GSR

The Great Southern Railway

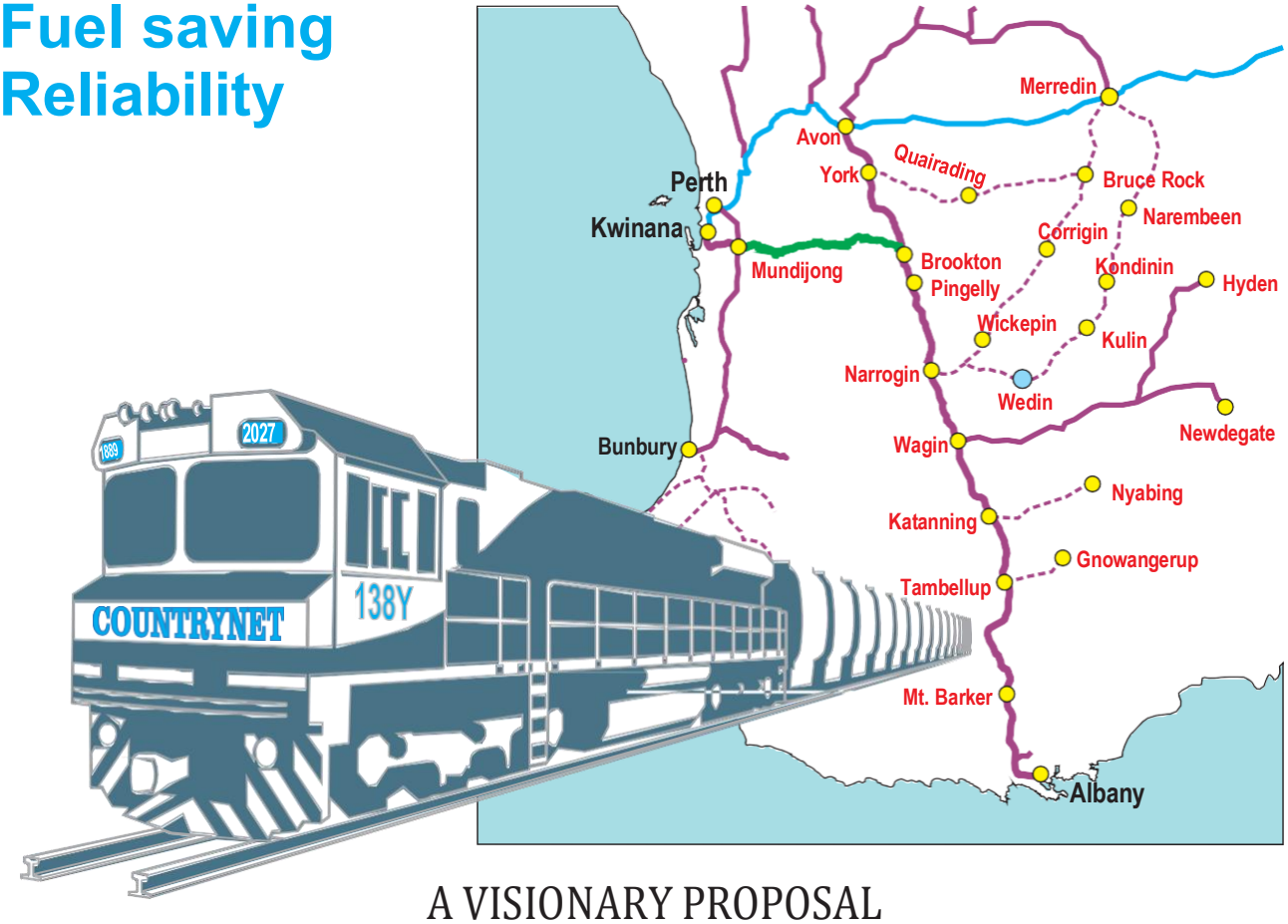
Agriculture Q Freight Q Passenger Q Tourism Q Community

PRIMARY DOCUMENT

Back on Track

Restoring

Productivity
Efficiency
Emissions reduction
Fuel saving
Reliability



A VISIONARY PROPOSAL

To unlock the full potential of the West Australian railway network as a modern and essential transport network supporting agricultural, industrial, commercial, tourism, and community development.

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INTRODUCTION

The return of Western Australia's rail network to public ownership presents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to redefine its role in driving economic growth and strengthening regional communities. Nowhere is this more relevant than the Great Southern Railway (GSR). Established in the nineteenth century as part of a bold vision to open up and develop the region's agricultural potential, it was conceived as a driver of settlement and economic development.
More recently, after twenty-six years of constrained development and a singular focus on commercial profit extraction, it is clear that further constrained incremental upgrades will not deliver the transformation that is overdue. The moment calls for a decisive reset, one that re-establishes the railway as strategic public infrastructure, central to regional prosperity and long-term economic efficiency and resilience.

This submission does not propose yet another narrow review or a sequence of minor technical fixes. Instead, it sets out a bold and integrated vision for the network's future. The propositions advanced here are deliberately interlinked, designed to operate in concert and generate momentum for more competitive freight haulage and significant regional development. Underpinning this big picture review is the proposal for a new time and money saving East-West arterial line, linking the South West Railway (SWR) at Mundijong, to Brookton on the GSR. Capitalising on the already established 18 kilometre rail corridor that climbs the Darling Scarp, it would provide a strategically direct connection from the upper Great Southern to the planned intermodal hub of Kwinana Port, and in turn, to the metropolitan logistic centres.

Just as METRONET was never conceived as a program to merely patch up Perth's existing metropolitan rail network, but rather advanced as a bold, long-term vision of what the network could and should become, this proposal looks beyond fragmentary repair. From the outset, it was understood that METRONET's ambitions would require significant investment. The benefits of that forward-looking commitment are now evident across the entire metropolitan area. In the same spirit, this submission does not advocate piecemeal upgrades to sections of the Great Southern Railway, nor a continuation of a minimalist approach to maintenance and renewal. Instead, at a cost well below that of the METRONET vision, it presents a strategic investment case, one that, would materially enhance efficiency, productivity, amenity and broader social value. Such dividends will then be delivered for decades to come.

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Executive Summary

This submission to the Western Australian Government from Regional Development Australia - Great Southern, is made on behalf of the industries, businesses and communities of Albany and the broader Great Southern region. It reflects widely shared and expressed concerns and priorities relating to the following interconnected issues:

- Once a principal artery of regional development and a significant state asset, the Great Southern Railway (GSR) has, for too long, been permitted to decline, with deteriorating infrastructure, constrained investment and a culture of inertia. This has inhibited efficiency, discouraged new enterprise, and limited the railway's capacity to contribute meaningfully to regional growth.
- The opening of the Avon Valley dual-gauge route in 1966 was a major strategic initiative that delivered substantial benefits to Western Australia's transport network and the wider economy. However, the consequential diversion and lengthening of GSR traffic via Toodyay to access coastal trade, has remained an enduring structural constraint. For nearly six decades, this additional distance and cost burden has undermined the competitiveness of rail freight in the Great Southern and discouraged investment in prospective new rail-based operations.
- The closure of Tier 3 lines has produced predicted and significant adverse consequences. Much grain that once moved by rail now travels further by road, increasing freight handling costs to farmers and eroding supply-chain efficiency. The shift has resulted in increased double and even triple handling of product, impacted road maintenance budgets, road degradation and safety outcomes with increased harmful emissions.
- The planned development of the new container port at Kwinana presents a timely opportunity to embed modern, integrated intermodal solutions. The GSR must form part of any meaningful mode-shift strategy aimed at improving freight efficiency, enhancing road safety and emissions reduction in the Great Southern. However, a more direct, unimpeded and competitive rail connection to Kwinana is essential. Current time wasting impediments are simply appalling. With the adoption of the proposals in this submission, and such a link in place, the fundamental economics of both existing freight and prospective new enterprises would shift markedly in favour of rail.
- The GSR has the capacity to carry substantially greater volumes of freight, yet without coordinated and strategic upgrades, it is unlikely that new industrial or agricultural ventures in the region will consider rail a viable transport option.
- With the maturation of the Metronet project, the metropolitan community now enjoys world-class rail infrastructure. The South-West is enjoying, dramatically enhanced Australind services, whilst the smaller communities of the Eastern Goldfields railway have long benefited from uninterrupted passenger rail services. The community service obligation to the Great Southern regional communities is yet to be acknowledged and met. This oversight has resulted in years of indifference to the considerable potential that a modern passenger service to Albany, arguably Western Australia's most compelling regional destination, would facilitate for metropolitan, interstate and international visitors. This substantial unmet demand has the potential to supercharge the tourism economy of the region, a bonus made possible with the other recommended initiatives.

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This submission broadly aligns with aspirations articulated in the Western Australian Regional Freight Transport Network Plan (2013), the Revitalising Agricultural Region Freight Strategy (2020), and the Agricultural Supply Chain Improvement ASCI) programmes and is informed by the many inquiries and reports that have examined the network during its period of private ownership under a flawed monopoly lease arrangement. It is also motivated by the frustrations and unmet expectations that have surfaced in that time.

Against this historical backdrop, there is a clear need to embrace big-picture visionary thinking with disciplined practical imagination. This submission acknowledges that an updated Regional Freight Transport Network Plan is yet to be announced by the government and is likely to place greater emphasis on 'resilience, decarbonisation and emerging technologies'. The following proposals address these aspirations directly.

Regaining functional government ownership of the network, clears the way for substantial restoration to an asset that better serves the state's freight transport needs in the unique way that only railways can. To do so requires three fundamental operational imperatives to be addressed.

1. Transit speeds must be maximised.
2. Loading and unloading must be characterised by rapid turnaround.
3. Progress en-route must not be impeded.

On all three, the existing G.S.R. metrics currently fall far short.

This submission demonstrates how, supported by a distance reducing 'Greenfield' project initiative, each of these issues are prioritised. It calls on the State Government to commit to a visionary investment, one which will markedly improve economic efficiencies for existing 'above rail' operators, remove current impediments that thwart the entry of new operators, and better serve the industries and communities of the Great Southern, for many decades to come.

To realize this transformative objective, it is proposed that three key infrastructure issues be strategically addressed.

1. **Construction of a new southern rail corridor** linking Kwinana and Brookton, creating a more direct and strategically efficient rail freight connection between the coast and the GSR.
2. **Targeted upgrades to the existing GSR infrastructure** to eliminate severe speed restrictions, restore, extend and modernise passing loops, and rectify track quality deficiencies that constrain traffic flow, efficiency, and productivity. Although many of these constraints stem from legacy design features, they are fundamentally technical and engineering matters that have been overlooked for too long yet can be systematically resolved.
3. **Selective reconstruction of sections of currently closed Tier 3 lines**, where restored viability should be assessed in light of the expanded opportunities created by initiatives (1) and (2).

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This proposal is described in six sections:

Section 1 outlines the concept of the critical “Missing Link” between Jarrahdale and Brookton.

Section 2 details the priority upgrade initiatives required on the GSR main line to restore efficiency and enhance performance.

Section 3 assesses the feasibility of re-opening selected sections of Tier 3 lines in light of the proposed network enhancements.

Section 4 considers the potential for a new intermodal freight service linking Perth and Albany.

Section 5 outlines the case for introducing a new passenger rail service and advancing a major tourism initiative made possible by the upgrades put in place across the network.

This submission is not a fanciful or indulgent call for high-speed rail, nor does it propose costly new lines criss-crossing the South West to link Bunbury, Busselton and Albany. It does not advocate for reopening every closed Tier 3 line. What it presents is bold and visionary in a practical sense, comparable in strategic intent to Metronet. It is the product of extensive research and sets out a coherent, integrated plan designed to be considered as a whole, implemented progressively over a defined time frame.

In preparing this submission, due regard has been given to the likely scale of project costs. Preliminary estimations have been informally canvassed, however, no specific figures are advanced. Detailed and defensible costings can only be produced through comprehensive technical assessment undertaken by appropriately qualified funded consultants. Such work represents the necessary next phase and would requires dedicated funding well beyond the capacity of this advocacy group. We regard this as properly the responsibility of government, as the proposal proceeds to more formal evaluation.

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In its present condition, West Australia's regional rail network falls far short of twenty first century standards. The Great Southern portion of that network is of particular concern delivering well below it's potential.

The 2 KEY ISSUES of this submission

1. **Train transit times are currently below an acceptable standard and that which should reasonably be achievable. This is eroding operational efficiency, limiting potential cost savings, and reducing rail's competitiveness relative to road transport.**

   WHY?

   a. Track conditions now host a plethora of speed restrictions, both temporary and permanent.

   b. There are insufficient passing loops. In addition, the ones which do exist are of insufficient length given the size of trains now possible in modern train operations.

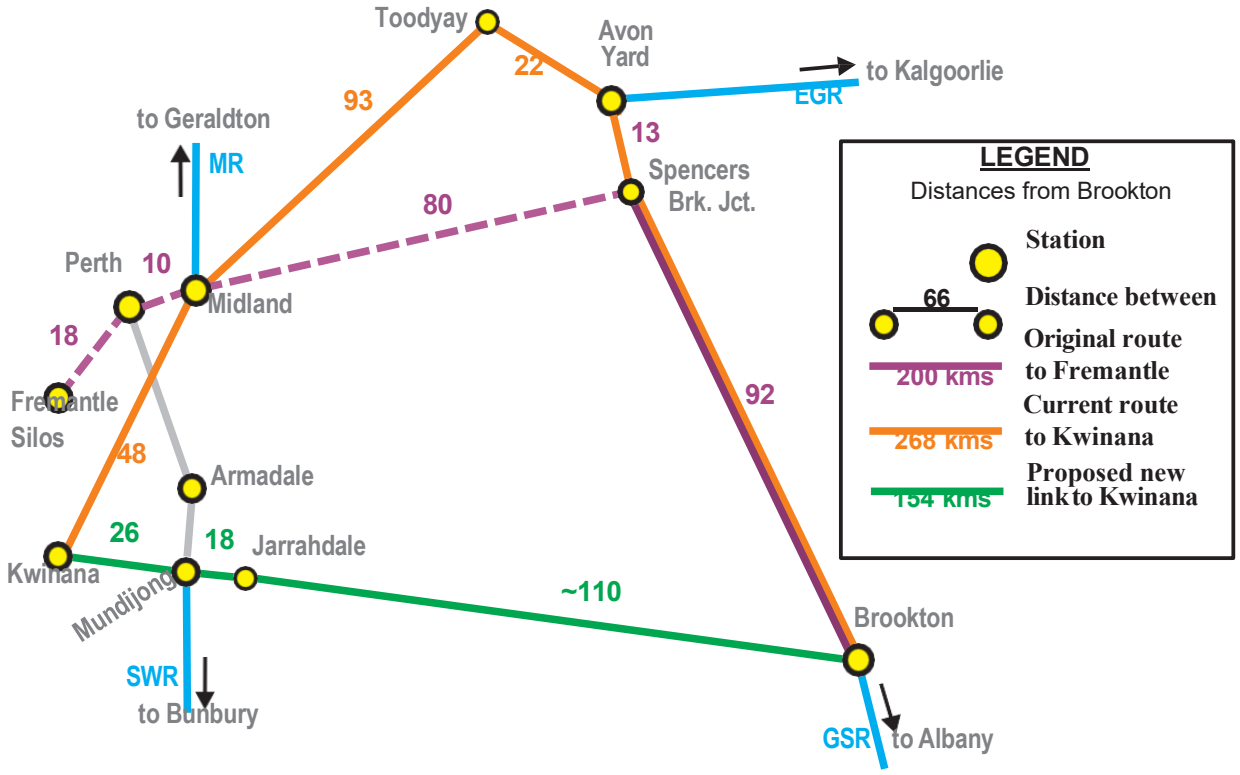
   c. Rather than being activated remotely by Central Train Control, **ALL** route adjustments between Northam and Albany require the manual activation of switching points by train crews, trackside.

2. **Distances need shortening.**

   WHY?

   Trains between the major grain hub of Brookton and Kwinana terminal currently traverses **536** kms via Avon Yard and Toodyay in one round trip. This can be reduced by **228** kms with the establishment of a new more direct link through Mundijong. In addition, potential operations between the metro area and other locations such as Narrogin branchlines, and all the towns to Albany, would gain a similar uplift in efficiency and viability. It addresses the inherent penalties in transit times, crew payroll hours, diesel consumption and emissions, motive power and rolling stock wear and servicing cycles and facilitates transfer of freight from road to rail.

DISTANCE COMPARISONS [Distances depicted to scale]



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Section 1. THE MISSING LINK

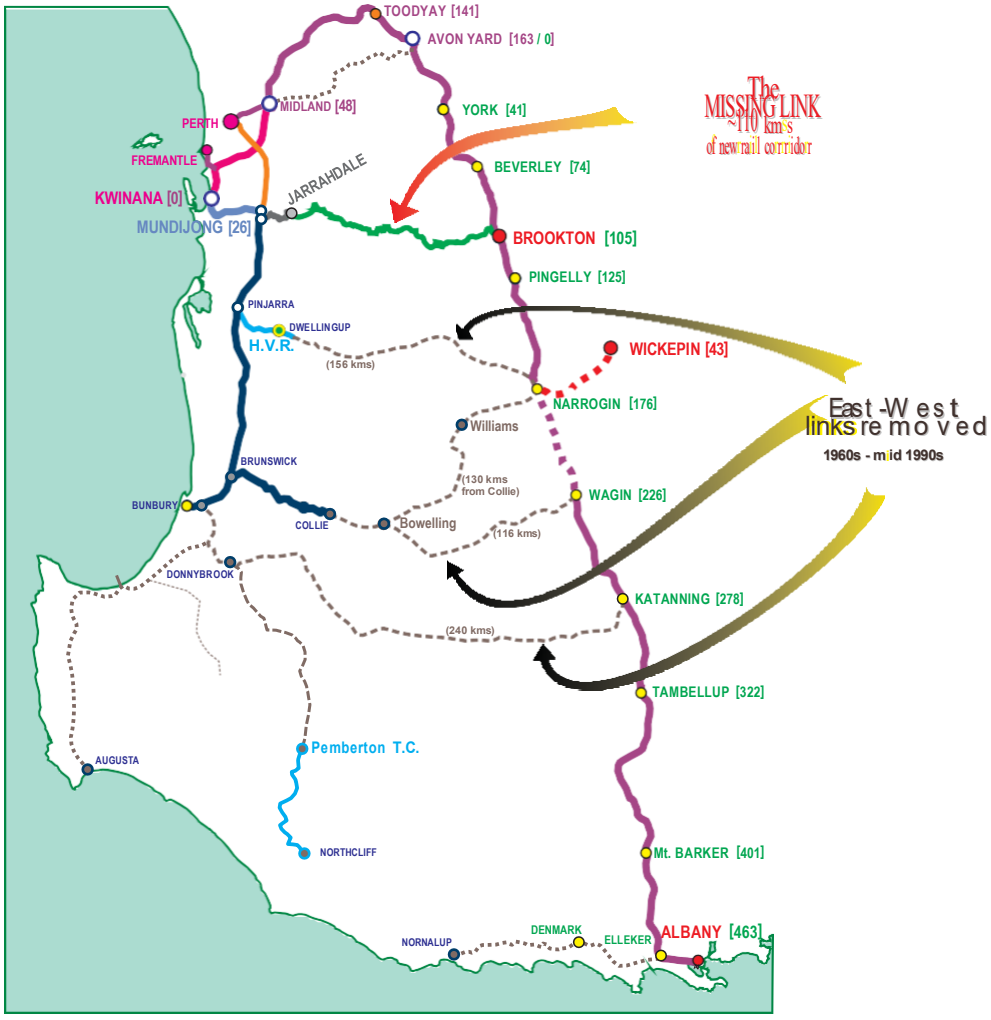
1. A NEW EAST / WEST LINE

Mundijong to Brookton

1.1 IMPORTANT BACKGROUND

The Great Southern Railway (GSR), which opened in 1889, is the main rail artery running from 'Avon Yard' (Northam), in the north, to Albany in the south. It is linked to Perth via the Eastern Goldfields Railway (EGR) which originally passed through Spencers Brook, Wooroloo and Chidlows Well. Once established, further east-west links were opened up from Narrogin to Pinjarra (1913) and Collie (1918) and to Wagin via Collie (1918) and finally from Bunbury to Katanning via Donnybrook in 1920. At the time, with these links, rail freight between the Great Southern region and the west coast was well served. One by one these lines were ultimately closed leaving the EGR. as the only link. Building of the dual gauge project through the Avon Valley saw the EGR re-routed north via Toodyay adding 30 kilometres to any Great Southern rail traffic destined for the coast. The distance for the grain industry was further lengthened when the Kwinana grain terminal was established in 1975 and the Fremantle Port silos closed.

Each of these developments has impacted rail's ability to compete with road freight. More than ever, costs in transit time and equipment utilisation has become critical.



A NEW 21 TONNE AXLE LOAD LINE IS REQUIRED LINKING MUNDIJONG (on the S.W.R.) TO BROOKTON (on the G.S.R).

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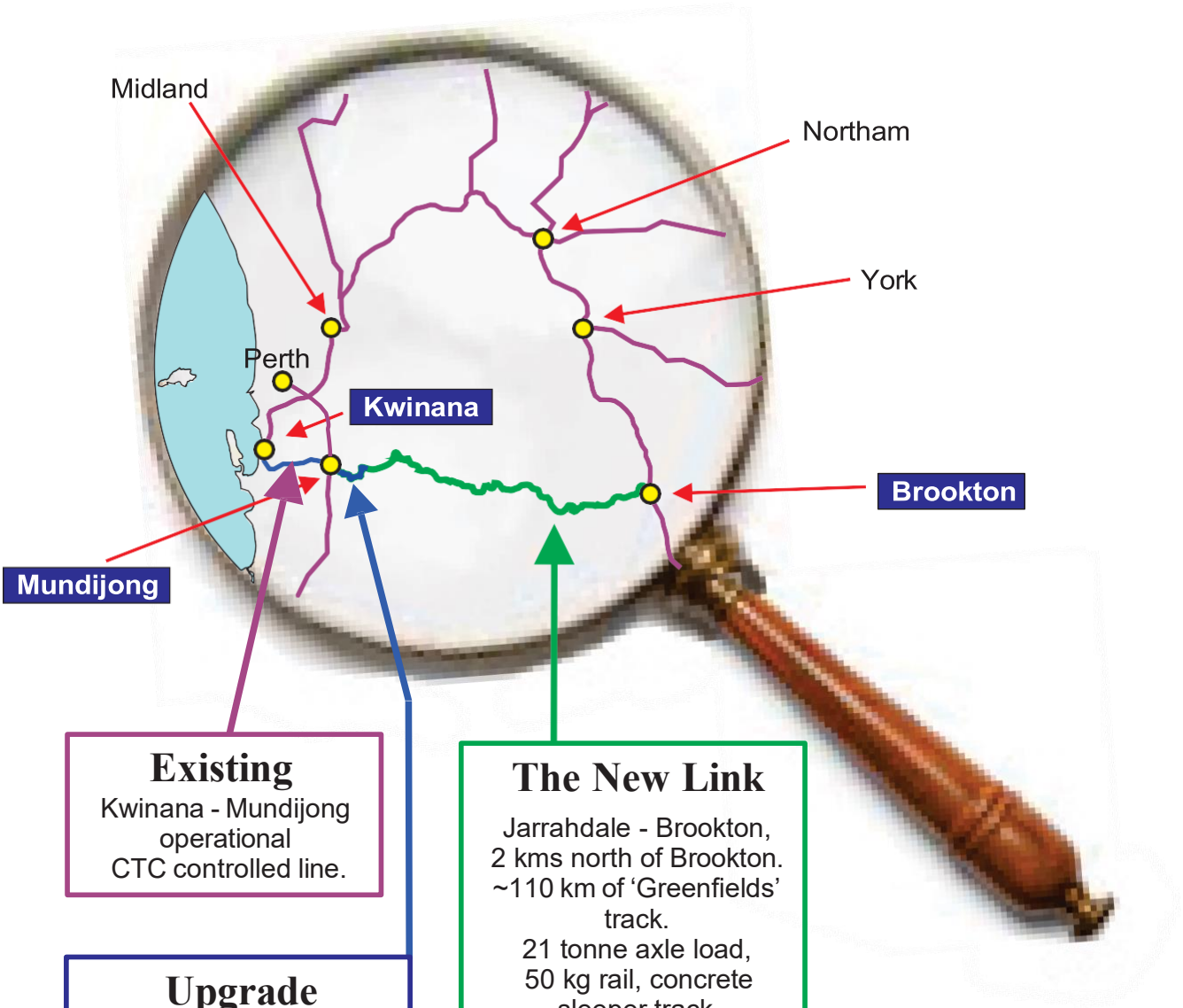
1.2 A MISSING LINK

This proposal advocates for a new rail link between Brookton on the G.S.R, and Kwinana, via Mundijong and Jarrahdale.

Capitalising on the currently closed 18 km rail corridor between Mundijong and Jarrahdale, and building a new line of approximately 110 kms between Jarrahdale and the GSR, a new artery between Brookton and Kwinana would be created. This would bring significant cost reductions and efficiencies to rail operations by reducing the round trip distance between Brookton and Kwinana by approximately 224 kms. The existing closed section, provides an established solution to the challenge of climbing the Darling Scarp. Commissioned in 1963, this line served bauxite ore trains of up to 66 cars for 35 years and remains a gazetted corridor.



Available as a detailed pdf file.

CONCEPTUAL MAP

BROOKTON to MUNDIJONG
RAILWAY ROUTE

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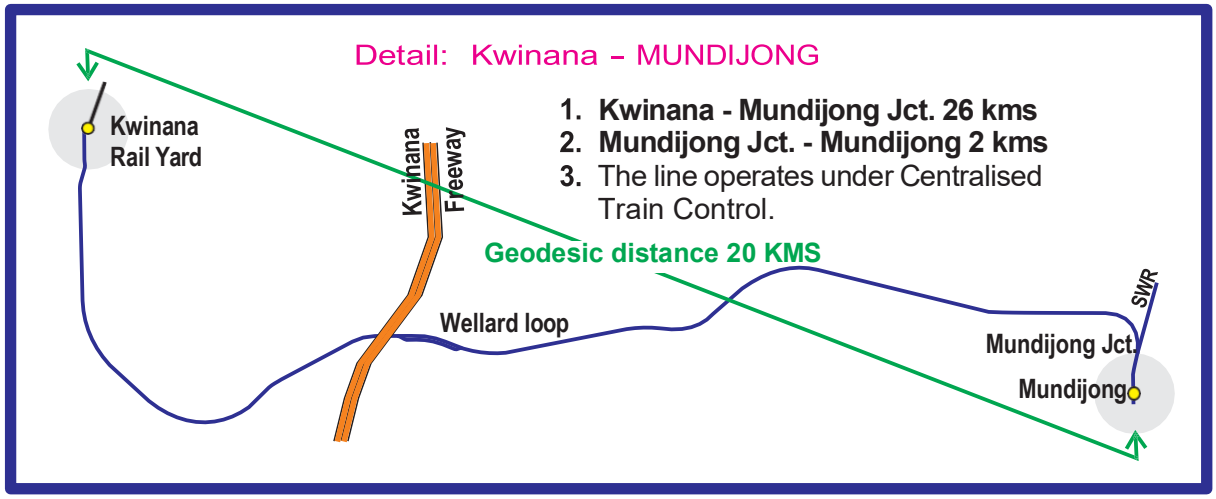
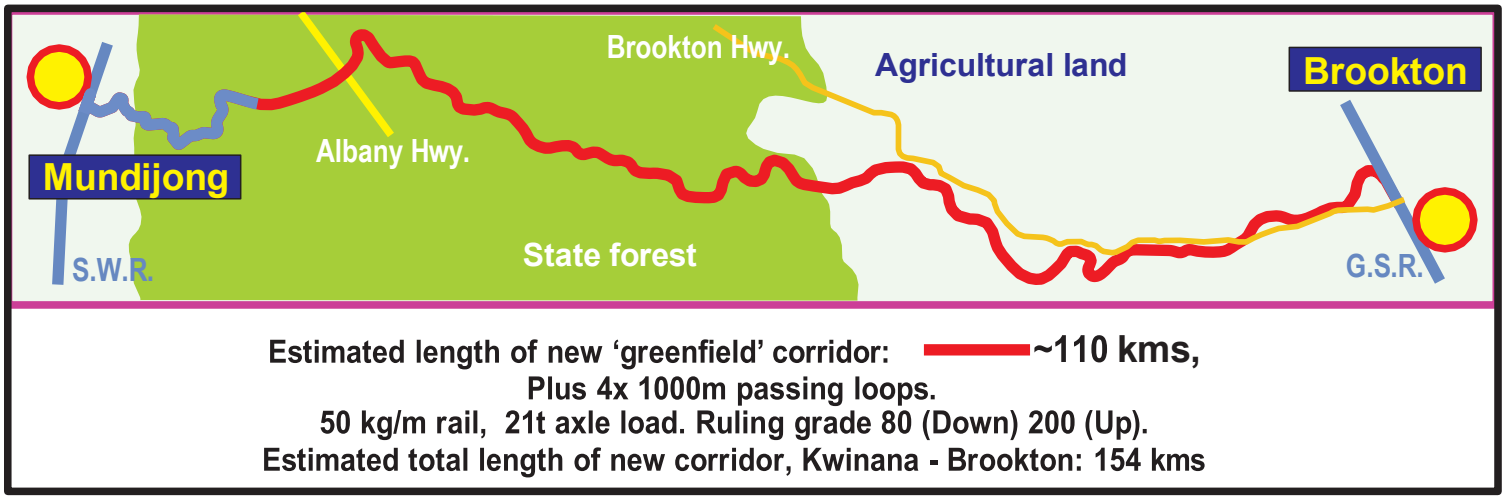
1.3 EXISTING OPERATIONAL TRACK



1.4 A NEW CORRIDOR



Estimated length of new 'greenfield' corridor: ~110 kms,
Plus 4x 1000m passing loops.
50 kg/m rail, 21t axle load. Ruling grade 80 (Down) 200 (Up).
Estimated total length of new corridor, Kwinana - Brookton: 154 kms

1.5 RATIONALE OVERVIEW

The need to improve efficiencies and deliver cost savings is as pressing as it has ever been for agricultural and industrial enterprises. For the agricultural sector, coping with production input costs remains an ongoing and major challenge. In addition, the cost of transporting grain to the market interface is proving more problematic than ever. In turn, for the cooperative, CBH, transporting grain to port is their primary business input. This proposed new East-West rail route offers multiple operational savings through a significant reduction in distances between the terminal at Kwinana and the collection of grain across the northerly half of the GSR and its branches. However they are not the sole beneficiary of this new shorter rail route to coastal termini, and in particular, the proposed new intermodal Kwinana port. Other freight and even passenger services become potentially viable, where previously distance proved too costly.

This new corridor provides:

- Faster turnaround time for every delivery.
- A marked reduction in km / tonne tariff costs for every round trip.
- Reduction in train crew rostered hours.
- More deliveries possible between scheduled servicing of locomotives.
- More deliveries between scheduled maintenance of rolling stock.
- Avoidance of delays eventuating on the Avon Valley route.
- Resilience in the face of adverse circumstances.
- Reduction in 'carbon footprint' in expanded train operations.

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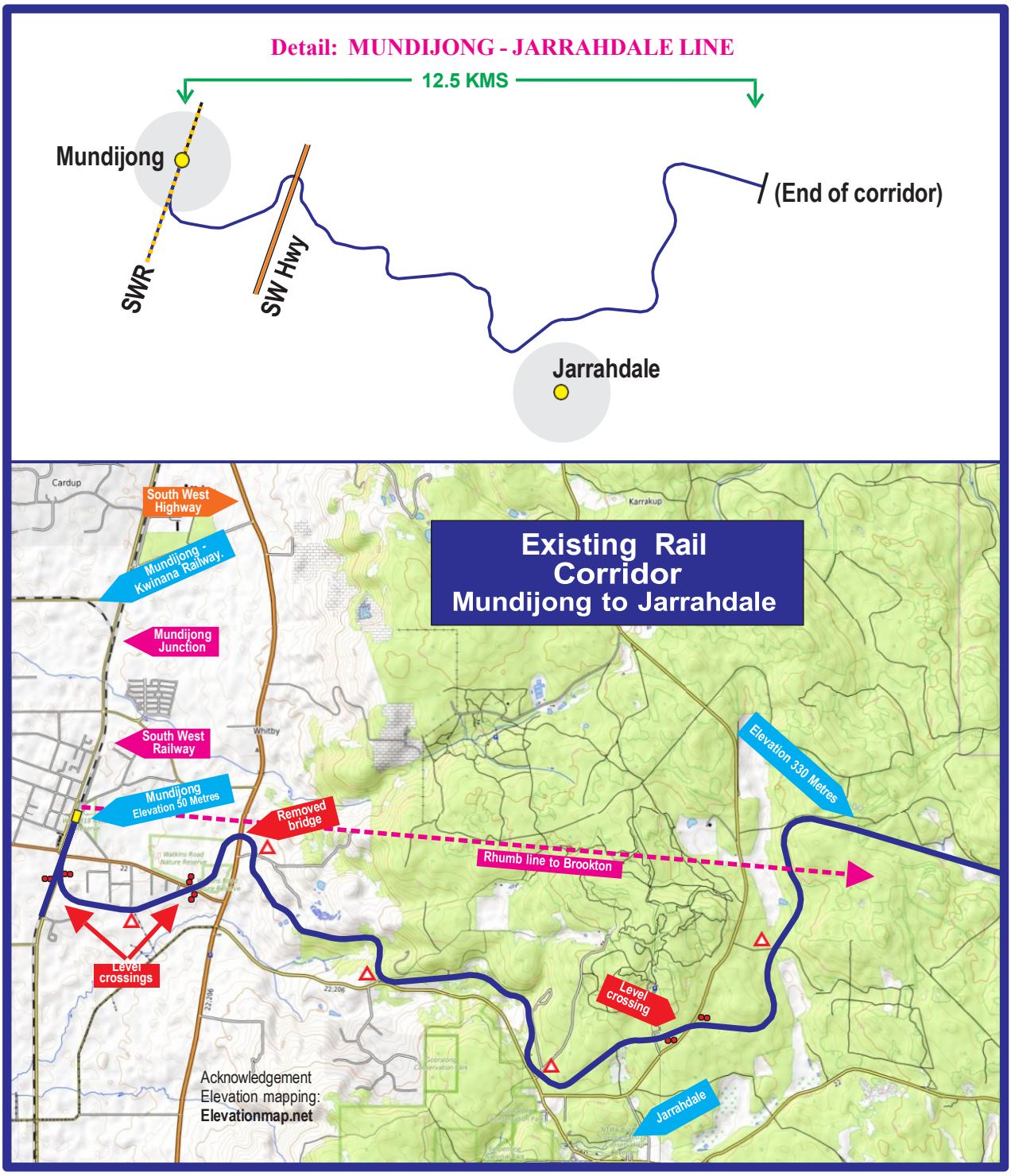
1.6 CLOSED TRACK TO BE RENOVATED



This line, between Mundijong and Jarrahdale, is still in place within an existing rail corridor, and an established formation, (line code 1401). Built in 1963 to support heavy haul trains delivering ore from W.A's first Bauxite mine, to the refinery at Kwinana, it closed in 1999. It has a ruling 'Down' grade of 60, (i.e ascending the scarp), and an 'UP' grade of 200. It once had a crossing loop of 1131 Metres. It has been disconnected from the South West Railway (SWR) at the turnout points and the main bridge beams over the South West Highway have been removed and are stored in the rail corridor at Mundijong. Crossing protections have also been removed. Critically, however, the corridor is established and ready for re-purposing. The almost 180 degree curve where it crosses the South West Highway appears to be of an estimated 200 m in radius and one with perhaps 5 others of similar radius.

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1.7 RELATED BACKGROUND

1. Track length: **18 kms**
2. Original Bauxite mine railway. Closed since 1998.
3. The line remains in place but timber sleepers are degraded.
4. During the mine's life ore trains of up to ~66 wagons traversed this line.
5. Ore trains were usually hauled by two locos of up to ~3010 hp (~2245 kW). [Current CBH grain trains are hauled on NG by locos of up to 3300 HP.

The rebuild of this line should be to track specifications, 50 kg/m, 21t axle load, concrete sleepers and operating under Electronic Train Order Working (ETOW).

It should be noted that there is interest in this corridor becoming a multi use trail, however, the strategic value of this existing rail corridor cannot be overlooked, and should remain as a first priority. That is not to say that the corridor couldn't be shared with a proposed trail, employing fence separation, to ensure security and safety.

1.8 NEW ROUTE DETAIL

1.8.1 Topography of new route

Travelling eastward between Mundijong and Brookton this proposed line would traverse 3 zones;

a) Climbing the Darling Escarpment the existing 18 kms of line rises from an elevation of 50 metres above sea level to 300 metres. This section crosses the South West Highway near Mundijong.

b) For the next 50 kms, the 'Greenfields' line would pass initially through the rehabilitated forest and then Jarrah forest of the Darling Range, with likely variations of elevation between 260m and 360m. At an estimated 8 kms east of Jarrahdale it would cross Albany Highway.

1.8.2 The new corridor

The new corridor through the forest would initially pass through land previously mined for Bauxite. From this point until it reached approximately the 50 km point it would pass through old growth Jarrah forest. A corridor width of 40 - 50 Metres would also accommodate a service track alongside the rail formation, however, given the forest environment, a greater distance might well be required. That said, this corridor would however, also provide new access in the forest for fire fighting, emergency and management purposes.

1.8.3 Ruling grade and curve radii

The ruling grade, between Jarrahdale and Brookton, based on studies of terrain and elevations, would likely be better than 100 although dependent on engineering and elevation studies, more intrusive earthworks could yield a ruling grade of 200 both 'Up' and 'Down'. This would be determined by cost / benefit parameters adopted for the depth of cuttings and, gully in-fills, and the chosen minimum curve radii, perhaps generally set at a minimum of 600 metres.

1.8.4 Level crossings, Mundijong - Brookton

It is estimated that approximately 17 level crossings would require passive protection and 7 would require flashing lights protection. Flashing distance warning lights would be required at two of these, those being Albany and Brookton Highways. Bush tracks would require some passive protection signage. The bridge over the S.W. Highway would require reinstatement and upgrade.

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1.8.5 Passing loops

It is suggested that this line should have four passing loops of no less than 1000 metres, which, in concert with loops at Mundijong and Wellard, would facilitate current train lengths for the full distance from Brookton to Kwinana. The GSR loop at Brookton should also be lengthened to 1000 metres from a point north of the Great Southern Highway level crossing.

1.8.6 Triangular junction

A triangular junction with the GSR would facilitate train movements accessing or exiting the east-west link from either north or south direction without any time lost in shunting or run-around movements.

1.8.7 ETOW

Train movements to be under Electronic Train Order Working with control of mainline points to operate under CTC control.

1.9 SUMMARY OF CBH PRODUCTIVITY GAINS

1.9.1 A return trip saving of ~224 kms on every trip for:

1. All traffic between Brookton and Kwinana.
2. All traffic to and from reopened Narrogin branchlines.

1.9.2 A return trip saving of ~184 kms on every trip for:

Periodic traffic servicing Mt Kokeby silo.

1.9.3 An option of either a north or south route of near equal length for:

Grain traffic from York and a reopened Tier 3 line to Quairading.

1.10 ADDITIONAL DIVIDENDS

1.10.1 Intermodal services

A potential intermodal freight service between Perth / Kwinana and Albany, clearly becomes more efficient utilizing the more direct route via Mundijong than via the Avon Valley. Facilitating this shorter link to the coast supports the government's stated commitment to developing efficient rail related intermodal operations in freight handling.

See Section 4

Although utilising the Mundijong - Jarrahdale link requires 'down' trains to ascend a ruling grade of 60, this presents no problem for empty grain trains of 66 wagons. Container traffic with a locomotive of 2500 bhp, and trains of at least 20 FEU containers are envisaged to be limited only (with varying internal cargo) by gross load, not the number of wagons. Subsequent traffic growth is readily addressed with additional wagons and double heading of locos.

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1.10.2 A new Transwa service out of Perth

Though the new route via Mundijong is proposed as a vital new freight artery, it also reduces the distance between Perth and Albany by approximately 61 kms. This reality and the efficiency dividends delivered to freight haulage by upgrades proposed for the GSR mainline also taken together, justify a fresh examination of the prospect of a restored passenger service between the two points. Add in the possibility of employing Tilt Train technology and a strong case can be mounted for such an initiative. The track condition and previous extended distance via Toodyay were two of the key reasons the passenger service ceased in 1978.

See Section 5

1.10.3 Resilience

The establishment of a new east west corridor, (Kwinana - the GSR) also brings resilience into operations on the four narrow gauge branch lines feeding into Avon Yard from the north, i.e. the McLevie, Kalannie, Beacon and Mukinbudin branches. The same security is even offered to the Miling branch West Toodyay and Avon Yard. In the event of any adverse event such as derailment, collision, bushfire or scheduled line closures (all of which have previously occurred), disrupting all traffic between Avon Yard and Kwinana, grain traffic from these branches could be re-routed further south to Brookton Junction to reach the coast. Such a diversion of about an additional 96 kms would ensure all narrow gauge traffic could still flow. Similarly for all GSR traffic normally routed between Mundijong and Brookton, in the event of unexpected line closure, access to the coast by the old route would still remain as a backup option.

1.10.4 Westport

This link directly aligns with the government's commitment to establish the new intermodal Westport Freight Hub at Kwinana as the centre of a radiating transport web.

1.11 ROUTE IMPLICATIONS

The Mundijong - Jarrahdale railway is an established corridor, but the building of its extension through to the GSR would be considered as a 'Greenfield' project requiring a new corridor through state forest and across agricultural land. Heritage, environment, and native title statutes would have to be satisfied.

The new corridor into the forest would require approximately 100 hectares of clearing, a mere fraction by comparison with the more than 30,000 already surrendered to bauxite mining. Timber salvaged would have premium value. A bonus feature of the corridor would be the creation of another access feature for DFES and their strategies in fire fighting and other emergency access operations between Jarrahdale and Glen Eagle on the Albany Highway, and between that point and Brookton Highway.

See Appendix 1 - Distances Reference Map

1.12 DIGITAL LINKS

The new corridor would also provide a potential additional route for a National Broadband Network fibre optic link from the coastal region through to the Great Southern, catering for anticipated development in the southern region.

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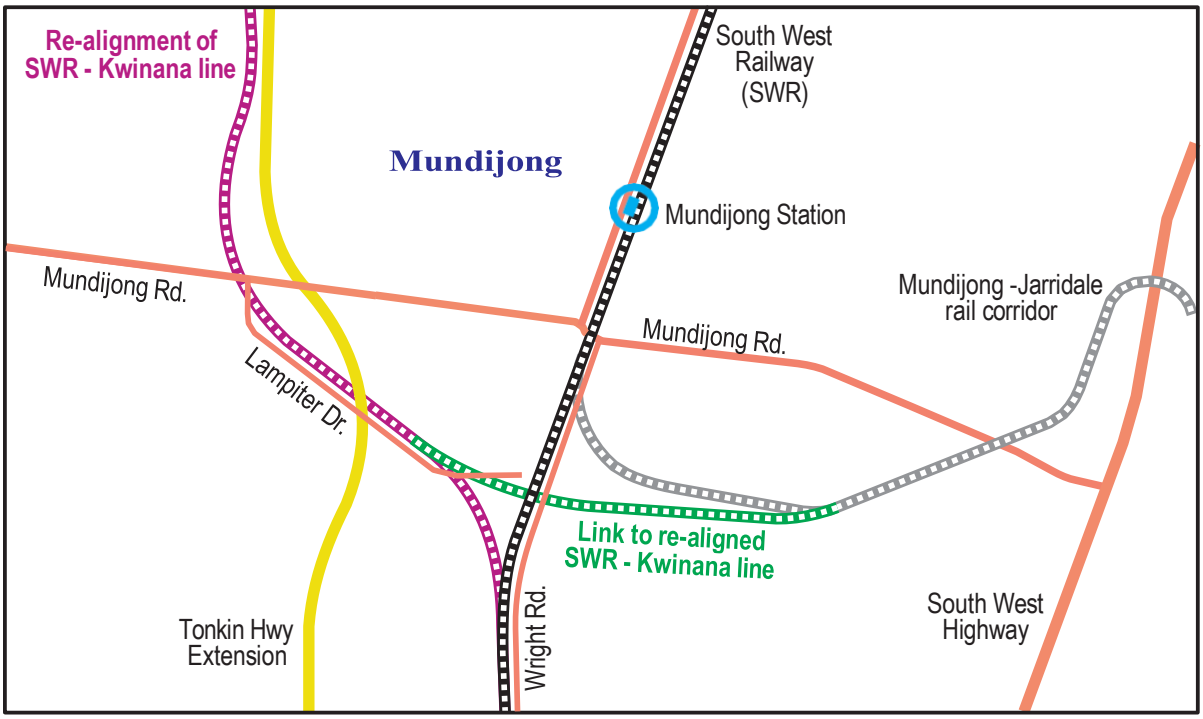
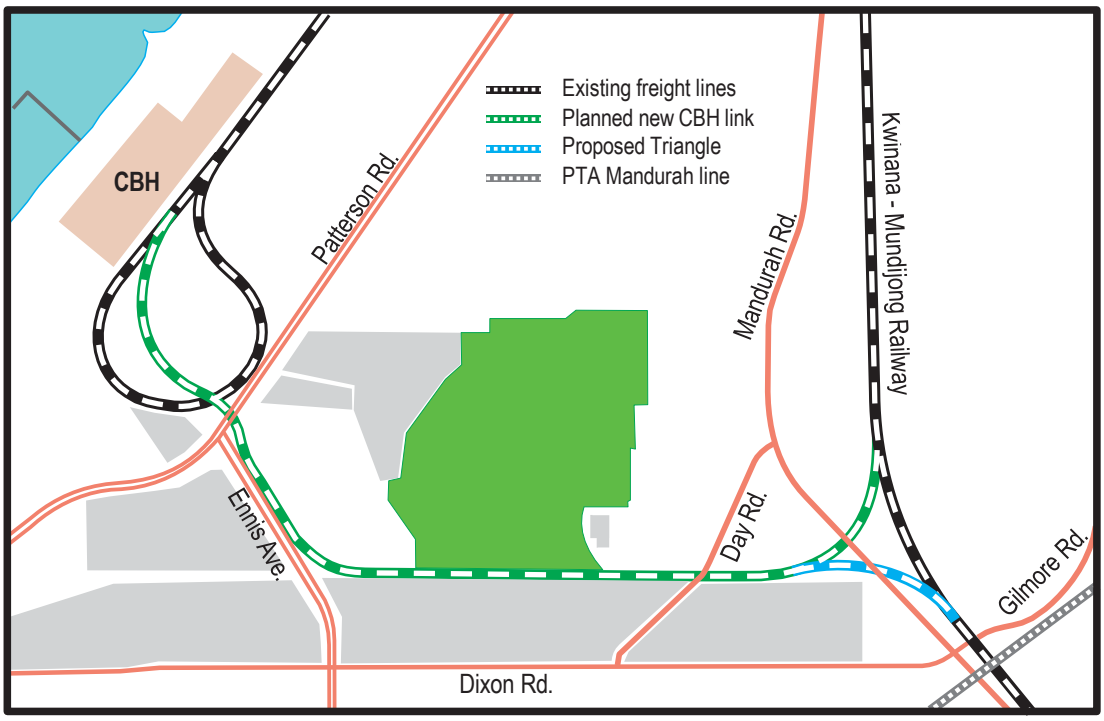
1.13 PROPOSED MUNDIJONG FREIGHT RAIL RE-ALIGNMENT (MFRR)

The recommissioned Mundijong -Jarrahdale line should be merged with the proposed MFRR at a point beside Lampiter Drive. In establishing this new link, both Wright Rd. and the South West Railway line would be elevated over the freight line. The existing connection to the S.W.R just south of the Mundijong Rd. level crossing should also be retained.



1.14 PROPOSED NEW LINK TO CBH TERMINAL

In preparing this submission, it is acknowledged that a rail corridor for a rail line linking the Mundijong to Kwinana railway and the CBH terminal is foreshadowed. To enable new grain deliveries via the proposed new shorter route to CBH utilising the Mundijong line, it is proposed that the junction should feature a triangle allowing entry either from north or south.



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Section 2. INFRASTRUCTURE UPGRADES

2 TARGETED UPGRADES TO THE G.S.R. MAINLINE

For the G.S.R. to function as an attractive economic transport option and at its full efficient potential, specific elements have to be addressed. They arise from one or more of the following three fundamental issues; Under investment, minimalist maintenance or simply a legacy of last century. The result in each case has resulted in speed restrictions and other delays. Addressing them will yield dividends far into the future.

***It should be noted* that in weighing up cost implications, *No changes* are being proposed to the route, the gauge, the curves radii, or ruling grades in this submission.**
[Some increase in cant and cant transitions on some curves may be considered to better facilitate proposed passenger railcar traffic speeds.]
However at less expense, targeted improvements can make a significant difference to the efficiency and productivity of the G.S.R. main line.
In particular, the imposed train speed limits that are in place over level crossings and through towns are unacceptable.
These current impediments to optimal transit times are not consistent with the contemporary standards required for this important rail artery.

2.1 TRACK UPGRADES

2.1.1 Sleepers, Narrogin - Wagin

The 50 km track section between Narrogin and Wagin has been allowed to steadily deteriorate further from the point where a 30 km/hr speed restriction was imposed before the network even passed into private hands.
1 in 4 (Steel/Timber) sleeper specification remains in place. The resultant 1 hour 40 minute transit time between stations is a huge structural impediment facing any prospective new customer. Inserting steel sleepers, if not concrete, to upgrade to the 1:2 standard of the rest of the route, is imperative and minimalist, given that it is highly likely numbers of existing timber sleepers may now have deteriorated beyond acceptable standard.

See Appendix 2 - G.S.R. Curves - 400m radii or less

2.1.2 Speed limiting curves

Whilst increasing the radii of any curves on the GSR is not proposed in this submission, it is suggested that an upgrade to the more severe curves is nevertheless possible as part of this overall project. Between Brookton and Albany it is estimated, there are approximately 20 kms (in total distance), of curves that are 400 metres in radius or less, supported by 1: 2 timber / steel sleepers. It is in the context of these curves that the various permanent speed restrictions that apply on the GSR can be found. Each extends transit time and adds to fuel consumption through the process of restoring the train to line speed once rounding the curve is completed. These should be upgraded with concrete sleepers and 50 kg/m rail. Upgrading these curves from an axle load rating of 19t to 21t would facilitate raising the permanent speed restriction in some cases, and return others to mainline line speed in others. In each case the angle of cant would warrant review and possible increase.

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2.1.3 Active sidings - Brookton - Albany (i.e. C.B.H.)

The turnout points which give access to active C.B.H. sidings should be upgraded and controlled by Centralised Train Control (C.T.C.) with possible illuminated indication, allowing through trains on the mainline unimpeded progress at line speed or close to.

2.1.4 Active passing loops - Brookton to Albany

The turnout points for passing loops that are or will be in active use should be upgraded to being motor powered, and controlled by C.T.C. with possible illuminated indication, allowing through trains on the mainline unimpeded progress at line speed or close to.

2.1.5 Inactive sidings or loops

The turnout points at sidings or loops on the mainline that are inactive should be permanently locked until such time that they are to be reactivated, and at that point they should be upgraded.

2.1.6 Active Junctions

Wagin Triangle Junction and Redmond Spur Junction points should both be upgraded to motor powered and C.T.C. controlled with illuminated indication, allowing through trains on the mainline unimpeded progress at line speed or close to.

2.2 RESTORATION OF TURNOUT POINTS

With the re-establishment of passenger services to Albany, eight heritage stations would again host departures and arrivals when required to stop. Currently trains still pass beside the station platforms at most of them, although a height difference between the pavement and the standard floor height of modern railcar design will require addressing. Platform pavement and sills will require varying amounts of attention.
Two stations require restorative track work to bring trains alongside platforms.

2.2.1 Narrogin Station

To remain on the Albany 'Main', on approach to Narrogin station from the north, trains are currently switched through Self Restoring Points, (by default), to the adjacent road. This manoeuver takes them away from the platform, which is the track that services the Yilliminning branch line. To arrive at and depart directly from the platform, two sets of points need to be restored south of the station, enabling departing southbound trains to turn out and back onto the 'Main'. The points at either end of the platform should then be C.T.C. controlled and signal lights indicated. The S.R.P. signal becomes redundant.

2.2.2 Wagin Station

As a once 'island' platform station, Wagin has two platforms. Only one is now served by a line on the west side, the Albany main. As this is the ideal journey mid-point where two passenger trains would logically cross, (as happens at Merredin on the E.G.R), the line stripped out from the eastern platform needs to be restored. This necessitates installing two sets of points, north and south of the platform to create the second platform loop. These points would need to be C.T.C. controlled and signal lights protected. This station requires the most platform renovation work of any on the line, although restoration to original length is not required. It is proposed this be the crossing station for passenger services.

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2.2.3 Albany Station

Albany station platform is currently an active through road. For arrivals and departures of Albany passenger trains, only 30 minutes of platform standing time would be required twice a day. At all other times the platform road would be available for existing freight traffic, currently grain and woodchip trains. It is preferable that stabling for railcars be provided as near to the station as possible to minimise the time occupying the section. It is suggested that with the installation of points beside the platform, approximately 121 metres from the western end, a line could return to follow the curve of the platform (as it once did), restoring connection to the adjacent siding road. This secure location, beside the Transwa coach parking point, would be ideally suited as the stow road for servicing and pre-trip provisioning. It could also be easily made secure against vandalism. The points would be C.T.C. controlled and signal indicated. The through (main) line would remain unaffected.

2.2.4 New Mirrambeena Intermodal Terminal Spur

Branching off the GSR at Redmond this site has been identified as the location of a future intermodal terminal for Albany. This will necessitate the installation of CTC controlled points to accommodate trains arriving in the down direction on the GSR. This will create a triangular junction.

2.3 PASSING LOOPS.

Being a legacy railway, the GSR is hamstrung by its origins which trace back to the earliest days of Western Australia. Consequently there are many features which have remained unaltered since it was first built. Curve radii, and undulating gradients are two such legacies, not easily addressed. However, the inadequate provision of passing loops, and the length of existing ones, is. Rectifying this issue will transform the efficiency of operations on this line.

As a main line artery and, a single track, the GSR did once have strategically spaced crossing loops. But their design reflected the realities of the steam train era and then typical train lengths. Today, many of those loops have been removed and the remainder are generally too short for efficient operation of current longer freight trains and the projected greater and diversified usage envisaged. Compounding the problem is the fact that many, being sited at a station remain limited to the space between two road level crossings and cannot be extended in that location.

2.3.1 An overview

This summary highlights specific serious limitations afflicting the GSR mainline, and the limitations on CBH efficiency. However equally concerning is how these deficiencies locking out the possibility of efficient and economical operations by new commercial enterprises. To highlight one issue, that of passing loops; The South West Railway, a single track between Mundijong and Bunbury, and a distance of **136** kms has, on average, a passing loop every **17 kms**. By contrast the GSR, also a single line between Brookton and Albany, a distance of **350** kms has 8 loops at an average of **44 kms** apart. However not one of them is close to being long enough to accommodate permitted train lengths of 67 wagons, which exceed 1000 metres! The best of the 8 is Woodanilling at 556 metres! Two loops of adequate length exist at Broomehill and Cranbrook, however they are CBH grain loading lines and are not part of the leased network and therefore unavailable for use by any other trains.

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This is clearly inadequate. If government is waiting for new enterprises to propose new operations without major upgrades, the wait will be in vain. The network has to offer a standard that will yield, rapid operations, efficiency and reliability, the features in which railways can excel.
Trains of up 1 km in length need to be able to shelter in loops to allow an on time passenger service (which would have priority) to pass without hindrance, and likewise a dependable intermodal service.
As the only current operators on the line, C.B.H. would also benefit from the improved flexibility and efficiency that investment in this issue would bring. Complementing activity out on the track, the network's Train Controllers would keenly welcome the flexibility and options that would open up in train path scheduling. Once built, upgrades to the provision of loops would yield dividends far into the future. However, as of the present, current trains parked for any significant lengths of time, waiting for authority to enter a long section, continue to lose their efficiency and have their profitability eroded.

[It is noted that the branchline junctions at Narrogin and Wagin provide Train Controllers with some of the flexibility of a loop, being able to hold a 'down' train on the branch, and allow an 'up' or 'down' traffic to pass through, on the main, particularly if running on 'Path' time, but this should not be necessary.]

2.3.2 Priority loop upgrades

2.3.2.1 Brookton

As noted in Section 1, the main loop in Brookton sits astride Brookton Highway in the heart of the town. For this loop to be practically functional, it requires lengthening to a point 1000 metres, north of the level crossing

2.3.2.2 Popanyinning

At this approximate mid-point between Brookton and Narrogin, the loop, removed during the period of the lease should be reinstated. It can be extended from its original length of 541 metres to 1,000 metres north, without obstructing any level crossings.

2.3.2.3 Wagin

Given the complexities of the configuration of the lines within Station Limits of Wagin it is proposed in this submission that a new loop of 1000 Metres be established immediately south of the Wagin Junction triangle, where it can serve both the GSR Main and the Lake Grace Branch traffic.

2.3.2.4 Woodanilling

With the limitations at Katanning, the Woodanilling CBH loop should be lengthened to 1000 metres at the northern end.

2.3.2.5 Tambellup

The recently lengthened CBH siding loops at both Broomehill and Cranbrook are now efficient in removing any line obstruction during grain loading operations and some train crossing pressures. However there is still a need to establish a 1000 Metre loop to the north of North Terrace Tambellup.

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2.3.2.6 Narrikup

By closing Hannan Way level crossing (North) the Narrikup loop can be extended to 1000 metres. Hannan Way crossing (South) would still adequately cater for local cross rail traffic.

See Appendix 3 - G.S.R. Loops - Specifications

2.4 LEVEL CROSSINGS

The G.S.R. is a Tier 1 main line, and as such, should facilitate the transit of its customers at line speed at all times, or as near to, as possible.

The permanent speed limit speed boards (samples illustrated below), are just a sample of the many that bedevil the route. Past management clearly had no interest in investing in upgrades that help customers operate at peak efficiency.

As illustrated, various level crossings within G.S.R. towns have speed restrictions down to as low as 10 kph! Whether this is due to their location within a town, the possibility of shunting activities, or the proximity or standard of points, upgrades are nevertheless required to lift these speeds. As a principle, and for operational efficiency, level crossings should not impede “through” trains. **Ultimately, this entire GSR mainline should come under Centralised Train Control.**

2.4.1 Specific crossing contexts

2.4.1.1 Crossings flashing light protected

In expectation that services on the line may now include railcars travelling at line speed, consideration should be given to the addition of boom barriers in some locations already equipped with flashing lights.

2.4.1.2 Crossings passive signage protected

In expectation that services on the line may now include railcars travelling at line speed, consideration should be given at a few selected crossings, currently passively protected, to the possible need for an upgrade to flashing lights. The remainder to have passive signage supplemented with new warnings of a changed train speed environment as occurred on the SWR with the introduction of a faster Australind service.

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2.4.1.3 Great Southern Highway level crossings on the G.S.R.

Given highway speed limits, at these crossings, booms and flashing distant warning lights should be added.

Great Southern Highway - Spencer's Brook, Edward's Crossing, Spring Hill, Popanyinning

South Coast Highway - Marbellup

2.4.1.4 Pedestrian crossings

A review of pedestrian crossing usage (e.g. Mt. Barker) overall will be required to determine whether a maze or bells may in certain instances be advisable.

2.4.2 Flashing light activation

The electronic control of level crossing flashing lights will require upgrading. Slow moving grain trains, non-stopping freight trains passing through a town and the faster transiting speed of railcars all require appropriate circuitry and activation software. A review of the use of "Predictors" will be needed and more recent digital technologies inevitably examined. Additionally, consideration must be given to a proposed scheduled passenger stop for railcars crossing at Wagin, and the implications for 'starting' activation for the crossings north and south of the station, given the anticipated longer than average pick-up and set down time.

2.5 CONVERSION TO DUAL GAUGE Vs NEW CORRIDOR

In the 2020 Infrastructure Project List of Appendix 2, of the 'Revitalising Agricultural Region Freight Strategy' report, the proposal to convert the **105** km. Northam - Brookton line from narrow to dual gauge was canvassed. It was listed as Project Number 5.1 and given a 'High Priority' rating. Whilst the benefits of standard gauge for grain haulage from York and Brookton are demonstrable, nevertheless that is the limit of the benefit, confined to the northern sector of the GSR. There are a number of reasons why this proposal is clearly short-sighted.

2.5.1 Short on Vision

It fails to engage with either the pressing Tier 3 issues east of York an south of Brookton, any vision for new and different future traffic beyond CBH grain.

2.5.2 Subsequent extension

It is unrealistic to imagine this penetration of SG into the Great southern would ideally lead to the conversion of the GSR mainline to SG as this would require the entire Great Southern network to be re-gauged. NG can still deliver efficiency if there is a commitment to high infrastructure standards.

2.5.3 Extended route distance

Without the Brookton - Mundijong link, the proposal locks in the requirement for all Great Southern traffic connecting with Perth and its terminals to continue traversing the extended distance via Toodyay, and the Avon valley interstate artery with its predicted growth in traffic density.

2.5.4 Imbalance of exit corridors

It must be noted that the Northern Wheatbelt NG network enjoys the efficiencies of **5** exit corridors to port: - Via Mullewa, Dongara, Muchea, West Toodyay and E. Northam. The Southern Wheatbelt network currently has only **2**, via Northam and Wagin.

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Section 3. TIER 3 LINES

In the ***"Revitalising Agricultural Region Freight Strategy – Responding to Change'* report** (released by the Western Australian Government in 2020), in which it reviewed the costs of re-opening the Tier 3 lines, C.B.H. considered those costs were not economically viable. It was concluded that investment in State and locals roads would have to compensate for increased road traffic in the areas formerly served by Tier 3 lines.

This submission accepts that, at the time, it was appropriate that the economic viability should be called into question, however the decision to close the Tier 3 lines has had enormous adverse consequences for the road and highways network in the regions of those lines. The simple conclusion that compensatory investment in state and local roads would be required, was wholly inadequate, naive and an abrogation by relevant parties of broader responsibilty for all that has followed.

The ramifications of closure are several:

1. There has been accelerated pavement deterioration, and reduced asset life impacting maintenance and renewal costs. Local government liability, has been exacerbated by a significant gap between the amount of funding required for road maintenance, renewal and upgrade and funding availability. The foreshadowed compensation either has never eventuated or the extent of need seriously underestimated.
2. The ratchetting up of tolerated Accredited Mass Management Scheme Levels for Heavy Vehicle access arrangements has compounded all the maintenance issues.
3. Local governments across the wheatbelt have experienced frustration with the limited compliance with the Main Roads Heavy Vehicle access permits and operating conditions despite more recent increase in heavy vehicle compliance issues.
4. The line closures have adversely impacted a great number of farmers who now find they are having to accept a financial penalty in their deliveries to CBH receival sites and an increase in double and even triple handling of grain which has emerged clearly undermines hoped for economies.
5. Regional communities and the wider motoring public have had to contend with not just increased road risk but also the realities and impact of actual road accidents. This risk environment is heightened by the increased number of trucks restricted to 100 kph (or even 90 which generate) a frustration factor for other road users legally engaged in a journey at 110kph.

To also state, on page 12 of the RARFS report that,

***"The transition of uneconomic Tier 3 rail lines into care and maintenance has increased freight volumes on some local roads; however, most of this freight is still being transferred onto rail at other sites"*,** misrepresents the fuller picture.

A disputable figure of 60% is sometimes cited as representing the long term average percentage of grain that is delivered to W.A. ports by rail. This of course is only focussed on the end point of movement (i.e. the ports) and masks the significant increase in the additional logistics associated with road transport in the regions of the closed Tier 3 lines before the grain is ultimately loaded onto rail further afield. This increased distance carried by road, erodes efficiency and inevitably comes at a cost, ultimately born by the growers.

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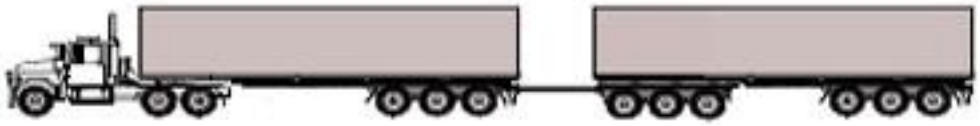
To illustrate the extent to which the transport framework currently operating across the state's grain growing region is unacceptable, several graphic depictions can prove instructive. With the closure of a number of the Tier 3 rail lines, a considerable volume of grain is now travelling regional and highway roads to receival silos from - silos, that, prior to the closures, were once served by rail. Commonly the trucks used for this double handling purpose are "A-Double" Road Trains.

An 'A-Double' Road Train

of Tare 28-35t, LOAD 60t, and a GVM on the road of 90t



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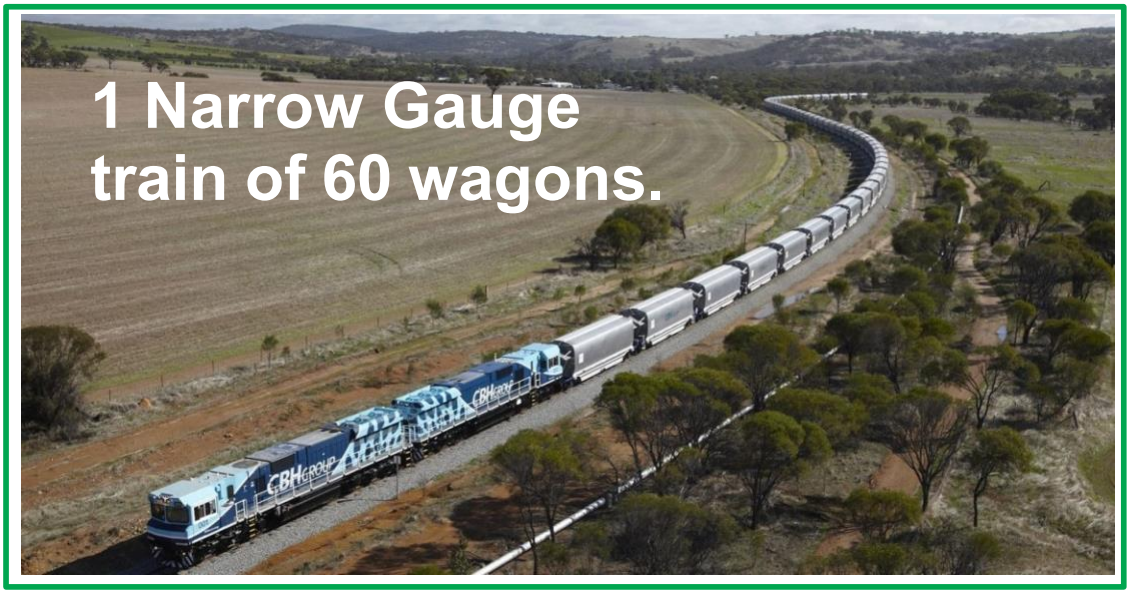
1x Narrow Gauge wagon carrying 60t.

60 'A-Double' Road trains

equals



Likewise the **entire load** of a typical **"AB Triple" Road Train**, (e.g.109t GVM on the road)

can be carried in **ONE** wagon on '24 tal' standard gauge track, i.e. 77 tons of grain

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3.1 HYPOTHETICAL EFFICIENCIES AND SAVINGS TO BE GAINED

EXAMPLE 1 — Current practice

Deliveries by farmers to the **Corrigin** Silo, (Tier 3 Line closed) - Reloaded for delivery by Road Train to Brookton for reloading on trains that proceed to Kwinana via the Avon valley.

Load	Mode	Distance (1-way)	Diesel Litres	Co2 Emissions	Driver/Crew hours (rtn)
3600 tonnes	Corrigin - Brookton - Avon - Kwinana				
	60x 'A - Double' Road Trains	89	5,349	14 tonnes	300
	+ 1x 60 Wagon train	268	5,787	15 tonnes	24
	TOTALS		11,136	29 tonnes	324

As proposed in "Back on Track")

Deliveries to the Corrigin Silo for travel by train 503 kms direct to Kwinana via Brookton / Mundijong.

Load	Mode	Distance (1-way)	Diesel Litres	Co2 Emissions	Driver/Crew hours (rtn)
3600 tonnes	Corrigin - Brookton - Mundijong- Kwinana				
	~~60x 'A - Double' Road Trains~~				
	1x 60 Wagon train	333	7,190	19 tonnes	28
	TOTALS		7,190	19 tonnes	28

EXAMPLE 2 — Current practice

Deliveries by farmers to a **Kondinin** Silo, (Tier 3 Line closed) - Reloaded for delivery by Road Train to Brookton for reloading on trains that proceed to Kwinana via the Avon Valley..

Load	Mode	Distance (1-way)	Diesel Litres	Co2 Emissions	Driver/Crew hours (rtn)
3600 tonnes	Kondinin - Brookton - Avon - Kwinana				
	60x 'A - Double' Road Trains	138	8,294	22 tonnes	315
	+ 1x 60 Wagon train	268	5,787	15 tonnes	24
	TOTALS		14,081	37 tonnes	339

As proposed in "Back on Track"

Deliveries to the Kondinin Silo for travel by train 503 kms. - To Kwinana via Brookton / Mundijong.

Load	Mode	Distance (1-way)	Diesel Litres	Co2 Emissions	Driver/Crew hours (rtn)
3600 tonnes	Kondinin - Brookton - Mundijong- Kwinana				
	~~60x 'A - Double' Road Trains~~				
	1x 60 Wagon train	366	7,903	21 tonnes	28
	TOTALS		7,903	21 tonnes	28

* Diesel consumption and CO^2 emissions are calculated with the aid of the "Aurizon" website calculator and only apply to the payload delivery journey. Return journey figures would be proportionately lower.
* Although all figures are estimates only, even allowing a 10% margin of error, they are compelling.
* Distances east of the Great Southern Highway are generally calculated mindful of classification of relevant roads by Mainroads W.A. as 'N6 Tandem Drive 6'.
* Rail routes are based on Narrow Gauge Tier 3 lines rebuilt to 19t axle loads on concrete sleepers.
* Calculations of Driver/Crew payroll hours are based on a completed round trip.
* Crewing hours are estimated on the basis of 2 rostered crew per train and one driver per truck and are indicative of payroll implications.
* Train hours are based on efficient scheduling conditions.

See Appendix 4 - Further silo examples

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The impact on regional roads has to be addressed by the local councils, and this, in turn, impacts the ratepayers, those very same growers. An additional concern relates to the elevated road hazard, social and environmental costs, impacting the Great Southern communities.
An announced capital cost estimation of a recommissioning study of the lines announced by the minister in May 2023 is welcomed, however these other lightly referenced key elements in the background to the closures must be revisited and factored into the costs of NOT reopening.

All these elements point to the need for a big picture response that embraces all these facets, not any single Tier 3 line in isolation.

This bigger picture submission however, positively addresses a number of other related cost elements for CBH in their end to end delivery to port. As already outlined in Sections 1 and 2, the proposals that are described **are all positives for CBH** and deliver efficiency and lowered costs for their grain handling operations in the Great Southern.
i.e.

- A much reduced distance for all deliveries to Kwinana via Mundijong.
- Fewer delays through the provision of more and longer loops.
- Adoption of C.T.C. controlled points and faster transits through towns.
- A raising or removal of speed restrictions currently in place on selected curves.

Included in this advocacy for specific sections of Tier 3 lines being re-instated is the recommendation that this rebuild should be to a standard of track higher than that which was previously in place. This too would facilitate faster transits and increased load ceilings. Section 'Running Times' that were laid down before lease signing, were embarrassing. Restoration should establish faster line speeds that will achieve greater productivity and cost reduction. The greater the time taken in delivery, the greater the rostered train times required for train crews and costs penalty.

It is acknowledged that the Ruling Grades that apply in some sections of track embraced in this section of the submission must be factored in as imposing some ceilings to train loads, particularly in the 'down' direction departing Narrogin.

3.2 A STARK PICTURE

The map below, overlayed with highlighted locations, reveals the relevant CBH silos which were open to receive grain during the bumper 2025/6 season. The coloured circles are centred on silos open during that season and which out-loaded by rail to port. They represent a radius of an arbitrary 20 kilometres, and are suggestive of a delivery round trip of 40 kilometres trucks had to make carting grain, at a cost to the farmer. What is starkly illustrated are the much greater distances to be found outside those radii, where farmers didn't have the option of delivering to a nearby railhead. If there is a silo open that is closer, the grain is further on-shipped by road incurring double and sometimes triple handling, inevitably adding to expense.

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The dotted lines represent the closed lines.
The red circles highlight silos no longer serviced by rail, i.e, a loss of the support farmers once enjoyed from the government in the original building of these Tier 3 lines.

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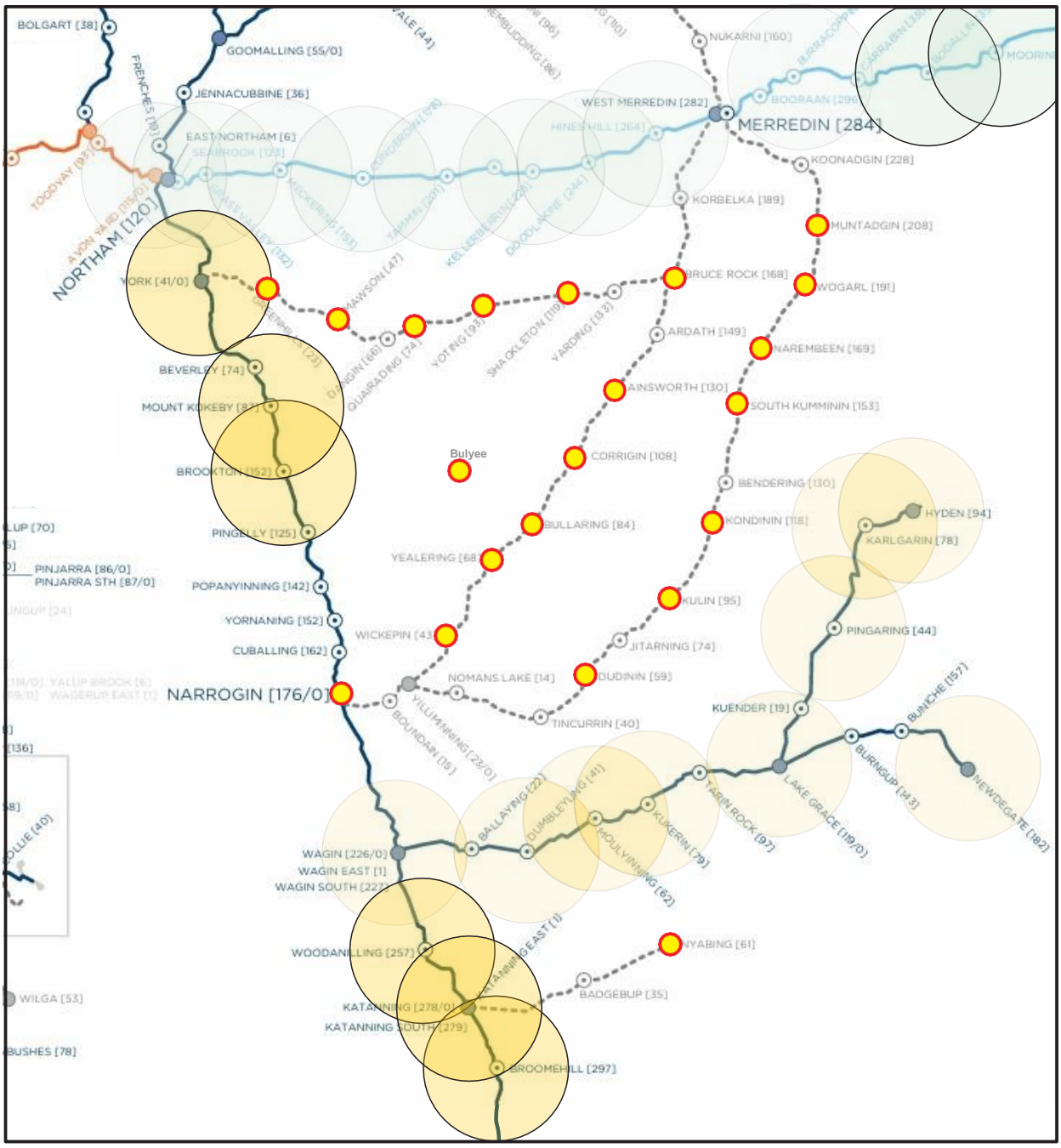
20 km radius Receival sites currently outloading on Standard gauge

20 km radius Receival sites currently outloading on Narrow gauge

Signifies an active **'road-load-out'** silo once served by rail.



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The following targeted proposals are based on the premise that, under reasonable access tariff conditions, and well designed and maintained track, rail has a substantial cost advantage over road for transporting grain to port, delivering transport savings for farmers, and greater operational efficiencies in bulk transport for CBH.

3.3 REINSTATEMENT OF NARROW GAUGE LINES.

To establish perspective, some comparisons need to be made between the two closed branchlines that feed into Narrogin via Yilliminning en-route to Kwinana, and the two operating and productive lines that feed into Wagin en-route to Albany. Before closure of the Narrogin lines, trains delivering to Kwinana were obliged to travel **339 kms** from Narrogin via the Avon Valley. The corresponding operation to Albany requires trains to travel **236 kms** from Wagin. This disparity of 206 kms per return trip clearly eroded profitability. Added to that, with the standard of line deterioration that had been allowed to develop, it is difficult to dispute the argument for closure. However, with the establishment of the proposed southern rail artery via Mundijong, compelling new comparisons emerge, with Wagin at **236 kms** but Narrogin at **225 kms**. In the debate over viability this requires a re-think. Moreover, when comparing distances to the two extremities that this submission proposes, i.e. **Corrigin** and **Kondinin**, further favourable implications stand out. They are, in turn, substantially shorter branch line journeys than Newdegate and Hyden.
A third factor to be considered is the proposal that these restorations should be to the new standard of **19t axle load**, equivalent to the standard of the Wagin branch. This is an upgrade from the previous 16t axle load.
Though a significant capital outlay, this is an investment by government in the long term productivity and economic underpinning of the state's economy, as in W.A's early development days, an outlay, amortised over so many years.
Additionally, as a result of 'Buyback', healthy revenue will be returning to the government. This will further increase with more grain back on rail.

Within the list of projects slated under the Agricultural Supply Chain Improvements programme announced in 2022, was the reported commissioning of a $72 million study of the Narrogin - Wickepin and Narrogin - Kulin branches. As of this date the results of that study have not been released, and are not likely to factor in the benefits, wider perspectives and ramifications of this submission.

3.3.1 Line specifics: Narrogin - Corrigin (108 kms)

By re-instating this line to Corrigin, three other currently active silos, i.e. Wickepin, Yealering and Bullaring could once again load-out to rail.

3.3.2 Line specifics: Narrogin - Kondinin (118 kms)

By re-instating this line, to Kondinin, both Dudinin and Kulin (currently active silos), could once again load-out directly onto rail. Jitarning should also be considered for re-opening and loading out onto rail.

3.3.3 Line specifics: York - Quairading (74 kms)

Although the new rail route from Brookton to Mundijong offers no distance advantage over the Avon valley route for traffic to and from York, in the interests of the relevant farmers and CBH, reopening of the line from York to Quairading (and even possibly Yoting) deserves re-consideration. Restoration to the new and higher standard of a 19 tonne/axle rating, would enable the running of higher capacity trains than pre-closure and in doing so change the economic viability equations.

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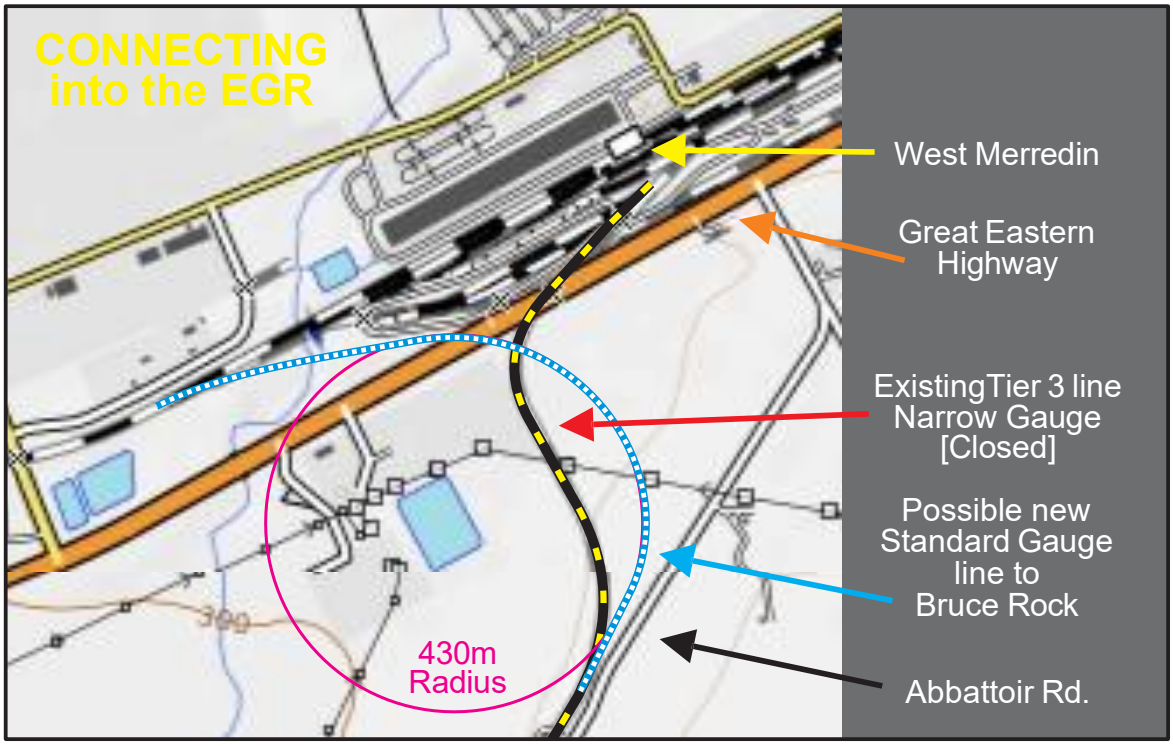
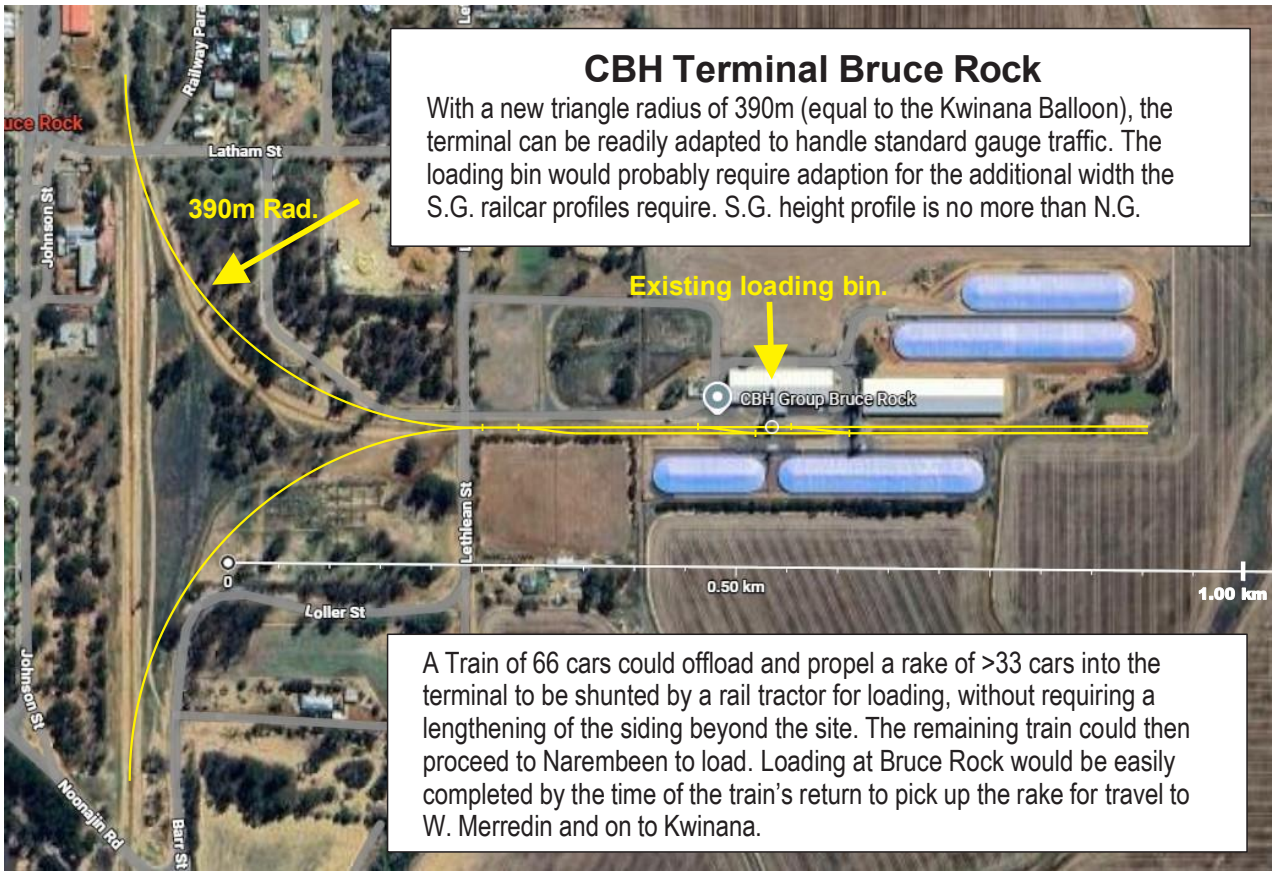
3.4 TIER 3 RE-INSTATEMENT IN STANDARD GAUGE (48 KMS)

The substantial throughput of grain from Bruce Rock should be returned to rail and better serve the farmers of that region. As with other long closed Tier 3 lines, given its deterioration, a complete rebuild will be required of the line to Merredin. In this instance, rebuilding in standard gauge is required and which will bring the extra dividend of SG load capacities. The long term economic dividend is indisputable. The only overly tight curve radius is at West Merredin and should be come redundant.





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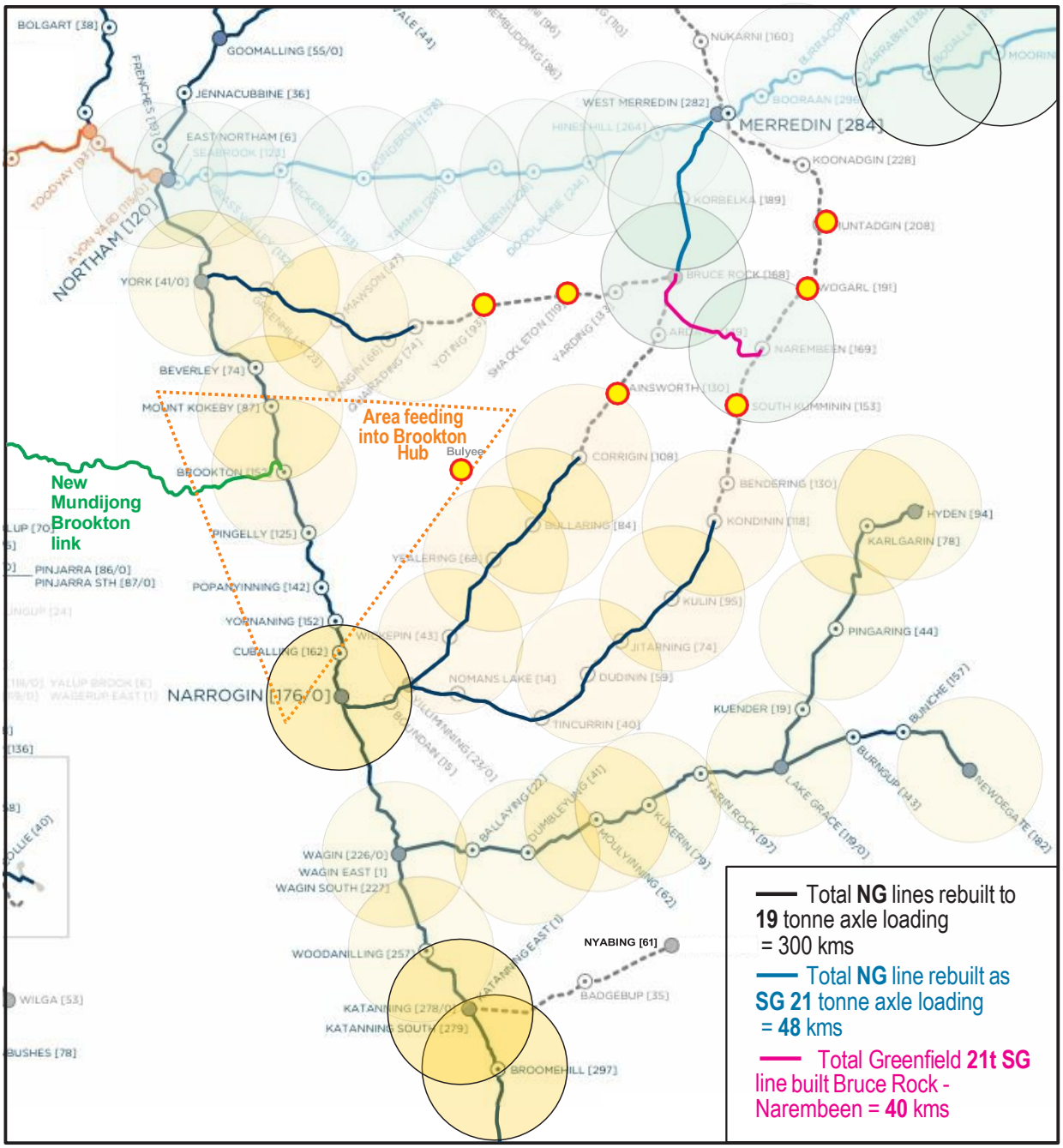
3.5 NEW 'GREENFIELD CONNECTION (≈ 48 KMS)

Narembeen is another receival point with substantial throughput of grain, currently subject to multiple handling. Rather than re-building the 89 kms of line to Merredin through Muntadgin, it is proposed that a new (estimated) 'Greenfield' 48 km line be built in standard gauge between Narembeen and Bruce Rock, depicted below in red. Combining a high standard of track, and a silo site at Narembeen with track upgraded to rapid and uninterrupted loading, with collections at Bruce Rock, the long term efficiency, productivity and economic gains are indisputable.

3.6 A NEW ECONOMIC MODEL

With the lines nominated in this submission once agin productive, the benefit to the grain farmers in this region is clearly evident. The Brookton hub continues to be vital.



See Appendix 5 - Building a new Economic model

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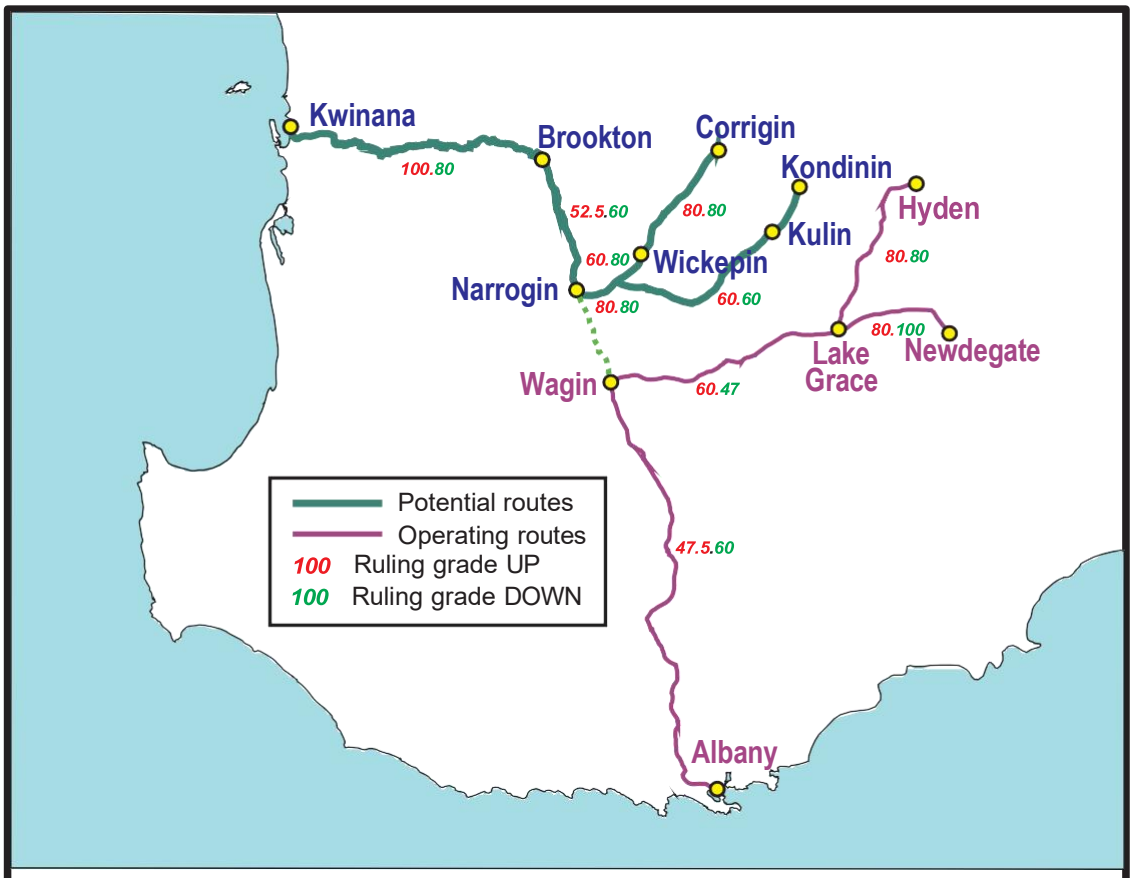
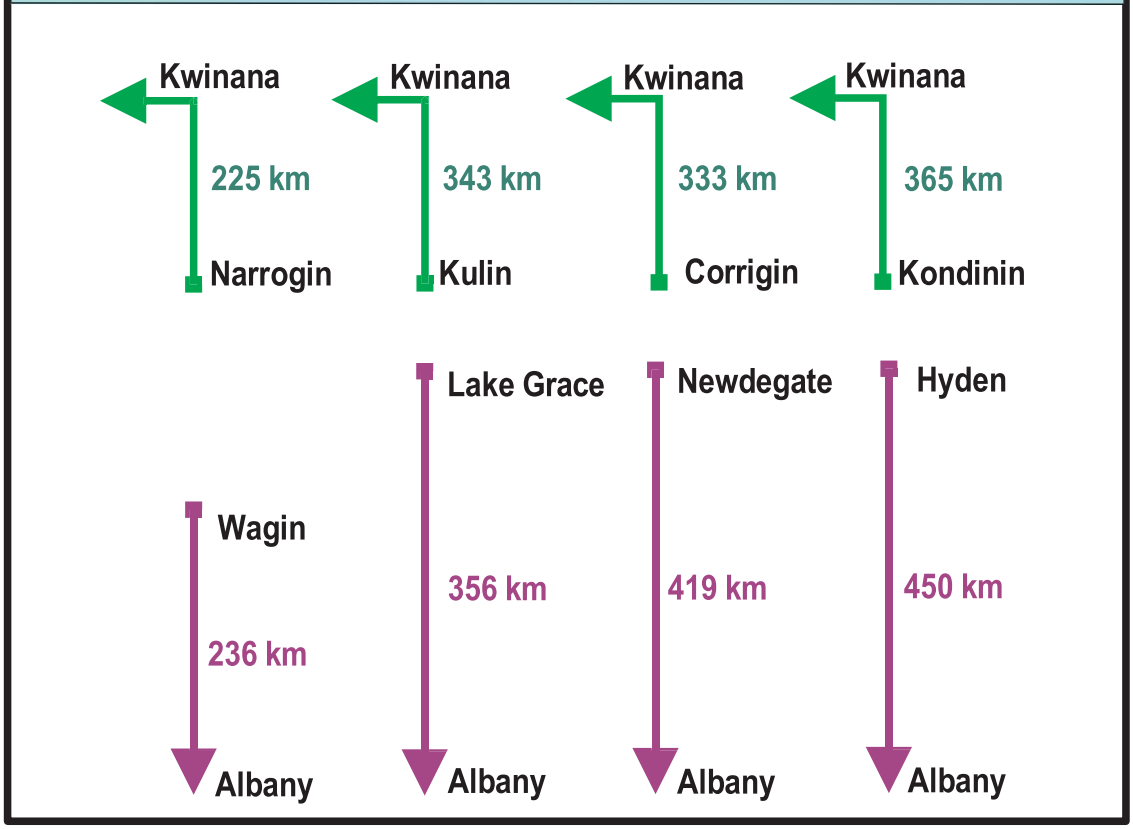
NOTE:

The existing Wagin branchline services are well established as viable operations. When key distances are compared, enhanced by the new Mundijong link, the case for re-establishing the Narrogin branchlines is clear and compelling.





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Section 4 INTERMODAL

With a new and shorter route to Kwinana, plus upgraded GSR track infrastructure, an intermodal initiative for the Perth to Albany route becomes a practical proposition and is now called for.

In 2018, the West Australian Department of Transport explicitly identified the fact that intermodal solutions, underpinned by rail, were the emerging need.

4.1 THE ECONOMIC IMPERATIVES

The Australasian Railways Association's 2020, Value of Rail Report found:

1. ***Rail freight produces 16 times less carbon pollution than road freight, per tonne kilometre travelled.***
2. ***Accident costs associated with road freight are 20 times higher than rail for every tonne kilometre of freight moved.***
3. ***Rail freight generates 92 per cent less PM10 emissions than road for each tonne kilometre of freight moved.***
4. ***Rail freight is most competitive as distances between origin and destination increase and as the volume of the goods increase.***

and again in June 2022, in the "Australian Railway Association Magazine" it states -

"Creation of new rail terminals will help achieve higher volumes of freight on rail. Rail does require higher freight volumes to be competitive with other modes and the establishment of new freight terminals can be a key to supporting the outcome. However, the upfront costs of rail terminals can be high and financial assistance in their early growth stages may be required to maximise the full benefits of these investments. It is important funding decisions for new rail infrastructure such as terminals, considers not just the capacity benefits the project can deliver but also the wider environment and social benefits greater use of rail can offer".

4.1.1 A Great Southern perspective

The intermodal concept is built on the efficiencies of rail for the long-distance component of freight transport, supported by road delivery for the so called "first and last mile" links.

The Fremantle – Forrestfield intermodal shuttle has been operating for some time but is only addressing an intra-urban problem which is seen as temporary, pending the eventual transfer of container ship handling to the new Kwinana port. It compares as only a fractional distance when discussing deliveries to Albany and towns on the GSR. The possibility of a standard gauge intermodal terminal at Northam and Brookton have been previously mentioned by the Transport Minister, but these initiatives primarily arise from the need to address urban congestion which is exacerbated by container transport transiting through the city and suburbs. This submission however, is framed with a broader regional perspective which draws attention back to two realities, one being how efficiencies in rail transport increase with distance, and how road damage and costs associated with road hazard reduction on highways and regional roads are seldom factored into evaluation of rail economics. The unprecedented 'aggregate mass' now permitted in large road train configurations is taking a heavy economic toll on road surfaces and formation.

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4.1.2 Regional employment

Regional intermodal services linked by rail, establish decentralised (regional) employment in terminal, and 'first and last mile' delivery operations.

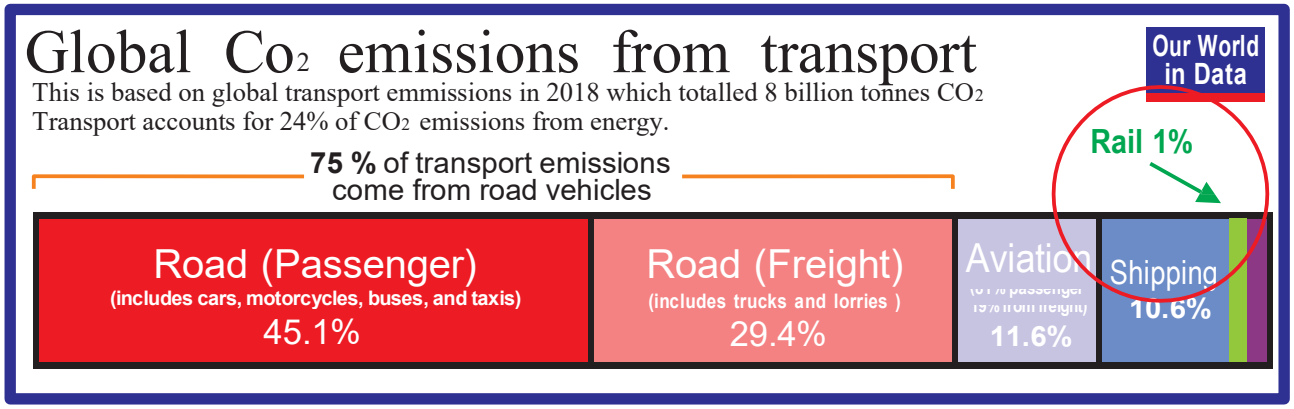
4.2 THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY IMPERATIVE

The graphic below, compiled in 2018, highlights both compelling science and the undeveloped potential for rail to contribute far more in addressing the issue of transport emissions.

The ***"Our World in Data"*** website provides the following analysis:

Figure 9. Global CO_2 emissions (Author Hanna Ritchie)

The two red divisions, and single green, indicating road and rail transport within the chart, highlight how the emissions of road transport, at 75%, must become a prime focus of both government and business, in the quest to meet reduction targets in the climate crisis.



Rail freight produces 16 times less carbon emissions per tonne-kilometre compared with road freight. In addition, with the constant updating of diesel locomotive fleets, the efficiency and emissions specifications are steadily improving and driving down emissions. Developments in hydrogen and battery powered alternatives are making progress and electric networks continue to extend.

In the latest **Infrastructure Priority List** report released by Infrastructure Australia (March **2026**) it states -

"Road freight is forecast to grow by 77% by 2050, while rail is expected to grow by just 5.7% over the same period.
This disparity is particularly significant given transport was the third-largest source of Australia's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in 2024 – 83% of which came from road transport and 23% directly from heavy vehicles."

See Appendix 6 - Savings in Intermodal

4.3 THE PRACTICAL IMPERATIVES

4.3.1 Current Traffic - Albany Highway.

Mainroads Western Australia's Traffic Map provides the following data at Network Performance Site #19389 on Albany Highway, north of the Frankland - Cranbrook Rd, the year's **average** (25/26) number of vehicles vehicles travelling south within the Austroads Vehicle classifications **#4** (3 axle trucks) up to and including **#11** (Double Road Trains), totalled **116**, - crudely equivilent to **300 TEU** container loads **per week**.

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Albany is W.A's fastest growing regional centre. Also, in advocating for a new passenger link, Perth to Albany, (see Section 5), this submission is premised on the belief that such a service will stimulate regional growth In intermediate towns. This will generate an additional freight delivery task. The bulk of all this freight originates in the Perth metropolitan area. It is clear that, taken together, the development of intermodal infrastructure and a supporting logistical framework must be prioritised to ameliorate an otherwise inevitable escalation in highway maintenance costs and incidence of road trauma.

4.3.2 Volume comparisons, Road vs. Rail

As a measure of comparison: A single train hauled by a typical 3000 hp locomotive could deliver >30 FEU containers or combinations up to >60 TEUs nightly to Albany. Not only is this markedly and greatly preferable to the road based alternatives, it also demonstrates capacity for capacity growth and with it, increasing economic efficiency.
It is not suggested that such capacity would be required initially, but with the establishment of a daily, overnight service, and proven efficiency and reliability, volume would undoubtedly increase as shippers and transport agencies adjusted their operational frameworks and included innovation in freight aggregation. There would be a substantial margin for business growth longer term with each train.
It is acknowledged however, that at launch, the service would likely require Government to put some incentivisation in place for a time, not unlike the "Fremantle Container Rail Subsidy" scheme.

4.3.3 Metropolitan roads

The movement of containers in and out of the urban areas by road is recognised as a major contributor to congestion, inefficiency and road hazard. It is also a major contributor to urban air pollution.

"One of our key election commitments was to move more freight onto rail to help ease road congestion and improve safety".

Ref: **Government of Western Australia Media Statement** – Thursday 29 October 2020. 'Bullsbrook Intermodal Container Terminal project reaches next stage.'

4.3.4 Road hazards involving ever larger trucks

The unthinkable does happen, and major accidents involving heavy road transport vehicles continue to claim lives. Infrastructure W.A's published State Infrastructure Strategy (July 2021) emphatically states:

"Accidents on regional roads contribute to a significant proportion of WA's road trauma".

"Deaths involving heavy vehicles, (rigid and articulated), in W.A, in the 12 months ending June 2025 numbered 33, up 37.5% on the previous 12 months".

(Figures published by the Australian Government Department of Infrastructure, Regional development, Communications, Sport and the Arts.
Quarterly bulletin: Apr - Jun 2025)

4.3.5 Driver Fatigue Management

The return distance between Perth - Albany can result in the emergence of a driver fatigue risk when driving time compounds with that taken in complex loading and unloading activity, and a desire to return home regardless.

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4.4 GREAT SOUTHERN LOGISTICS

Consultation feedback in the **Infrastructure Australia 2022 Regional Strengths and Infrastructure Gaps Report,** (Western Australia – Great Southern, - Consultation feedback: Page 15) states-

"Stakeholders suggested pressure on road freight infrastructure could be alleviated if the region's rail network was upgraded to allow for more freight by rail. Without improving rail, the region could be limited in its ability to export products effectively. Attendees were also concerned about limited connections to other major economic centres, seen as another consequence of limited rail services".

4.4.1 Terminals

An intermodal terminal located at Mirambeena has already been foreshadowed in the report's project priorities list. *

***(Revitalising Agricultural Region Freight Strategy – Responding to Change report released by the Western Australian Government on June 29, 2020**)

. Active metropolitan terminals already exist east of the city, one of which may already be suitable for adaption. Alternatively, a new Albany freight specific terminal may be required. In addition intermodal operations will be integral to the planned new Kwinana Port and therefore incorporating a southern zone pick-up in Kwinana en-route to Albany is perfectly feasible.

4.4.2 'Last mile' contractors

For more than a decade Australia has been experiencing a critical truck driver shortage, which is projected to worsen in the coming years.
Long haul driving is suffering the greatest shortfall. In 2024, NatRoad partnered with the International Road Transport Union (IRU) being the first time Australian statistics were included in the IRU Global Truck Driver Shortage Survey data.
The survey revealed the dire situation currently in Australia (as with many other countries), – a huge shortage of drivers in Australia including over 28,000 unfilled heavy vehicle positions and a high proportion of older drivers in the workforce. Operating trucks, semi trailers or road trains to Albany from Perth, ties up both expensive 'rigs' and drivers for at least 12 hours. An intermodal service not only eliminates those 'overheads' but even more positively, provides employment opportunities for local Albany contractors who would collect and deliver containers between clients and terminals. These local businesses would operate flat top trucks available for containers that are going to be unpacked immediately, whilst standing by, and 'side lifter' trailers for depositing and collecting containers at their destinations.

4.4.3 Intermediate Drop-off / Pick-up

With the service operating between Perth and Albany, strategic 'mini' or intermediate terminals should be considered for selected towns on the GSR. A spur line to the south, with hard stand, branching off the principle loop would provide all that would be required for booked rapid wagon drop-offs from the tail of the train. An authorised and qualified employing a Shunting Tractor would then propel the delivered wagon(s) into the intermodal handling spur.
For booked pick-ups by northbound traffic, the train would pause long enough in the loop for the contractor to propel the wagon(s) from the spur onto the rear of the train. A Reach Stacker crane would complete the establishment of the terminal.

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4.4.4 Schedules

As a five nights a week service, trains departing from both Perth and Albany termini would be scheduled to arrive for unloading and reloading at the beginning of the work day. With the upgrading of loops as proposed in Section 2.3 of this document, scheduling these two trains into other operations on the GSR would not present any difficulties.

If intermediate GSR terminals, as
described earlier, are added, the process of consist planning would have to be coordinated between the two metropolitan terminals and more time allowed for shunting operations at Kwinana.

4.4.5 Train 'Paths'

Late afternoon departures from the eastern suburbs terminal would see the trains arriving at Kwinana half an hour later, where additional wagons would be picked up with a shunting operation. The train would then proceed to Brookton via Mundijong, to continue south on the GSR to Mirambeena terminal (Albany). If intermediate GSR terminals, as described earlier, are added, the process of consist planning would have to be coordinated between the two metropolitan terminals and more time allowed for shunting operations at Kwinana.

4.4.6 Positive Incentivising

It is also proposed that in establishing support for this new service, a Government funded incentive scheme should be considered on the basis of savings to be made in road repair funding and road trauma costs that is acknowledged is the consequence of heavy vehicle, and in particular road train traffic on Albany Highway.
The "Fremantle Container Rail Subsidy Scheme" serves as one model.

4.4.7 Full distance toll

The outlay of this subsidy could be wholly or partially offset with revenue derived from persisting heavy freight traffic southbound from Perth to Albany. An ANPR and AI powered fixed 'point-point' toll camera system could be established. Specific locations might well be at a point south of Jarrahdale Rd, with another located north of Millbrook Rd. North Albany.
The system would analyse heavy vehicle traffic and its licensing category as it transits within a determined time window. A size proportionate toll would be levied proportionate to the potential for that load to be containerised and shipped overnight by rail. It's fair to say that any consignment to Albany requiring a truck with more than two axles (or perhaps six wheels) or a designated load limit, would logically justify the use of a 20 ft. container or larger. It is acknowledged that the introduction of any system of toll into the state would undoubtedly raise vigorous debate, within the road freight industry. However, it should not be difficult to justify the economic feasibility for Perth based freight shippers to come to value, and take advantage of, a reliable, safe and efficient overnight service to Albany where they or their contractors would complete the 'last mile' functions. Additionally, the wider climate, highway maintenace cost, and road trauma issues are compelling.

4.4.8 Exceptional loads

Loads not suited to containerisation would be toll exempt, e.g. some liquids, (perhaps fuels if not in ISO Tank containers), vehicle transporters, and oversize loads etc.

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4.5 INTERMODAL SEAPORT ENGAGEMENT

In the RARFS report (2020), this Key Point was highlighted.

"Increasing volumes of containerised hay are being exported through Fremantle Inner Harbour. There is currently no regional rail loading facility for hay, resulting in containerised hay being transported into the Perth metropolitan area by road".

Based on regional volume, Brookton, Narrogin, Wagin and Katanning are possible contenders for establishment as mini - intermodal terminal hubs where containers of export hay could be transferred to rail and delivered direct to port. Similarly empty containers would return to those hubs for collection by shippers. The reduction in related heavy road haulage on the highway and urban roads would be significant.

4.5.1 Fertilizer imports

In excess of 500,000 tonnes of fertilizers are imported into W.A. annually, with the greater volume arriving in Kwinana and in bulk dry form. CBH and CSBP, the two dominant importers, are based in Kwinana, with the planned container terminal port and intermodal hub nearby. One recent report reveals that nearly 300,000 tonnes of fertilizer was delivered to grain farmers in 2025. That gross tonnage is equivalent to >12,000 TEU container loads per year. Currently a significant proportion of that distribution is to the southern wheatbelt on road trains which navigate metropolitan roads en-route. With a rail based intermodal framework in place, switching a proportion to rail as containerised shipments, would result in efficient, safer and more environmentally acceptable deliveries to distributors via the suggested mini intermodal hubs on the GSR.

4.5.2 Hay exports

Of Western Australia's 600,000 tonnes of hay produced annually around 400,000 tonnes is exported in containers. This translates into approximately 30,000 TEU container loads, the greater proportion is sourced from the Great Southern region and currently transported by road to the coast. There is a compelling case for the majority of this volume to be transferred to a nightly intermodal Great Southern train service utilizing the more efficient proposed new route. This reinforces the justification for 'mini', or intermediate-loading terminals between Brookton and Albany, particularly Wagin.

4.5.3 Meat exports

The abattoir at Katanning exports well over 20,000 tonnes of chilled and frozen meat in refrigerated containers per year. Currently these have to be delivered to port by road. With an overnight intermodal service on the GSR and a mini terminal established at Katanning, consignments could readily be delivered the short distance to the terminal during the day for pick up and delivery to port by the next morning. Similarly empty containers could be consigned to Katanning for collection in the mornings.

4.5.4 Katanning Gold Project (KGP)

With the development of the KGP and building the associated accommodation village, there will be considerable equipment and supplies to be delivered to site, all of which will originate from Perth or beyond. This further strengthens the case for a Katanning mini intermodal terminal facilitating containerised deliveries.

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4.5.5 Route options

Although the new Brookton - Mundijong link brings time and cost savings to all operations out of the Great Southern, it must be noted that the 'RARFS' report also makes reference to consideration of intermodal operations at Northam. There would be some logic in it being integrated into planned standard gauge intermodal services to Kalgoorlie.

However, a Great Southern service, as described, could be based on the Avon valley route and embrace a Northam intermediate terminal. A nightly service departing in the evening, with fast pickups (as earlier described) en-route, should still be capable of an arrival at Mirambeena in time for adequate load turnaround and evening departure for the return journey. The proposed track upgrades and provision of more and lengthened loops, would facilitate faster and less impeded transit times than currently possible.

While the service via Mundijong would originate from east of the city, with a Kwinana pickup point, services routed via the Avon valley would start and terminate in Kwinana.

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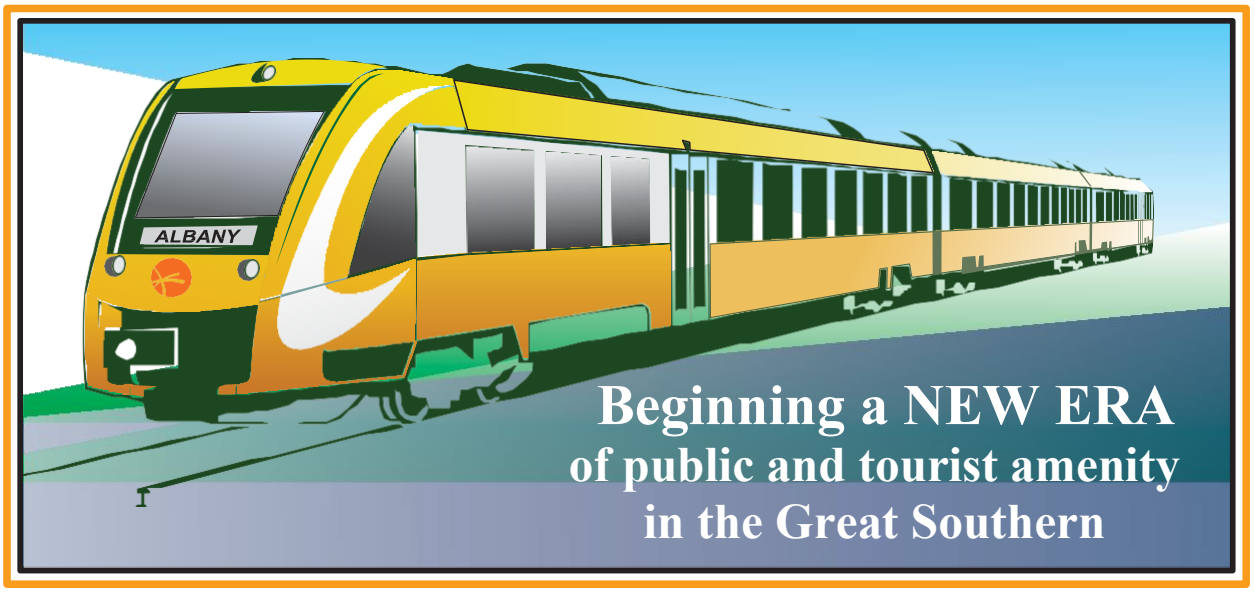
Section 5. PASSENGER SERVICES

5. A PASSENGER RAILCAR SERVICE



It is more than four decades since the Albany service ceased, and over those years the Government has resolutely defended that decision, despite many calls for re-instatement. have never died away. This should not be surprising because the conditions that justified its closure have largely persisted.

However, in light of the substance of this 'Big Vision' proposal, specifically, targeted GSR upgrades, and the establishment of a Mundijong - Brookton link, the issue warrants objective re-consideration. This section undertakes a detailed review of all relevant elements and presents a compelling case. It demonstrates not only how, as a bonus to the broader project, a reinstated service would become technically viable, but how it also addresses a neglected government public service obligation. This is particularly pertinent in the context of the Great Southern region's significant growth trajectory.

5.1 WHY THE "ALBANY PROGRESS" SERVICE CEASED

- **The train required subsidy disproportionate to its patronage.**
- **At nearly nine hours in transit, a time determined by the then route and general condition of the track, the service was not an attractive offering.**
- **It was seen as a little needed utility service in the face of competition from a six hour road coach service and growing independent car travel.**
- **The rolling stock was well past it's 'use by date' and did not meet the more stringent design standards then being applied to new passenger carriages.**
- **There was no vision for the potential embedded in a still developing tourism and travel industry.**
- **The government of the day had lost interest in railways as a contributor to the economy and this was reflected in its declining investment in the sector.**

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5.2 A NEW ERA - CHANGED CIRCUMSTANCES

5.2.1 Public service obligation

It is acknowledged that any new Transwa service would require a level of government subsidy. However, substantial public investment in other PTA services, (particularly Metronet,) demonstrates broad acceptance that supporting public transport is a core responsibility of government in the public interest. This submission contends that, with appropriate market research, especially focussed on the tourism sector, the proposed service has strong potential to achieve favourable 'boarding-to-capacity' ratios. Indeed, given a journey time projected at slightly shorter than that of the Prospector, it may reasonably be expected to perform as well as, or better than, existing regional services in terms of patronage and capacity utilisation.

5.2.2 Economic efficiency

As with the other Transwa rail services, no longer do stations en-route require platform staff. The efficiencies of computerised ticketing and the reduced staffing needs of modern railcar designs have all dramatically reduced the payroll burdens of the past, while delivering more efficient operations.

5.2.3 Reduced distance

The proposed new East-West arterial line via Mundijong reduces the distance by approximately 64 kms between Perth and Albany. This, coupled with the proposed track upgrades and raised speed limits, makes possible a new and attractive daylight transit time, one that more than favourably compares with the previous overnight service.

5.2.4 Trains have regained allure and popular preference

Travelling by road has lost much of its gloss as the road toll creeps up. Heavy trucks and caravan combinations intimidate, and driving has become more stressful, particularly for older drivers. By contrast, worldwide, modern trains are luring passengers back to the safer and more environmentally defendable mode of rail transport. Patronage in Australia's eastern states replicates the trend. The local West Australian community is no different in a preference for travelling by rail where available.

5.2.5 A new train for a new market

Whilst a new and attention grabbing service would undoubtedly be welcomed by the Great Southern community, this proposition is built on the strong conviction that marketing to the much larger metropolitan population would be met with an enthusiastic response. In addition, there is now the potential for such a train to be the vehicle for innovative initiatives in the promotion of Great Southern tourism, especially to Albany, where there are growing accommodation options. There is little doubt a new service as proposed, has the potential to rapidly surpass the patronage level of the Prospector service.

5.2.6 Track upgrades

The track upgrades that will improve the operating efficiencies and productivity of freight operations also provide the bonus of a new faster operating environment for a passenger service.

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5.3 PSYCHOSOCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

5.3.1 Preference for trains over buses

Many public transport studies have found that potential passengers consider rail-based public transport to be superior to bus systems, assuming equal service conditions. There is also an abundance of anecdotal local desire for a re-instatement of a Perth - Albany rail link despite the existence of a quality coach service.

5.3.2 Choice of train over car

There is an identifiable percentage of the population who would prefer to 'take the train'. This can derive from having the conviction they no longer have the capacity to cope with the stress of driving long distances, have a genuine concern for the hazard factor on high speed highways, or even having surrendered driving licences through age related factors.

5.3.3 Choosing relocation to a regional centre

There is an acknowledged need for greater decentralising of population and the development of more substantial regional centres in W.A, ones that are fully serviced by the important amenities expected in the city. There is also a significant cohort of the urban population who plan to, or desire to shift to 'the country', if all their defined parameters could be met. One of those often subliminal elements is the emotional sense of retained connectedness to the city (and its ties), that is provided by the knowledge that the town is serviced at least once a day by a train to the city. This may concept may not satisfy hard-headed accountancy but is one that resonates psychologically within the community, the electorate.

5.3.4 Environmental awareness

More than ever, across society there is a general awareness of emissions and the environmental ramifications associated with travel. People understand the need for a whole of population response to address the climate crisis. With this awareness (assuming other practicalities are satisfied), given the option, people are motivated to travel by rail rather than road or air. It is an obligation on this state's government to respond to this social trend by providing regional travel just as has been its commitment to Perth's urban transport framework.

5.4 A NEW TRANSWA SERVICE - A Tilt Train

5.4.1 Why a Tilt Train?

The GSR from Northam to Albany is a historic line that has not been significantly upgraded to improve operational speeds since its legacy days of the **1950s**. There are some existing curves which, because of their radii, require speed restrictions, all of which lengthen journey time.

A tilt train is a engineered to lean into curves, allowing it to maintain higher speeds on winding tracks while sustaining passenger comfort. Tilt trains have been in use across more than a dozen countries to address this specific and common problem. Transit speed on these curves can then be safely raised.

The concept of tilt trains is not new to Australia. Queensland Rail, which has the same gauge as W.A, faced the same problem with their regional services. It introduced tilt train electric railcars into its Brisbane - Rockhampton service in 1998, and it's overnight diesel service to Cairns in 2003.

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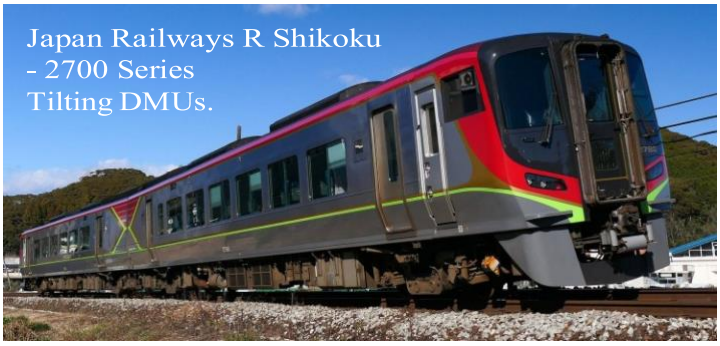
5.4.2 Examples of Tilt Trains on W.A's gauge track



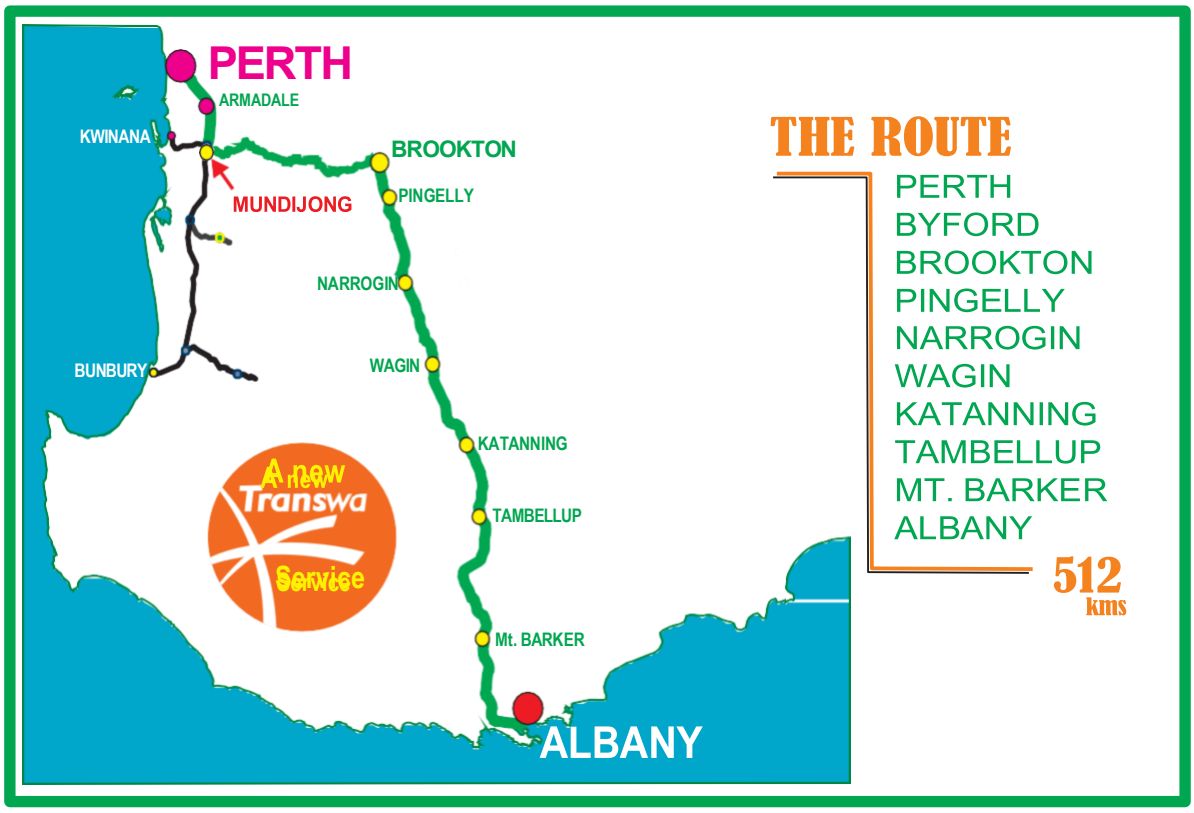
Operating on the same gauge (1067mm) as W.A. The railcars
Weight - 37.5t, (9.4 TAD). (The G.S.R. is a 19 TAD line.)
Diesel Hydraulic transmission. Top Speed: 130 kph.
Entered service 2019. Body dimensions compatible.

Operating on the same gauge (1067mm) as W.A.
Diesel Hydraulic transmission.
Top Speed: 130 kph. Entered service 2015.

EMU Consist - Top speed - 160 Kph
Cars - 13-47 TAD / car. Successfully tested
at 210 km/h on narrow gauge

Push-Pull (DEMU) Top speed - 160 Km/h
Loco weight - 64t, 16 TAD. Coaches - 10 -12.5 TAD
The GSR is a 19t TAD line.

5.4.3 The route



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Sharing Platform 3 of Perth Station with the Australind services, the train would travel on the Armadale line to Mundijong, pass through the forest of the Darling Range to cross open land beyond and join the GSR at Brookton. From there it would work its way south to Albany embracing seven of the state's unique heritage stations in towns on the way. Scenically, this journey has the potential to become the pride of Transwa's journey offerings.

5.4.4 The stations

This project brings back to life eight preserved and treasured heritage stations on the G.S.R, a collection of historic and iconic buildings unique in W.A. There are few other such country stations which remain preserved with the potential to once again serve passenger trains.
With modern online based ticketing, the interior spaces of these stations would not be called on or require upgrades.
[The issue of legacy platform heights is one that is addressed in the Annexure document.]

See Appendix 7 - Great Southern Railway Stations.
Appendix 8 - Station Infrastructure.

5.4.5 Journey time

Comparisons with the transit time of the road coach service is inevitable, however with

1: Upgraded track,
2: Centralised Train Control,
3: The new shorter route and
4: Tilt Train rolling stock,

it is believed that a schedule of approximately seven hours should be possible, roughly equivalent to the Prospector service. It's worth noting that the current six hour direct road coach does not service or support any of Great Southern Railway towns north of Cranbrook and has little tourism appeal to offer in the changing landscape.

5.4.6 Service offerings

A daily train in each direction is the logical concept, with the 'up' and 'down' trains timetabled to cross at Wagin, where crews could be exchanged, as is currently practiced with Prospector train crews at Merredin.
Byford and Wagin would be the only scheduled stops with the other 6 stations on the G.S.R. designated as "request" stops. This is current practice on the Australind and Prospector services.

5.4.7 Patronage

In past viability debates, there has been a tendency to focus on Albany and Great southern patronage. However, whilst attractive as a utility service for the communities and towns of the G.S.R, that market is overwhelmingly exceeded by potential patronage ex-Perth and the metropolitan area, which very likely would easily exceed that of the Prospector service. In addition, and by comparison with 1978, (when the previous service ceased), tourist travel is now beome a major contributor to the economy. In the amplifying appendices, a comprehensive description of potential patronage is outlined, with a clear focus on tourism. Both the unique attractions of the journey's route, and the town of Albany and its region have strong marketing potential. This submission contends that the range of tourism attractions on offer is not surpassed by any other W.A. town.

See Appendices 9 - Patronage profiles

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5.5 POTENTIAL SERVICE VARIATIONS

5.5.1 Premium standard

With the potential to be W.A.'s premier train, attracting interstate and overseas patronage, the interior fit out should feature a standard of seating and on board amenities that surpass any in Australia.

5.5.2 A weekend night train option.

Noting the configuration of the "Spirit of Queensland" train to Cairns, the Albany train could feature standard class seating, (with degrees of recline greater than airline economy standards), supplemented with a "Business Class" section and Queensland Rail style "Railbeds". This would then support timetabling of both a regular daytime service and the option of an overnight service via the Avon Valley on selected nights such as Sunday and Friday in both directions. This night service could then also include Toodyay, York and Beverley in the timetable. In addition to regular offerings, the night train buffet would feature a breakfast menu.

(refer: "Spirit of Queensland")

5.5.3 A regular night and day service

In time, both a regular night and day service may become viable, day services via Mundijong, and those at night via the Avon Valley.

5.6 ROLLING STOCK

This submission initially proposes the acquisition of 3 train sets of 3 DMU tilting railcars. Hitachi (Japan) has substantial design I.P. An alternative is three car, loco hauled push-pull consists, effectively equivalent to half a "Spirit of Queensland" consist. Rather than the configuration of a loco at each end, as in the QR train only one loco would be required with a driving cab featured at the other end.
The IP of these trains is still held by the Australian train manufacturer, Downer Australia. Three trains would accommodate a 'seven day a week service' with available off roster time for routine workshop servicing and flexibility for charters, on the SWR or GSR routes, contingency and resilience.
Railcar design specifications could be such, that should patronage growth warrant it, the insertion into the consist of an additional car could be easily effected at a later date. Such growth is highly likely.

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5.7 COMPELLING FACTS and EQUITY ISSUES

1. Albany last had a regular passenger rail service in 1978. a time when Albany had a population of **25,000**. Today it has over **46,000** people and is noted for its current rapid growth. By comparison, Kalgoorlie, (population: **30,000**), has enjoyed an uninterrupted passenger rail link with Perth **since 1937** and is served by the 'Prospector' 9 times a week.
2. Toodyay and Northam are served by **17** trains a week and together, have a population of less than a quarter of that of Albany, whether taken as town figures or taken as local government districts.
3. The combined total population of the main intermediate centres east of Northam served by the Prospector, (**11,700**), is less than that which would be served by an Albany Train between Brookton and Mt. Barker, (**15,300**).
4. Merredin, with a population **one eighth** that of Albany, since 2004 enjoys **12** trains a week.
5. Bunbury is only **168 km**s from Perth with an entire dual carriageway road link, yet it has been served by an **uninterrupted rail service since 1947**. With its new generation trains it will be with **four** trains a day.
6. Though the growth of the South West region is significant, the total population of intermediate stations currently served by the Australind (**15,400**) is no more than the sum of equivalent intermediate stations, Brookton to Mt Barker.
7. Whilst both the Australind and an Albany services would support their town and regional development, and the the Australind has a significant commuter clientele,a stand out feature of an Albany train would be its superior attraction in support of a town and region with tourist attractions second to none in the state.
8. The 'Prospector' route to Kalgoorlie totals **670** kms.
9. The rail route to Albany via a new Mundijong - Brookton link would total approximately **512** kms, 76 kms less than the previous legacy route via Toodyay, a significant reduction.
10. A possible Tilt Train Perth - Albany service would probably be of similar transit time to that of the 'Prospector'.
11. Consistent with international trends, regional rail patronage in the eastern states is experiencing noticeable increases supported by strong ongoing government investment new improved rolling stock.
    An Albany service would also be assured of steady growth.
12. Worldwide there is an ongoing process of reactivation and upgrading of old lines and services.
13. In Europe there is a surging growth in night train sleeper services, reversing a history of decline. New rolling stock is being built and older rolling stock renovated and returned to service. Queensland Rail's design for the "Spirit of Queensland demonstrates fresh thinking concerning offering an overnight service.
14. In Europe, a growing awareness of air travel emissions is contributing to a turning back to rail. A rail service to Albany would be consistent with that trend.

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IN SUMMARY

The VISION

Restore the Great Southern Railway (GSR) to be a strategic public asset, fit for purpose, to:

- Deliver operational efficiency and savings to all above rail operators.
- Establish clear advantages in utilisation of rail over road transport .
- Boost productivity and savings in agricultural transport logistics.
- Deliver long-term regional economic resilience.
- Support regional development, tourism, and community amenity.
- Meet a community service obligation with passenger services.

The STRATEGY

1. Build the 'Missing Link'

A new arterial rail line linking Kwinana to Brookton via Mundijong.

2. Upgrade Existing Infrastucture

- Upgrade the GSR mainline to 19t AL standard from Narrogin to Wagin.
- Build adequate placement of 1000 metre passing loops Brookton and Albany.
- Upgrade to 21t AL standard, 20 kms of curves of less than 400 m radius.
- Apply Central Train Control to all GSR mainline points.
- Upgrade level crossing protections to enable line speeds through towns.
- Restore full track access to two heritage stations platforms.
- Restore 300 kilometres of selected Tier 3 track sections, to 19t AL standard.
- Establish an 87km S.G. linking West Merredin to Narrembeen.

The DIVIDENDS

- Achieve savings of ~228 km on round trip traffic, Kwinana to the GSR.
- Efficiency and cost savings for Bruce Rock and Narembeen grain transport.
- Greater productivity - delivered through faster transits of all freight traffic.
- Greater productivity - from raised or removed speed restrictions on curves.
- Greater efficiency in 'Path' planning through better loop provision.
- New higher levels of productivity on restored Tier 3 line sections.
- Enhanced economic advantage of the GSR, over road transport.
- Grain from 13 active silos returned from road load-out to rail load-out.
- Lowered farm and marketing and delivery costs for grain producers.
- Big reduction in road hazard, damage and CO2 emissions.
- New economic model for viable intermodal services, Perth - Albany.
- Practical viability of a new Transwa passenger service.
- An exciting new tourism initiative for Perth, interstate and overseas visitors.
- Injection of fresh new regional development, confidence and energy.
- Significant reductions in diesel fuel use and emissions.
- Reduction in road hazard and road maintenance.

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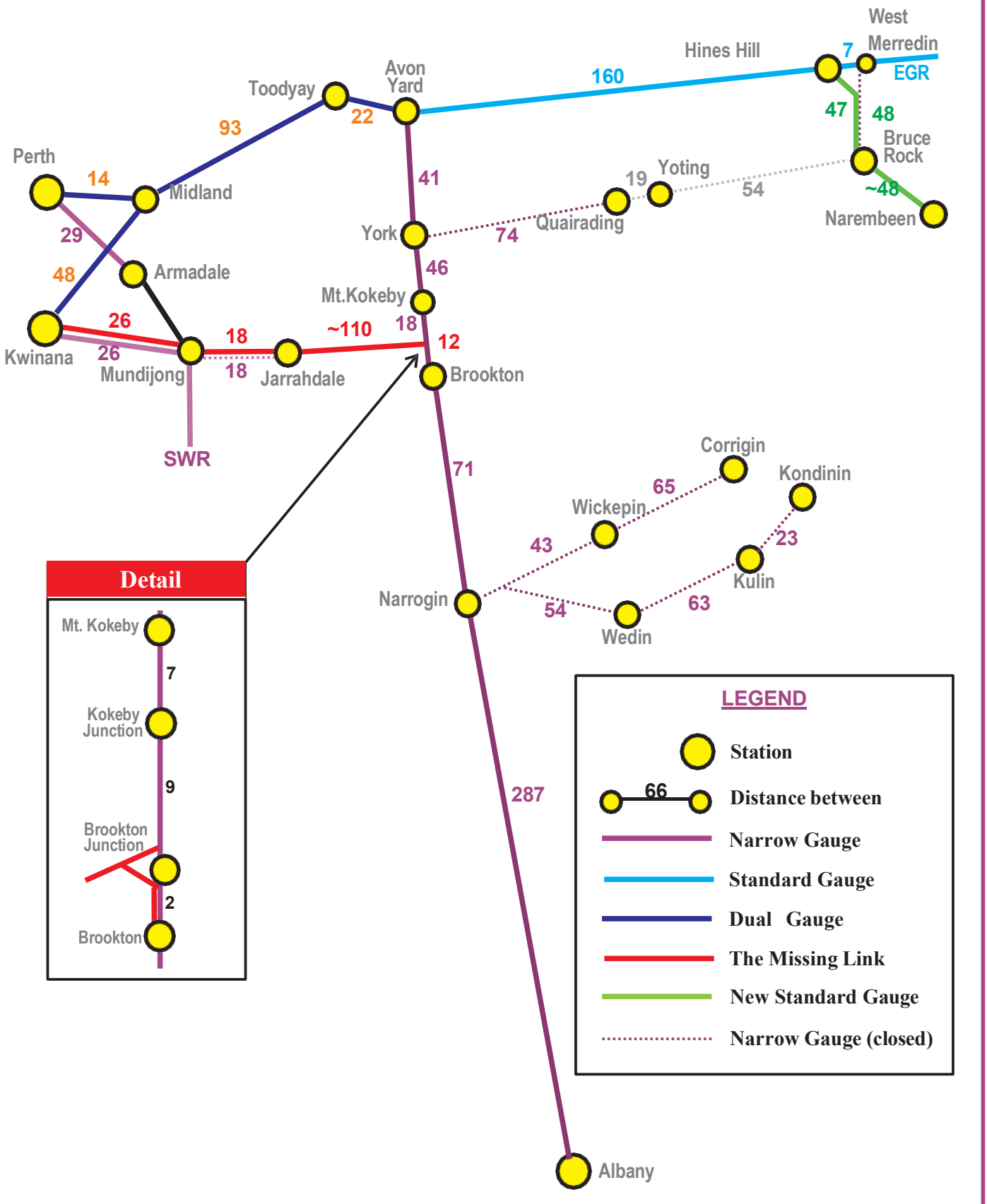
REFERENCE MAP
DISTANCES: Southern network.

Schematic, not to scale



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APPENDIX 2

GSR CURVES UPGRADES
Radii 400 metres or less

The following is a detailed list of the curves of 400 metres radius or less on the GSR mainline between Brookton and Albany.
It is proposed that for these sections, the track ibe upgraded to 21 tonne axle load, 50 kg/m rail & Concrete Sleepers

	From	To	Total distance	Radius	Possible continuous section
CUBALLING 162 km	162.960	163.280	0.3200	340	
	163.280	163.950	0.6700	380	
			0.050	straight	
	164.810	165.230	0.4200	360	
	165.230	165.550	0.3200	400	
			0.050	straight	
	165.600	166.020	0.4200	320	Total 2.03 km
			0.080	straight	
	169.520	169.700	0.1800	320	
	169.700	170.210	0.5100	300	
	170.210	170.560	0.3500	280	
	170.560	170.960	0.4000	280	
	170.960	171.440	0.4800	300	Total 1.92 km
	171.860	172.440	0.5800	340	
			0.060	straight	
	172.500	173.020	0.5200	320	
	173.570	173.890	0.3200	360	
			0.060	straight	
	173.950	174.200	0.2500	380	Total 0.63 km
NARROGIN 176 km	177.000	177.380	0.3800	380	
	180.380	180.760	0.3800	280	
	180.770	181.380	0.6100	320	
	181.440	181.880	0.4400	300	
	218.200	218.790	0.5900	360	
	269.755	270.061	0.3060	400	
KATANNING 278 km	289.400	289.850	0.4500	400	
	290.380	291.000	0.6200	400	
	292.020	292.460	0.4400	280	
	292.840	293.280	0.4400	370	
	294.000	294.400	0.4000	380	
	300.680	301.110	0.4300	380	
	301.560	301.860	0.3000	260	
			0.180	straight	
	301.940	302.220	0.2800	260	Total 0.66 km
	306.420	306.730	0.3100	360	
	308.160	308.500	0.3400	350	
KENDENUP 381 km	381.450	382.000	0.5500	370	

See over

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	384.450	384.850	0.4000	400	
	385.650	386.080	0.4300	380	
			0.050	straight	
	386.500	386.770	0.2700	320	Total 1.12 km
	387.000	387.270	0.2700	350	
	387.270	387.500	0.2300	440	
	388.500	388.750	0.2500	350	
	394.260	394.590	0.3300	420	
			0.070	straight	
	394.660	395.110	0.4500	440	Total 0.85 km
	400.620	400.950	0.3300	400	
	400.950	401.270	0.3200	360	
	402.770	402.980	0.2100	360	
	404.230	404.560	0.3300	450	
	409.000	409.520	0.5200	460	
			0.040	straight	
	409.560	410.000	0.4400	430	Total 1.00 km
NARRIKUP 419 km	436.690	437.020	0.3300	270	
ELLEKER 448 km	448.790	449.200	0.4100	380	
	460.870	461.110	0.2400	300	
	461.110	461.370	0.2600	280	Total 0.50 km
	461.790	462.020	0.2300	280	
TOTAL UPGRADE			**19.896 kms**		

Footnote:

This upgrade to curves, would release sufficient steel sleepers from these various sections of the GSR, to enable their re-insertion into the **50 km**. section from Narrogin to Wagin, upgrading it from a steel to timber ratio of **1:4** to **1:2** consistent with the rest of the GSR mainline if desired.

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G.S.R. LOOPS - Specifications

STATION LOOPS			
LOOP	DIST.	LENGTH	LIMITATION
Brookton		463m (428)	Straddling 1 of 2 town level crossings. the 40m north of a crossing could be 1000m
Pingelly	Brk-Pin 24	-	Loop removed
Popanyinning	Pin–Pop 17	-	Loop removed (1000m possible)
Yornaning	Pop-Yor 10	478m	CBH loading siding
Cuballing	Yor-Cub 10	500m	Straddles one of town's level crossings
Narrogin	Cub-Narr 14	736m	Between 2 town level crossings
Highbury	Narr-High 16	-	Loop removed
Wagin	Narr-Wag 50	498m	Impeded by necessary CBH shunting
Woodanilling	Wag-Woo 31	556m	(only 1 level crossing- easily lengthened)
Katanning	Woo-Kat 21	672m	Straddles one of town's 4 level crossings
Broomehill	Kat-BH 19	>1700m	CBH loading loop. (Old loop 462)
Tambellup	BH-Tam 25	522m	Between 2 town level crossings
Cranbrook	Tam-Cran 35	>1007m	CBH Loading loop. (Old loop 497)
Kendenup	Cran-Ken 24	550m	Between 2 town level crossings
Narrikup	Ken-Nakp 40	502m	Between 2 town level crossings

PROPOSED NEW 1000m LOOPS		
LOOP	DIST.	ENGINEERING
Brookton	Brkt-Pop **37**	Extend existing loop beyond Brkt. Hwy. level crossing
Popanyinning	Pop-Nar **34**	Reinstate loop north from Bunmulling Rd. level crossing
Wagin	Wag-Wood **30**	New loop south of Wagin Juct. (south)
Woodanilling	Wood-Broom **40**	Extend existing loop north
Tambellup	Tam-Narri **97**	New loop north from North Tce.
Narrikup	Narri-Alb **82**	Extend existing loop north - close Hannan (N) crossing

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FURTHER EXAMPLES of SAVINGS

EXAMPLE 3 — Current practice

Deliveries by farmers to **WICKEPIN** silo (Line closed) - Reloaded for delivery to Brookton by road.

Load	Mode	Distance (1-way)	Diesel Litres	Co2 Emissions	Driver/Crew hours (rtn)
3600 tonnes	Wickepin - Brookton - Avon - Kwinana				
	60x 'A - Double' Road Trains	76	4,567	12 tonnes	270
	+ 1x 60 Wagon train	268	2,461	6 tonnes	24
	TOTALS		7,028	18 tonnes	294

As proposed in "Back on Track")

Deliveries to the Tier 3 Silo for travel by train 268 kms. - To Kwinana via Brookton / Mundijong.

Load	Mode	Distance (1-way)	Diesel Litres	Co2 Emissions	Driver/Crew hours (rtn)
3600 tonnes	Wickepin - Brookton - Mundijong- Kwinana				
	~~60x 'A - Double' Road Trains~~				
	1x 60 Wagon train	268	2,461	6 tonnes	24
	TOTALS		2,461	6 tonnes	24

EXAMPLE 4 — Current practice

Deliveries by farmers **QUAIRADING** silo (Line closed) - Reloaded for delivery to **YORK** by road.

Load	Mode	Distance (1-way)	Diesel Litres	Co2 Emissions	Driver/Crew hours (rtn)
3600 tonnes	Quairading - Brookton - Avon - Kwinana				
	60x 'A - Double' Road Trains	68	4,086	11 tonnes	300
	+ 1x 60 Wagon train	52034	4,405	11 tonnes	21
	TOTALS		8,491	22 tonnes	321

As proposed in "Back on Track"

Deliveries to the Tier 3 Silo for travel by train 503 kms. - To Kwinana via Brookton / Mundijong.

Load	Mode	Distance (1-way)	Diesel Litres	Co2 Emissions	Driver/Crew hours (rtn)
3600 tonnes	Quairading - Brookton - Mundijong- Kwinana				
	~~60x 'A - Double' Road Trains~~				
	1x 60 Wagon train	278	6,003	16 tonnes	36
	TOTALS		6,003	16 tonnes	36

EXAMPLE 5 — Current practice

Deliveries to **NAREMBEEN** silo (Line closed) - Road to **W. MERREDIN** reloaded onto S.G. rail to **KWINANA** .

Load	Mode	Distance (1-way)	Diesel Litres	Co2 Emissions	Driver/Crew hours (rtn)
4,620 tonnes	Narembeen - W. Merredin - Kwinana				
	60x 'A B - Triple' Road Trains	71	5,476	14 tonnes	240
	+ 1x 60 Wagon S.G. train	330	9,144	24 tonnes	28
	TOTALS		14,620	38 tonnes	268

As proposed in "Back on Track"

Deliveries to Kwinana via **West Merredin** 375 kms. - To Kwinana via Merredin on **Standard Gauge**

Load	Mode	Distance (1-way)	Diesel Litres	Co2 Emissions	Driver/Crew hours (rtn)
4,620 tonnes	Narembeen - via Bruce Rock - Kwinana				
	~~60x 'A B - Triple' Road Trains~~				
	1x 60 Wagon S.G. train	418	11,583	31 tonnes	30
	TOTALS		11,583	31 tonnes	30

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BUILDING A NEW ECONOMIC MODEL

Sample □gures relating to rail operations prior to line closures compared with operations with a new link through Mundijong, GSR upgrades and Tier 3 rebuilds to a higher standard.

Siding	Via	Original distance	New distance	Return trip saving saving (~)	Old line speed (empty)	New line speed	Old axle load	New axle load	Gauge
Brookton	Mundijong	269	154	**230**	80	**80**	19	**21**	**NG**
Quairading	York & Avon	278	278	0	30	**80**	16	**21**	**NG**
Bruce Rock	W. Merredin	378	378	0	50	**100** *	16	**24**	**SG**
Narembeen	Bruce Rock	419 (new B R link *)	418	1	60	**100**	16	**24**	**SG**
Wickepin	Mundijong	382	**268**	**228**	60 & 40	**80**	16	**19**	**NG**
Corrigin	Mundijong	438 **or** 447	**333**	**210**	60 & 40	**80**	16	**19**	**NG**
Kulin	Mundijong	457	**343**	**248**	60 & 40	**80**	16	**19**	**NG**
Kondinin	Mundijong	470 (via Merredin)	**366**	**208**	60 & 40	**80**	16	**19**	**NG**

* Based on some re-alignment of corridor to increase the more severe curve radii

* New 40 km SG link to Bruce Rock avoids restoring 89 kms in SG via Muntadgin

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EXAMPLE POTENTIAL INTERMODAL SAVINGS

Diesel fuel, Co2 Emissions, Payroll hours.

Intermodal trains from Kewdale:

Kenwick, onto the S.W. Main, to Mundijong - Brookton - Albany.

Load 20 FEUs	Mode	Distance Kwinana - Albany (1-way)	Diesel Litres	Co2 Emissions	Driver/Crew hours (round trip)
	Kewdale - Albany				
	10x 'A - Double' Road Trains	410	3,011	8 tonnes	100
	1x 20 Container flats train	524	1,739	4 tonnes	18
		Intermodal Savings	2,172	4 tonnes	82

Intermodal trains from Kwinana:

Kwinana - Mundijong - Brookton - Albany.

Load 20 FEUs	Mode	Distance Kwinana - Albany (1-way)	Diesel Litres	Co2 Emissions	Driver/Crew hours (round trip)
440 tonnes	**Kwinana - Albany**				
	10x 'A - Double' Road Trains	413	3,033	8 tonnes	100
	1x 20 Container flats train	512	1,699	4 tonnes	18
		Intermodal Savings	1,334	4 tonnes	82

Estimations only, using "Aurizon" online emissions calculator.

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Great Southern Railway
Heritage Stations

APPENDIX 7

	BROOKTON **Opened 1926**
	PINGELLY **Opened 1930**
	NARROGIN **Opened 1907**
	WAGIN **Opened 1911**
	KATANNING **Opened 1920s**
	TAMBELLUP **Opened 1925**
	Mt BARKER **Opened 1923**
	ALBANY **Opened 1888**

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APPENDIX 8

STATION INFRASTRUCTURE

TABLE: Towns shown in population ranking and detail of stations.

	Population	Town	HERITAGE STATION	Built	Platform length
1	4200	**Narrogin**	Track to be reconnected at south end	1907	≈ 111m
2	4200	**Katanning**		1889	≈ 165m
3	2900	**Mt. Barker**		1923	≈ 120m
4	1100	**Wagin**	Eastern platform to be restored with track	1911	≈ 53m
5	1000	**Pingelly**		1930	≈ 33m
6	900	Cranbrook	No longer aligned to track, not sheltered, nor heritage	1911	
7	880	**Tambellup**		1929	≈ 130m
8	860	**Brookton**		1889	≈ 85m
9	512	Cuballing	No station remains	1899	
10	251	Woodanilling	Not heritage building	1889	≈ 37m
11	208	Popanyinning	A W.A.G.R. prototype, e.g. similar to Bowelling etc.	1913	≈ 60m
12	150	Broomehill	No station remains		
	42,000	**Albany**	Heritage Station @ Transwa Coach terminus.	1888	≈ 124m

NOTE:

The height of the platforms at these heritage stations reflects their era, and are generally between 300 and 450 mm above rail head. This is below the modern and Metropolitan station standard which is a little over 1000 mm.
Railcar set designs will need to provide for step access at most doors, supplemented with retractable ramp access (as per Transperth buses) at least at one door per side.

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MARKETING & PATRONAGE

From research undertaken to underpin this proposition, it would appear that in the years since the previous service ceased in 1978, NO surveys or studies into the viability of, or the potential patronage for a new rail service to Albany have been undertaken. To even the casual observer, there is compelling evidence of a readily identifiable and substantial cohort of likely patrons. What follows are two complimentary perspectives.

Target market	Potential	Why
Leisure tourists	☆☆☆	Huge Albany tourism appeal
Older travellers/retirees	☆☆	Comfort and no driving
People without cars	☆☆☆	Strong public transport proposition
Families	☆☆	Easier than driving, especially with good fares
Friends / relative travellers	☆☆☆	Recurring year-round demand
Students/young people	☆☆	Price-sensitive but potentially regular
Scenic/rail tourists	☆☆☆	Train becomes part of the holiday
Business travellers	☆	Faster options available
Time-sensitive travellers	☆☆☆	Plane option available

PATRONAGE PROFILES - Ex Perth

- Overseas and interstate tourists keen to experience this premium train.
- Private tourism and holiday makers (individuals and families - Albany hire car).
- Self guided tourist packages sold by national, West Australian or Albany promoters.
- Escorted Package tourism (advertised and sold for defined dates) supported by contracted local coach operators.
- Retirees - Two way, or as part of rail / bus Transwa ‘chain’ itinerary around the south and south west.
- Groups booked into Albany DLSCI and other youth and recreation campsites, currently dependent on buses from Perth. (A figure in excess of **100 PAX / wk**. average is substantiated by current booking patterns.) Specific local excursions are then catered for with local bus hire.
- Booked “Off Ship” experiences, between Perth and Albany stopovers by Cruise Ship passengers, leaving the ship in one port and reboarding in the other. (Albany has had as many as 18 Cruise ships visit in a season.)

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- Professionals and consultants on short business appointments.
- Grandparent visits and Grandparent escorted children's, trips.
- Backpackers and seasonal workers.
- Metropolitan motorists unwilling to tackle the daunting road trip to Albany, preferring to hire a car in Albany. Albany Highway is rated #6 of 10 Riskiest Regional roads in W.A. (RAC Publication 2025)

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PATRONAGE PROFILES - Ex Albany & G.S.

- Travel for professional appointments.
- Travel to the airport (via Perth and the airport line) for flight.
- Travel for major sporting or entertainment events.
- Backpackers and seasonal workers.
- School students to and from boarding colleges.
- University students travelling between terms or semesters.
- Family visits and holidays.
- Grandparent visits to or by family, and Grandparent escorted children's, trips in school holidays, while parents work.
- Retirees - Two way, or as part of a rail / bus linked Transwa 'chain' itinerary around Perth and the south west.
- Retirees holidaying in greater Perth.

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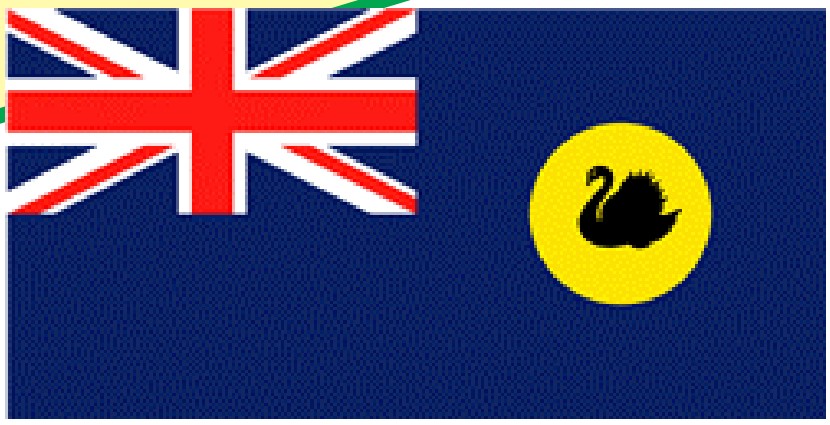
Bi-Centenary of W.A.

W.A. celibrates its bi-centenary in 2029.

The launch of a vision of this new magnitude and exciting possibility of a restoration of railcar service linking Perth to the first settlement in W.A, - Albany, could be one of the signature features of the state's celebrations of Western Australia's Bicentenary. It could be the banner headline and a tangible symbol of a commitment to regional development.

A new Transwa Service

Such an announcement would be widely supported by both the Perth population who would be eager to experience it, and the communities of the Great Southern and Albany who have long called for it.



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