

Interested parties:

Residents along the current rail corridor from Epping through Cheltenham and Beecroft to Pennant Hills.

Area affected: Quadruplication of the main northern rail line between Epping and Pennant Hills would impact notably on the amenity of Beecroft and Cheltenham. The North West Rail Link initial proposal in 2006 required quadruplication of a section of this area from Epping to the Beecroft Village Green. A professional review for the Trust of one impact of rail corridor widening indicated the destruction of some 800 trees and other notable flora.

Background: Rail freight operations through our area have increased noticeably over the years. NSW Government is working to augment freight rail capacity along the main northern line. New rail line construction is underway at Normanhurst for improved operations. Rail quadruplication between West Ryde and Epping has allowed freight trains a better run up the steep grade at Denistone. Steep rail grades also apply at Cheltenham and are made worse by notable curves and grades through Beecroft to Pennant Hills. This section is known as the *Beecroft bank*, and is the second steepest rail grade in NSW.

Key points:

- Rail freight noise is more noticeable than some years ago when quiet, more powerful electric locomotives moved freight swiftly through our area.
- Privatisation of freight trains means that diesel locomotives are preferred as they can travel from Victoria to Queensland, usually without refuelling. (Melbourne / Sydney / Brisbane rail links are not electrified.)
- Rail planners may see logic in further quadruplication through our area, despite the extensive loss of amenity, trees and flora that would occur.
- The aspect from many houses to current treed rail embankments could be replaced by high concrete walls, and more notable noise, as neither local steep grades nor curves would be significantly reduced.
- Whilst the Trust agrees that rail freight can be more effective than road haulage, a more strategic option would be a new Western Sydney transport link, for road and rail, between Western Sydney and Ourimbah areas, avoiding long-haul transport through the steepest parts of Sydney
- Although not favoured by the RTA, a 2007 NSW Planning Enquiry by Marla Pearlman pointed to the need for a strategic transport crossing of the Hawkesbury River
- Baulkham Hills Shire Council has recently indicated it would be supportive of this
- Fires, truck break-downs and other incidents have regularly stopped vital transport by road and rail to the north of Sydney, at great economic cost and inconvenience.
- Double stacking of container trains is in practice between Adelaide & Parkes; a new rail link would accommodate this efficiency with higher tunnel and bridge clearances.

Trust response:

- The Trust sees no logic in having the main northern transport and freight corridors for rail and road through some of the steepest, most elevated parts of Sydney.
- Expanding the winding, steep rail grades of 19th century engineering & largely manual construction, is strategically, economically & environmentally unsound
- Western Sydney is a national business/industrial hub with notable, growing GDP contributions; it has good road/ rail links to the south – but not northwards!
- The Central Coast, North Coast and Queensland are rapidly developing areas demanding much trade/transport with Sydney & from areas south to Melbourne.
- The Trust supports the strategic option of a new road and rail Hawkesbury River crossing upstream of the F3, Pacific Highway & Brooklyn rail bridges.

- The Trust understands that a good crossing location was selected by the NSW Government some 20 years ago, & could link the M7 more directly with the F3 north
- Parallel construction of road and rail links could achieve significant savings
- The Trust will be consulting with other Resident Groups – including the Pennant Hills District Civic Trust – to encourage our State & Federal Members of Parliament (MP) to act with vision, *not hindsight*, in achieving this national construction priority
- The Trust recognises the concerns of residents along the rail corridor on issues of noise and amenity – and encourages them to let their MPs know directly
- Rail quadruplication would have a more detrimental effect on our suburbs than any tunnelling for the North West Rail link to Castle Hill and Schofields.

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