

Minutes of the Lachlan Regional Transport Committee Inc Meeting held on the 3rd November 2012 at Cowra

The meeting was opened at 10am by President Maurice Simpson and members were welcomed to Cowra by Mayor Bill West. Mayor West said that the LRTC focus on regional and rural transport issues brought together many players in the transport industry and we are finding out information that one group on its own cannot hope to uncover.

Attendance: 46 people attended the meeting; names as per attendance sheet.

Apologies: Apologies were received from Donna Ehsman, Russell Holden, Jan Kenworthy, Mike Sweeney, Wallace Devlin, Doug Palmer, Kenneth Epp, Don Tydd, Philip Laird, Mike Sutherland Andrew Gee MP, John Ridley, Lachlan Shire, Parkes Shire, Paul Toole MP, Paul Trevaskis, Garnet Jones, Greg Butler, Barry Holland, and Angus Taylor. Moved Greg Standen and Harry Mansfield that the apologies be accepted. **Carried.**

Introductions: For the benefit of newcomers to the meeting President Simpson introduced several visitors to the meeting - Lord Mayor of Wollongong, Gordon Bradbery OAM, Judy Hannan (Wollondilly Council), Dom Figliomeni (Port Kembla Port Corporation) and explained that the reach of LRTC as an organization extended a considerable way across NSW and the research done by member councils of LRTC had and will continue to have a wide reaching influence.

Minutes of the August meeting were distributed and it was moved that they were a true and accurate record of that meeting by Dom Figliomeni and Geoff Bradden. **Carried.**

Secretary's Report: Secretary Max Duffey advised the meeting that this would be the last occasion for minutes to be distributed in hard copy as future minutes would be placed on the website. Correspondence would also be available to be read on the site and that this would reduce costs considerably and allow for a continuous stream of information to be available between meetings. Correspondence In and Out was tabled. **Max's report was accepted.**

Treasurer's Report: Dennis Hughes provided a written report which showed the balance of the account to be \$7923.37. Treasurer Hughes asked for permission to pay the on-going monthly account of D Yates (\$55) which is for website maintenance. Max Duffey moved and Stuart Freudenstein seconded the treasurer's report. **Carried.**

Secretary's Expenses: It was moved Max Duffey and seconded Kevin Kronke that expenses incurred by the secretary to the amount of \$490.21 be reimbursed. **Carried.**

Reports:

LVR (Tony Healy LVR Chairperson) advised that the closure of the Blayney/Demondrille line had impacted severely on their operations and although they had been able to get their rolling stock out of Cowra they preferred to be based in Cowra. The LVR was still running heritage trips but they do not have the funds to maintain a line as they have insufficient volume capacity. LVR had met with John Holland regional representatives, Greg McLeod and Andy Sturt, who are quite supportive but insist that the present standards must be maintained. A lease to use the lines was signed but LVR is not allowed to operate. The corridor is under the control of John Holland. In Parkes, Mark Norris, a private rail contractor has provided knowledge, equipment and support for LVR and future heritage operation for passengers and heritage trips is planned. LVR looks to LRTC for support.

Medical Transport Group (G Dun) reported that the introduction of train services from Bathurst was still a work in progress.

There were no further reports from sub committees. Both reports were accepted.

Presentations:

1. Ian Gray spoke to the two page summary of the submission made on behalf of LRTC to the draft **NSW State Government Transport Master Plan**. Ian highlighted some key issues of concern for rural people and said that the plan was at draft stage and that there was a call for comment and public consultation and would probably be finalized in the next month. The plan states the parameters that

the State is laying down and it will establish reference points which will underpin funding requests. Some items of relevance that LRTC may wish to consider are:

- **customer focus** – pertinent and seems to be Sydney focused; there is a need to reflect rural and regional transport users of the future
- **Planning** – corridors of movement through Sydney are being addressed and this needs to be applied to rural regions as well
- **Hierarchies** – regional rail freight is missing
- **Regional development** – offers a double opportunity which is missed in the plan; road operators may become interested in operating trains
- **Transport safety issues** – very large and very small vehicles sharing the same roads inappropriately with regulation being the difference when it comes to rail issues; road use does not have the same regulatory burden
- **Money for bridge upgrades** – a part of the ‘last mile’ issue; bridges may be replaced but what about the wear on the roads on either side?
- **Mass distance charges** – tolls on heavy vehicles for distance traveled on all roads allowing attention to be paid to damage done to local roads; money already paid is not getting back to where it is needed
- **CountryLink** – XPTs have limited life left; would cost \$450million to replace them which is about the equivalent of 10 to 15 kms of a Pacific Highway upgrade (figures approximate only)
- **Rail access regime** – access charges for track use; government owns the tracks but they are open to any rail operators which is expected to encourage competition, but the model is not working in rural areas; it is to be reviewed needing attention paid to the link with regional development and a best practice model of a vertically integrated system.

Discussion around Ian’s report:

- **Bill West (Cowra Mayor):** Should other roads and rail be included in your comments? Ian responded that specific infrastructure projects are covered by a report from Infrastructure NSW.
- **Rob Staples (Cabonne Council):** CENTROC meeting task force saw 3 key issues – capital and coastal centric; existing demographic trends were being considered not the future possibilities.
- **Dom Figliomeni (Port Kembla Ports):** The Freight Report Strategy document comes out on 16 Nov and looks at critical freight lines for NSW; there is a raft of documents – Infrastructure Reports - that are looking at these issues and LRTC needs to strategise to move its submission forward. A suggestion would be to have the 13 mayors be signatories to support the submission along with other significant players and this would help crystallise future thinking.
- **Motion:** It was moved Greg Standen and seconded Graeme Dun that the submission to the Transport Master Plan be edited in light of these comments and made available on the LRTC website. **Carried**
- **Tony Healy (LVR)** added his support to the submission and was willing to involve LVR in future operations on the Blayney/Demondrille line with a view to local economic development.
- **Bill West (Cowra Mayor)** suggested that the report be emailed to all member councils and added that The Five Councils involved in the Blayney/Demondrille line were still working together even though there had been a change in positions in some councils. He had spoken with Regional Development Australia (Simon Crean) and had been given a good reception. ARDAF funding had been applied for through Central West RDA and an operator will be sought for the rail line. There is an MOU with The Five Councils and the NSW State Government and things are moving quite quickly. Mike Foster (Cowra Council) has lobbied

interested parties and no-one will be excluded from access to the line; reports from the meeting were sent to General Managers and Mayors of all councils involved.

2. **Geoff Clark (Dubbo)** gave an overview of the **Blayney/Demondrille line** costing review which he said requires \$30million to make it operational which is not a lot of money when compared to road coats. The line is designated as a medium haul line which means medium speed (60km/hr) and medium weight loads. There are some bridges which need replacing the costs of which are included in the \$30 million. One bridge is of a wrought iron structure from the 1880s and it could be used with modification. The tunnel at Carcoar can be accommodated by either lowering or removing some upper layer bricks or a combination of both. These costs are also included in the estimate given (Geoff Bradden commented that the heritage listing on the tunnel may be of concern.) Some flood damage around Koorawatha would need to be fixed.

Discussion around Geoff's report:

- **Gavin Knowles (LVR)** commented that the line near Young was 80lb line but in other areas it was 94lb and a designated Class 3 line.
- **Ian Gray** remarked that it might be worthwhile writing to the national rail regulator once it came into being and that ITSR was likely to still be involved for a period.

3. **Gordon Bradbery (Lord Mayor of Wollongong)** addressed the meeting and said that the concerns being raised by the LRTC group were enlightening. He went on to speak about the Port Kembla focus on coal and wheat which is now being supplemented by containers. There are concerns about the capability and fragile connections of Mt Ousley to take more trucks and the F6 was almost at capacity. The demands for freight going to Port Kembla require a rail solution and the Maldon/Dombarton connection is a high priority. The NSW Government report sees it as a 10-20yr focus and the issue now is to get our heads around the benefits for the NSW economy as a whole. The congestion in the Sydney metropolitan area is enormous and road costs are immense. We need to make better use of rail as a major passenger and freight conveyor as with 4.5 – 5 million people the Sydney basin has almost reached crisis point re congestion.

Gordon believes that decentralisation is back in vogue and will be the state government focus with connectivity being the key. Better use of existing lines with certain corridors being the focus for opening up regional rural areas. The Maldon/Dombarton link is vital. The Illawarra line needs massive amounts of money for maintenance. To move the argument further LRTC needs to feed information about the advantages to council mayors so that the ideas can be advanced at various meetings. The rural to port connection is vital for economic and social viability and could be seen as wishing to raise the concept 'Re Rail NSW'.

Discussion around Gordon's report:

- **Dom Figliomeni** spoke in support of Gordon's statement and agreed that the Maldon/Dombarton link is a vital part of the strategic network. It is a critical link; an enabler. For every passenger train path given there is a loss of a freight path and more congestion is already occurring. Manildra Flour is one producer wanting to put container freight on rail at Port Botany but finding it hard to get paths. The master plan focus is in Sydney and a major submission needs to look at services for the whole of NSW. Port Kembla will also send a submission to the NSW plan and a copy will be forwarded to LRTC. Collective thoughts can be supportive of individual ideas. The Ports lease agreement still to be decided but still need to maintain the focus. Lines to the Port will grow NSW.
- **Ian Gray:** The freight on the Unanderra/Moss Vale line could be increased. Would that be an issue?
- **Dom Figliomeni:** It is a difficult route requiring locos for heavier trains and the operational costs could be the demise of that line. It has limited use with small passing loops and there are risk and safety factors in regards that line. It will take five years to get the Maldon/Dombarton line up and running but that fits with the Ports development that is

occurring now. There is a need for both lines with a difference in distance from Lithgow between the lines (230kms and 320kms) needing to be considered.

- **Max Duffey:** The two lines can be used effectively with heavy down and light up which is a strategic approach to making the best use of the two lines.
- **Dom Figliomeni:** We need to get on the front foot and take a proactive approach.
- **Bill West:** Would the Maldon/Dombarton line do away with the need for the Blayney/Demondrille line?
- **Dom Figliomeni:** No. The length of trains and the congestion on the Blue Mountains line is still a problem.
- **Greg Standen:** How do we win over the private providers and transport groups as represented by people like Nick Greiner?
- **Dom Figliomeni:** Use the influence of the LRTC and take a co-ordinated approach; the LRTC is a formidable group.

4. Judy Hannan (Wollondilly Council): Judy addressed the meeting and stated that 8 years ago the Maldon Dombarton line was forgotten. She likened the present transport issues to that of a plumbing problem; if one section doesn't work even though other parts are great then you will get real problems. It is vital that we keep the pressure on and get the line completed now as costs will go up and existing infrastructure will deteriorate if it is left uncompleted.

Further Discussion and General Business:

Gordon Bradbery: The NSW Infrastructure Report does give rail a guernsey and there is still leverage to build on a window of opportunity. He advised all present to 'get into the ear of every polly they know.'

Maurice Simpson: Is the possibility of a second airport at Wilton likely to have any relevance?

Gordon Bradbery: Holding off commenting until the Wollongong Council has taken its stance.

Judy Hannan: Quite a few councils are against Wilton. The LRTC might like to invite the Canberra Airport Corporation to address the next meeting in regard to the fast train proposal.

Motions: It was moved Judy Hannan and seconded Kevin Kronke that LRTC invite a representative of the Canberra Airport Corporation to speak at the next LRTC meeting in February. **Carried.**

President Simpson called for a **motion of support for the Mayor of Wollongong** in his endeavours to have the Maldon/Dombarton line opened. It was moved Greg Standen and seconded Kevin Kronke that LRTC formally support the Wollondilly Shire and the Wollongong City Council in the immediate construction and completion of the Maldon/Dombarton rail link as part of the major rail corridor linking Western NSW and Port Kembla. It is also moved that LRTC circulate the motion to member councils seeking endorsement of the decision. **Carried**

Central West XPT Service: The service may not be replaced and CountryLink is for sale. It was moved Tony Healy and seconded Garry Braithwaite that LRTC write to object to the closure of any XPT services if and when they are mooted. **Carried**

Mt Victoria/Lithgow: **G Dun** advised that a submission had been made re the improvements being made near Lithgow. Not enough funding to fix Mt Victoria pass and Hartley residents are against what is being proposed. The quality of roads is not satisfactory and all roads feed into Lithgow. The Bells Rd corridor is not going ahead which is very disappointing and there is not much proper direction after two and half years.

B-Doubles and triples on country roads; Kevin Kronke raised this ongoing issue again and commented on the cause for concern at the increase in number and the safety issues that arise.

Garry Braithwaite commented that **Dubbo Mining** would benefit from rail opening up for freight.

Millthorpe Station: Geoff Bradden informed the meeting that as a tourist town with trains coming in Millthorpe needed to be able to use its station. The removal of rail line from nearest the station with trains using the loop line has meant that people cannot alight at the station. An interim step may be to build the verandah out further but the line really needs to be replaced.

Motion: It was moved Greg Stanten seconded Geoff Bradden that LRTC write to state members for Bathurst and Orange stating its concerns for the viability of tourism in the town of Millthorpe.

Bathurst/Sydney train service: Lawrance Ryan reported that he had taken a trip on this new service. It was a great service averaging 50 passengers at Bathurst and full capacity from Lithgow. It does need to tap into coach services from further a field and could connect with Mudgee to Lithgow. It does need pre-booked ticketing and parking facilities at Bathurst are limited. It's a 2 car Endeavour set and takes 3½ hrs. A lack of toilets on the train is a concern and there is no buffet facility. It has been nicknamed the "Bathurst Bullet" and some people think that there is the possibility that it may replace the XPT.

Discussion on Lawrance's report:

Motion: It was moved Lawrance Ryan seconded Greg Stanten that LRTC write to member for Bathurst and City Rail asking that consideration be given to the points raised by Lawrance and to give serious consideration that the train cater for Oberon passengers. **Carried.**

- **Timetabling comment:** Hayden Homes remarked that any changes to the Bathurst service timetable would depend upon availability of platforms and other infrastructure. It used to be that the people furthest out were given first consideration when timetabling and that train services like this one would only stop to set down not pick up at designated stations. There is a need to know where people are getting on and off and booking ahead on this train would not be possible because the seats are not numbered. Trains seem to be timetabled now to suit trains, not people.
- **Geoff Clark:** Be careful of asking for changes as it is a City Rail service not CountryLink and people may lose the \$2.50 City Rail fare. Passenger services like this are great but they do take the paths of two freight trains.

Cowra By-pass: Bill West advised that there has been some discussion about the possibility of bypassing the main street of Cowra but still maintaining the connectivity with other regional towns.

Young Boorowa Harden Canberra Bus link – Stuart Freudenstein advised that the arrangement with a 12 seater bus 3days/week managed by Community Transport in Young and funded by the Federal Department of Health was going well. Patronage is good and people are satisfied with the service.

Dubbo-Orange flights – Garry Braithwaite reported that there have been security upgrades but that he was not aware of anything further happening.

Carbon tax Road Rail Comparison – no tax on trucks until 2015.

Narrandera/Tocumwal rail line – Mayor of Narrandera wants to open the line through to northern Victoria and for traffic to go to Brisbane. Freight would go south to Melbourne. Dom Figliomeni commented that an interstate coastal shipping could operate from NSW ports served by rail.

Blue Mountains Submission for integrated transport forum is available on the website. Mayor Daniel Myles of Blue Mountains said that he supported all aspects of rail to get trucks off the roads in their region and would support the letter to the 13 mayors and to state members as well.

Timber from Tumbarumba still on roads; Visy using rail from Harefield.

The meeting closed at 12:30 pm and a light lunch was enjoyed.

The next meeting is proposed to be held at Blayney on 9 Feb 2013. (CONFIRMED)