

**Submission
No 12**

INLAND RAIL PROJECT AND REGIONAL NSW

Organisation: Blue Mountains City Council

Date Received: 4 February 2021



4 February 2021

Reference File: F09766 – 21/12539

Justin Clancy MP
The Chair
Committee on Investment, Industry and Regional Development
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

investmentindustry@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Dear Justin Clancy MP,

SUBJECT Inquiry Inland Rail project and Regional NSW – Submission

Blue Mountains City Council (Council) wishes to submit the following comments for the Inquiry into the Inland Rail project and Regional NSW.

From the limited information which is available about the Inland Rail project, we are unable to estimate the impact on road freight passing through the Blue Mountains between Greater Sydney and regional loading facilities for the Inland Rail. It appears possible that regional loading facilities will be used to transfer rail freight to Sydney utilising rail and roads which will travel through the Blue Mountains.

Council has reviewed the following information:

- The Terms of Reference for the Inquiry;
- Information on the NSW Parliament website;
- Existing rail links within NSW;
- NSW Freight and Ports Plan 2018 – 2023;
- State Infrastructure Strategy 2018 – 2038; and
- The NSW Long Term Master Plan.

Council supports further investigation of the Inland Rail project which will deliver vast efficiencies and significant savings of a planned 24 hour journey time and \$10/tonne for freight between Melbourne and Brisbane.

Council requests that the inquiry considers the following points and potential impacts the Inland Rail project may have on the Blue Mountains area and community.

Priority Areas of Concern

Three priority areas of concern that have been identified to focus the council's response to this development, are detailed below.

Transport & Road Impacts

The proposal, contains very little information about the scale of operations for the Inland Rail. While the stated purpose of the Inland Rail project is to provide a rail link between Melbourne and Brisbane, the potential impact of any increase in road and rail freight travelling through the Blue Mountains cannot be assessed but also cannot be discounted.

If the rail infrastructure, including regional loading facilities, are used to enable additional freight transport through the Blue Mountains, it will have a significant impact on the Blue Mountains Line and Great Western Highway (GWH) or Bells Line of Road.

Cycling has a strong tourism and transport focus along the GWH between Mount Victoria and Lapstone, which in many sections has hazardous shoulder conditions and no dedicated cycle lane.

Also of concern is the interaction of heavy vehicle freight traffic with tourism traffic on the GWH including a high number of coaches and buses. There is considerable collateral around this high priority tourism resource.

For any route option which does have the potential to increase freight traffic on the GWH and/or Bells Line of Road, Council notes that these are classified as State Roads and under the care and control of Transport NSW. Any additional maintenance as a result of the additional truck movements is therefore the concern of TfNSW, the Council is extremely concerned that additional maintenance is put in place to ensure the current standards are maintained.

Council also notes that there are existing rail links used for Sydney bound freight, which may or may not be within the scope of this inquiry. We request that these are considered as part of the greater network of rail links which will serve the state of NSW. Council requests that Sydney bound freight is maintained and maximised on these existing lines.

Nature Environment

Council has considerable concern on the potential environmental impacts on the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area (GBMWA) which is divided by the Blue Mountains Western Rail line, Great Western Highway and Bells Line of Road.

The potential impact of additional traffic will create emissions, noise and vibration, and light pollution which will have an impact on wildlife amenity. There would also be a significant increase in the risk to native mammals from death from vehicles.

There is also the risk of the inadvertent importation of weed propagules on vehicles or freight containers from areas which have not traditionally been transported through the Blue Mountains LGA leading to the establishment of new weed population which may invade GBMWA. These may be exotic species or non-endemic native species.

Residential Amenity

Dust, noise and vibration will certainly be generated by heavy vehicles and freight trains travelling past residential areas on the GWH and Bells Line of Road. Potential impacts will be felt on almost all towns and villages in the Blue Mountains. Particularly, Blackheath due to the potential increase in heavy vehicles movements

through its single lane town centre which is a tourism precinct. At this stage, there are no delivery timeframes for the planned Blackheath bypass tunnel.

Summary

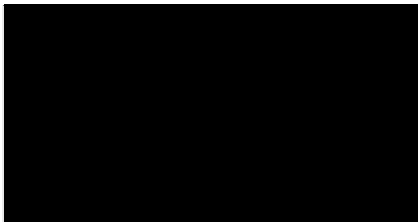
Council and the Blue Mountains community have a strong vested interest in maintaining and improving the conditions of the GWH and Bells Line of Road. Council requests that for each of the route and regional loading facility options, the inquiry considers the following matters:

- The potential impact of additional freight which may travel by road or rail through the Blue Mountains Local Government Area and World Heritage Listed Greater Blue Mountains Area; and
- The potential to maintain or increase capacity for freight on existing Sydney bound rail links from the north and south.

Council has a strong history of engagement with the local communities, including transport action groups, who lobby strongly to divert a higher proportion of freight onto the Blue Mountains and Western Rail line, and off our local highways. Maximising the capacity of rail for freight transport continues to be high priority for the Blue Mountains community.

If you require further information, please contact me on [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]

Yours faithfully,



GLENN SHERLOCK
Program Leader - Transport and Infrastructure Planning