of new sub-divisions in the village. The following table (table 1) illustrates smaller and similar sized communities with either a stop on request train service or regular train services. The population figures quoted are from the 2011 census at which Millthorpe's population was 737 and a further 372 in the surrounding district being total of 1109.

Table 1 – Populations served by train of similar size to Millthorpe.

Station	Population	Service
<i>Millthorpe</i>	<i>1109</i>	<i>nil</i>
Bellata	407	Stop on request
Boggabri	1189	Regular service
Eungai	658	Stop on request
Geurie	894	Regular service
Gunning	482	Stop on request
Henty	1136	Stop on request
Kendall	1190	Stop on request
Rydal	188	Stop on request
Stuart Town	487	Regular service
Tarago	351	Regular service
Tarana	354	Stop on request
The Rock	1054	Stop on request
Willow Tree	422	Stop on request

Existing Services

The existing CountryLink coach service is farcical with two outbound services on a weekday (Sydney to Millthorpe), one leaving Sydney Central at 4.03am and the other at 5.37pm, and on weekends there is only one outbound service leaving Sydney Central at 5.19pm on Saturday. The existing outbound services are not suited to the tourist in terms of the experience Millthorpe offers. There is only one inbound service per week from Millthorpe to Sydney Central leaving Millthorpe at 1.35pm on a Sunday.

Summary

Having the Dubbo XPT CountryLink service make a stop on request at Millthorpe has the following benefits:

- ✓ provides a commercial opportunity for CountryLink, opening up a new destination for visitors and also provides a valuable service for local residents
- ✓ advances regional development in line with the government's regional development policies, in particular the goal of Destination NSW in achieving the NSW Government target of doubling tourism overnight expenditure in regional NSW by 2020 and supporting the local marketing expenditure to date being approximately \$60,000
- ✓ it provides tourists and residents with a comfortable trip from and to Sydney (and other regional centres) at convenient times of the day, 7 days a week
- ✓ it has fewer stops, avoids a change of transport mode at Lithgow and is considerably faster
- ✓ the timing of the service allows tourists to make a short one-day excursion to Millthorpe, or a two-day (or more) visit with overnight stay
- ✓ it allows Millthorpe residents to visit Orange for shopping or other appointments (e.g. medical) with an approximate 4 hour stopover at a realistic time of day

Any further servicing of Millthorpe by CountryLink coaches would presumably be achieved by diverting existing services, which would substantially increase their journey times. The Dubbo XPT CountryLink service already passes through the village daily and a stop on request would add little to the overall journey time through to Dubbo and return to Sydney Central.

We would welcome a meeting with representatives from Transport for NSW, Country Rail Infrastructure Authority, John Holland, CountryLink, Blayney Shire Council, Millthorpe Village Committee and the current lessee of the Millthorpe Railway Station to discuss the implementation and associated financials and value of this proposal.

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