

NORTH COAST LINE RAIL FORUM

Brisbane, 22nd March 2013

In July 2012, the Queensland Transport and Logistics Council (QTLC) facilitated an industry meeting on Queensland's Freight Future. This meeting identified challenges and priorities for rail on the North Coast Line (NCL) and the QTLC gave an undertaking to engage with government and industry in the pursuit of opportunities to improve the reliability and efficiency of this service.

Subsequently, the QTLC partnered with Queensland Rail (QR) to hold the NCL Rail Forum on 22 March 2013. The Forum was well attended by government and industry including customers, freight forwarders as well as above and below rail operators.

The following Communiqué summarises discussion regarding the challenges and constraints to the reliable and efficiency movement of freight on the NCL and identifies key actions and accountabilities to progress opportunities to improve overall performance of northern supply chains, as agreed by attendees.

Communiqué

1. Passenger Priority

The Forum considered that the application of passenger priority was impacting the reliability of freight services on the NCL and consequently impeding the ability of rail to compete with other transport modes and provide a competitive alternative service offer.

- 1) **Issue:** Understand the obligations of Passenger Priority applied under the Transport Infrastructure Act (TIA), the policies used for the practical application of these to freight and passenger train operations and assess the need for clarification or change.
- 2) **Actions:**
 - a. TMR and QR advice to confirm policies and protocols currently used to determine relative planning and operational priorities.
 - b. TMR to review whether a Priority Protocol is required to provide clarity and guidance for QR.
 - c. TMR to brief the Minister to confirm the appropriate protocols to be applied under current policy.

- d. QR to gather data on the incidence and extent of passenger priority protocols impacting and delaying freight services including metropolitan, regional and network delay information.

3) **Lead Agents:** Damian Colclough & Glen Doyle

2. Priority v Non-Priority Paths

The Forum did not see a significant benefit from priority and non-priority path availability. However, the NCL paths are subject to train control being handed from QR to Aurizon Network for the Gladstone to Rockhampton track section. This disconnect with control split to more than one network manager was resulting in delays to NCL services relative to coal services.

- 1) **Issue:** Understand the legislative and regulatory obligations pertinent to NCL train services that transit across the Aurizon Network and their application and impacts.
- 2) **Actions:** TMR and QR to clarify path coordination, protocols, options, legislation and regulations currently applicable to NCL rail services and understand their impacts.
- 3) **Lead Agents:** Damian Colclough & Glen Doyle

3. Urban Peak Congestion

The Forum was concerned that SEQ freight path constraints arising from peak period restrictions may expand and reduce rail freight service reliability and efficiency.

- 1) **Issue:** Understand implications of future SEQ passenger service operations and initiatives on freight operations, and how these could be addressed.
- 2) **Actions:** TMR currently undertaking SEQ Capacity Improvement Project (SEQCI), which will identify and assess implications and mitigations.
- 3) **Lead Agent:** Peter Rose

4. Longer Train Services

The Forum discussed issues constraining the deployment of long trains and achieving more efficient NCL operations.

- 1) **Issue:** Understand the issues associated with operating longer freight trains.
- 2) **Actions:**
 - a. TMR will assess feasibility of operating longer trains on SEQ network in SEQCI and long train implications to be assessed and considered in potential future NCL investigations.
 - b. Identify other constraints in the supply chain including locomotives, terminals, yards, scheduling, crossing loops, grades, etc.
- 3) **Lead Agents:**

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- a. Peter Rose & Damian Colclough – TMR Projects
 - b. Graham Brown & Glen Doyle – Grades and Operations Restrictions
 - c. Tim Dwyer – Customer Long Train Issues

5. Network Maintenance Closures

The Forum queried whether the coordination of maintenance track possessions could be improved and freight trains be allowed to transit where the possession is a multi-track network section (e.g. SEQ).

- 1) **Issue:** Understand if track maintenance possessions can be better coordinated between QR and Aurizon networks and rather than be subject to cancellation, freight trains can be walked through multi track maintenance closures.
- 2) **Actions:**
 - a. TMR to facilitate a discussion between QR and Aurizon Network.
 - b. QR to provide advice on freight train walk through transit options.
- 3) **Lead Agents:**
 - a. Sal Petrocitto – facilitate discussion
 - b. Graham Brown & Glen Doyle – Possession Flexibility

6. Flood Immunity & Recovery

The Forum discussed potential areas for further flood mitigation work to be undertaken.

- 1) **Issue:** Understand the cost of the next individual track section upgrades that would increase flood immunity on the NCL between Brisbane and Townsville.
- 2) **Actions:** QR to provide advice on potential flood immunity upgrades options.
- 3) **Lead Agent:** Graham Brown

7. Transit Time and Service Reliability

Beyond recent efforts to improve communication and coordination that has delivered reliability improvements (prior to recent flood events), the Forum discussed potential ways to facilitate improved recovery when freight services were impacted by delays and became unhealthy losing path priority.

- 1) **Issue:** Understand what potential options are available to incorporate buffer or a flexible service recovery capability which would facilitate a more reliable and robust train service schedule.
- 2) **Actions:** QR to facilitate a discussion between QR Train Schedulers and Toll Intermodal/PN to examine path flexibility and schedule changes including Master Train Plan (MTP) adjustments to improve reliability and recovery.

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- 3) **Lead Agents:** Glen Doyle, Tim Dywer & Brian Hobbins.

8. Curve and Grade Easing

The Forum discussed whether curve and grade easing would help facilitate the ability of a longer train to be deployed on the NCL.

- 1) **Issue:** Understand whether curve and grade easing can be undertaken as smaller projects rather than major system upgrades and assess the potential resulting increased train length that could be achieved.
- 2) **Actions:** QR to advise estimates of grade/curve projects and potential length change opportunities arising from these projects.
- 3) **Lead Agents:** Glen Doyle and Graham Brown.

9. Supply Chain Redesign

The Forum discussed components of the supply chain that may inhibit efficient and reliable rail services.

- 1) **Issue:** Understand system factors that can increase system reliability and robustness.
- 2) **Actions:** Examine as part of Transit Time and Service Reliability Project.
- 3) **Lead Agents:** Glen Doyle, Tim Dywer & Brian Hobbins.

10. Benchmarking

The Forum discussed whether similar NCL systems exist for benchmarking performance.

- 1) **Issue:** Understand if systems exist to compare on time performance data.
- 2) **Actions:** Examine other rail systems and performance data availability.
- 3) **Lead Agents:** James Stubbersfield.