



TABLE TALK

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TOP TABLE TALK – REGIONAL RAIL STUDIES

Three business cases for faster rail will be developed under the Federal government's \$20 million *Faster Rail Prospectus*. The business cases are expected to be delivered over the next twelve months. The intention is to develop detailed proposals for faster rail services between major cities and surrounding regional areas.

In the *Faster Rail* prospectus, the Federal government stated that it wanted to look at both 'evolutionary' and 'revolutionary' proposals—and the three proposals chosen for further development are at different points along this spectrum. One involves upgrades to existing track, another proposes entirely new track, and the third sees a mix. Once the business case for each proposal is complete they will then proceed to independent assessment by Infrastructure Australia.

Cynical people might note that the three proposals selected for business case development are one each from the three big states:

NSW government proposal for Sydney to Newcastle. NSW will explore improvements to the rail connections between Sydney and Newcastle that would facilitate faster passenger rail services. The Sydney to Newcastle business case will investigate works including reducing track curvature, deviations and realignments, removal of level crossings, junction rearrangements and better segregation of passenger and freight services. The NSW government has indicated that travel times between Sydney and Newcastle could be reduced from approximately 3 hours to 2 hours.

North Coast Connect Consortium's proposal for Brisbane and the regions of Moreton Bay and the Sunshine Coast. The Consortium will explore upgrades to the rail connection between Brisbane and Nambour as well as a new rail spur to Maroochydore. This new and upgraded infrastructure would facilitate higher-speed passenger rail services between Brisbane and the regions of Moreton Bay and the Sunshine Coast. Travel times could be reduced from approximately 2 hours to 45 minutes between Nambour and Brisbane and the trip between Brisbane and Maroochydore could also be expected to take 45

minutes. The business case undertaken by the North Coast Connect Consortium would assess three stages of work covering corridors between Brisbane, Nambour and Maroochydore:

Stage 1a is an upgrade of 64.5km of the North Coast line from Brisbane to Beerburrum through curve easing, level crossings removal and systems upgrade.

Stage 1b is an upgrade of 40km of the North Coast line from Beerburrum to Nambour through curve easing, level crossings removal and systems upgrade. This work would include duplication of the North Coast Line which is part of a Queensland Government proposal currently subject to an Infrastructure Australia assessment. The Australian Government would require the North Coast Connect Consortium take into account the Queensland Government's proposal.

Stage 2 is a new passenger rail service comprising a spur line with 40km of new track from Beerwah to Maroochydore, and several new stations.

Consolidated Land and Rail Australia's (CLARA) proposal for Melbourne to Greater Shepparton. CLARA, a private consortium, will explore improvements to the rail connections between Melbourne and Greater Shepparton through the development of a business case. The CLARA proposal provides an innovative and revolutionary model for building a High Speed Rail link between Melbourne and Greater Shepparton that does not involve direct costs to government or tax payers. The Melbourne to Greater Shepparton business case will investigate the development of two new sustainable SMART cities with connections to High Speed Rail along a new dedicated corridor.

CLARA define their cities as "new cities where data is open, energy is renewable, water is valued, homes are affordable and people can live within 10 minutes of all they need; cities where world class healthcare meets high tech education; where new and existing businesses will converge to create more vibrant regional economies; cities built to unlock all human potential; cities made possible by High Speed Rail that

can place citizens in our capitals in less time than a morning commute.” The opportunity created by the development of these two SMART cities would fund the infrastructure, including the faster rail line, needed to support them through land value uplift.

CLARA has indicated that travel times over the full length of the line could be reduced from approximately 3 hours to 32 minutes. *[Editor’s Note: This is what the press release said. I am not making this up.]*

For more information visit infrastructure.gov.au/rail/trains/faster_rail/.

RAIL AND TRAM NEWS

Pacific National and Aurizon

On 15 March the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission Chairman, Rod Sims, said it had “strong concerns” about the proposed sale of Aurizon’s Acacia Ridge terminal to Pacific National, given the ACCC’s view that Aurizon and PN are currently the only providers of intermodal rail services in Queensland. It is concerned over potential price rises that could take place in the Queensland market once Aurizon is not there to compete with PN. The ACCC acknowledged SCT Logistics provides interstate intermodal services, but said the company was an integrated freight forwarder which generally doesn’t haul many containers for other freight forwarders. “Aurizon’s decision to sell its Queensland intermodal operations and the Acacia Ridge Terminal to its closest competitor, while shutting down its remaining intermodal business, will fundamentally change this market,” Mr Sims said. “We are concerned about the impact on competition in the freight industry.”

Aurizon CEO Andrew Harding has said it would be forced to close Acacia Ridge if it couldn’t sell it – a step which would also leave PN as the only intermodal rail provider in the state.

PN has offered to enter into a regulated undertaking as part of owning and operating Acacia Ridge, but Sims said this would not be good enough. He thinks another player should buy the terminal. “The Acacia Ridge Terminal is an important infrastructure asset and would be a key component in the strategy of any potential supplier of intermodal rail freight that wants to compete with Pacific National,” he said.

Queensland Rail Travel: Floods

Due to floods, services were suspended between Townsville and Cairns from Friday 9 to at least Monday 19 March.

Gold Coast Tram

Queensland Department of Transport figures show the Gold Coast Tram has recorded an extra 510,000 passenger trips since its second stage opened in December. The 11 km second stage helped deliver a 27% increase in patronage, bringing total passenger journeys to 2.3 million in 12 weeks. The three new stations — Helensvale, Parkwood and Parkwood East — are fast becoming commuter favourites, recording 3036 boardings a day or 255,000 in total across the three months. As the key public transport hub between

Brisbane and the Gold Coast, Helensvale — where heavy rail and light rail meet — receives the highest patronage. The week beginning 26 February was the busiest recorded, with 224,000 trips taken.

Proposed stage 3A, which would run between Broadbeach and Burleigh Heads, is in the planning stages, with a \$10 million feasibility study underway. Stage 3B would run to Coolangatta and the airport, with other future stages proposed to travel west.

NSW TrainLink: New bus services

Commencing 12 March new NSW TrainLink bus services are running on six months trial from Tamworth. The Scone/Muswellbrook thrice weekly service will allow day return trips to Newcastle. The services to Port Macquarie and Dubbo fill gaps in the network, but they operate only twice weekly.

Mon & Wed

Tamworth	0350	Newcastle	0318
Werris Creek	0426	Maitland	0358
Quirindi	0445	Singleton	0430
Willow Tree	0502	Muswellbro’k	0501
Murrurundi	0519	Aberdeen	0510
Scone	0555	Scone	0521
<i>Connect with train</i>		<i>Connect with bus</i>	
Scone	0607	Scone	0605
Aberdeen	0616	Murrurundi	0638
Muswellbro’k	0624	Willow Tree	0657
Singleton	0655	Quirindi	0713
Maitland	0728	Werris Creek	0732
Newcastle	0801	Tamworth	0810

Return Mon & Wed

Newcastle	1629	Tamworth	1630
Maitland	1701	Werris Creek	1705
Singleton	1733	Quirindi	1724
Muswellbro’k	1804	Willow Tree	1741
Aberdeen	1814	Murrurundi	1759
Scone	1824	Scone	1833
<i>Connect with bus</i>		<i>Connect with train</i>	
Scone	1845	Scone	1906
Murrurundi	1918	Aberdeen	1915
Willow Tree	1937	Muswellbro’k	1923
Quirindi	1953	Singleton	1954
Werris Creek	2012	Maitland	2027
Tamworth	2050	Newcastle	2100

Fridays			
Tamworth	0720	Newcastle	0817
Werris Creek	0756	Maitland	0846
Quirindi	0815	Singleton	0918
Willow Tree	0832	Muswellbro'k	0949
Murrurundi	0850	<i>Connect bus</i>	
Scone	0925	Muswellbro'k	1010
Aberdeen	0939	Aberdeen	1022
Muswellbro'k	0952	Scone	1035
<i>Connect with train</i>		Murrurundi	1110
Muswellbro'k	1009	Willow Tree	1129
Singleton	1039	Quirindi	1145
Maitland	1112	Werris Creek	1204
Newcastle	1145	Tamworth	1242

Return Fridays

Newcastle	1759	Tamworth	1810
Maitland	1831	Werris Creek	1846
Singleton	1903	Quirindi	1905
Muswellbro'k	1934	Willow Tree	1921
Aberdeen	1943	Murrurundi	1939
Scone	1954	Scone	2013
<i>Connect with bus</i>		<i>Connect with train</i>	
Scone	2030	Scone	2051
Murrurundi	2103	Aberdeen	2100
Willow Tree	2121	Muswellbro'k	2108
Quirindi	2137	Singleton	2139
Werris Creek	2155	Maitland	2212
Tamworth	2232	Newcastle	2245

Mon & Fri

Tamworth	0900
Somerton	0932
Carroll	0945
Gunnedah	1004
Mullaley	1034
Coonabarabran	1120
Gilgandra	1223
Dubbo	1315

Return

Dubbo	1420
Gilgandra	1510
Coonabarabran	1613
Mullaley	1701
Gunnedah	1727
Carroll	1749
Somerton	1803
Tamworth	1836

Mon & Fri

	Mon	Fri
Tamworth	0855	1400
Kootingal	0913	1418
Moonbi	0920	1425
Bendemeer t/o	0936	1441
Walcha	1013	1518
Long Flat	1220	1725
Wauchope	1254	1754
Port Macquarie	1315	1820

Return

	Mon	Sun
Port Macquarie	1415	1500
Wauchope	1435	1520
Long Flat	1506	1551
Walcha	1707	1750
Bendemeer t/o	1745	1835
Moonbi	1803	1853
Kootingal	1809	1859
Tamworth	1830	1920

Byron Bay train

A timetable of the new Byron Bay solar-powered train is at <http://byronbaytrain.com.au/>. There are eight trips daily from North Beach to Byron Beach and return, once an hour. On Fridays and Saturdays there are five more trips extending into the evening. The journey takes ten minutes in each direction.

Sydney: Transport strategy

A long-term NSW transport and infrastructure strategy was launched on 18 March by the Premier, Gladys Berejiklian, Transport and Infrastructure Minister, Andrew Constance and Planning Minister, Anthony Roberts. The plan includes:

- identifying and reserving corridors for future projects, to make sure the community, business and industry know where major infrastructure projects are planned; and
- supporting technological innovation, such as automated vehicles and smart motorways.

In the next 10 years, investigations will be undertaken into:

- smart rail technology and an Advanced Train Control System to provide safer and more efficient train services on key lines including the T4 and T8, followed by the T1 and T2;
- faster regional rail on key routes, including between Sydney and Newcastle, Canberra, the Central Coast and Wollongong;
- improved train links in regional NSW, including the Main Northern Line and electrification of the intercity network to Bomaderry/Nowra, Goulburn and Bathurst.

To provide direction to freight-related businesses and industry, the government is developing a NSW Freight and Ports Plan.

The government plans to:

- Complete business cases for the Western Sydney bus rapid transport network, Smart

Rail program, Sydney Metro West, and north-south rail link connecting Western Sydney Airport;

- Continue the Regional Road Freight Corridor Fund, Fixing Country Roads, Fixing Country Rail, and Bridges for the Bush programs;
- Partner with local government on active transport projects;
- Complete business cases for the Outer Parramatta Ring Road, Stage 2 of the Parramatta Light Rail, and the Greater Parramatta access plan;
- Complete business cases for smart motorways technology, the Western Harbour Tunnel and Beaches Link, the F6 Extension, Sydney Gateway, Port Botany rail duplication, and Moorebank Terminal Road access;
- Partner with the Australian government to plan for Sydney's Western Parkland City; and the Western Sydney Airport and associated transport links, including the motorway link to the airport;
- Investigate faster rail connections for the regional network.

Ambitious public transport proposals to be investigated include:

- An alternative railway crossing of the Blue Mountains;
- A railway from Hurstville via Rhodes to Macquarie Park;
- A railway from Kogarah via Bankstown to Parramatta;
- A Metro line from the CBD via Eastlakes to Maroubra Junction; and
- A Metro line from Eastlakes to Sydney Airport, Kogarah and Miranda.

The plan can be accessed at

<https://www.nsw.gov.au/improving-nsw/projects-and-initiatives/nsw-state-infrastructure-strategy/>

Sydney Trains: Timetable amendments 12 March

Sydney Trains cut about 94 services a week from 12 March as part of what it describes as a tweak to the timetable. The changes – representing fewer than 1% of the thousands of services each week – mainly affect the Northern, North Shore, Bankstown, Cumberland and Carlingford lines. Sydney Trains chief executive Howard Collins said the services to be cut were mostly late at night or early in the morning, and Opal data showed them to have low patronage levels. “We are reusing the train resources and the driver resources. We don't want to run trains when people are not using them,” he said. “Some of these services are at 4.30 in the morning or after midnight.

New PDF timetables are available on the Transport for NSW website, <https://transportnsw.info/routes/train> - but not on the Sydney Trains website!

Weekday changes are:

Central –Strathfield – Epping

Up and down services reduced from 4 trains per hour to 2 tph after 2330.

Hornsby – Chatswood via ECRL

Up and down services reduced from 4.tph to 2 tph after 2330.

Penrith – Berowra via North Shore

Up and down services reduced between Hornsby and Berowra early morning and late night.

Homebush - Circular Quay

Up services reduced from 4 tph to 2.tph after 2330 on Friday.

Down services reduced from 4.tph to 2 tph after 0030 on Friday.

Leppington - Circular Quay via Granville

City to Leppington via Granville become all stops on Friday when above Homebush serve frequency reduced (excluding Clyde).

Leppington to City via Clyde extra stop Newtown on Friday when above Homebush serve frequency reduced.

Lidcombe Turnback – Circular Quay via Bankstown

From 1957 hours 2 tph Circular Quay to Lidcombe will operate as tabled and 2 tph will terminate at Central.

Liverpool – Circular Quay via Bankstown

From 1944 hours limited stops services to Liverpool will instead stop all stations.

Carlingford – Clyde

Up and down services reduced from 2 tph to 1.5 tph (every 45 minutes). This is what Sydney Trains' internal summary says, but, in fact, this does not apply on Weekdays until after 1930. It does apply on Weekends.

Wyong / Hamilton – Sydney Terminal

Down late night Sydney Terminal to Central Coast services will make additional stops Hornsby to Berowra.

As far as operational staff are concerned these changes:

- Increase walking time between changeovers from 5-7 minutes to 10 minutes;
- Reduce the number of crew changeovers from 1,781 to 1,596; and
- Reduce the number of relief locations.

Following complaints about Blue Mountains trains no longer stopping at Redfern, it will be returned as a stop for three morning and three afternoon peak services:

- 0544, 0614 and 0645 from Mt Victoria to Sydney;
- 1633 and 1703 from Sydney to Katoomba; and
- 1733 from Sydney to Mt Victoria

This will be implemented as soon as possible following briefing of operational staff.

Sydney Trains: Closures

A four day closedown of the **City Circle** may take place later this year to enable transfer of control from the existing Redfern Signalling Centre to the new Operations Centre near Green Square.

The seven months closure of the **Chatswood-Epping line** for conversion to Metro is expected to commence in November.

Sydney Central is to undergo significant rebuilding over the next few years. The redevelopment will mainly comprise new Metro underground platforms and a "Central Walk" — a 19-metre wide underground concourse from Chalmers St connecting heavy rail, light rail, the Metro and buses. Those works are expected to be complete by 2022. After this, new Metro tracks will be laid and the station fitted out before its opening in 2024. During construction, platforms 13 and 14 will be closed.

Sydney Airport: Train to the Plane

The Federal and NSW governments have agreed to build railways to the second Sydney airport in western Sydney. A north-south line, would link from St Marys on the Western line to the Airport, at a cost of \$6bn. This could in time, be extended north to Schofields, where it might meet an extension of the Sydney Metro from Cudgeong Road. To the south, it could be extended to Macarthur. An extension of the South West railway from Leppington is envisaged, at a cost \$10bn-plus.

Details of these projects are at <https://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/projects/current-projects/western-sydney-rail-needs-scoping-study> and at <https://cities.infrastructure.gov.au/western-sydney-city-deal>

Mr Turnbull has always stated his preference for a rail line to be operational when the new airport opens in 2026. NSW Minister Constance is believed to have told Cabinet it was important first to build the Western Metro — which would run from the city to Parramatta and relieve a heavily crowded Western line — and the Federal government needed to stump up more cash. NSW cannot afford to build all three. "The reason Metro West is more important than any other project is because, come 2031, we are physically not going to be able to get people on to trains, given the growth in western Sydney. What we've got to do is make sure that we in essence double the capacity between the city and Parramatta, given we have 450,000 people living in that corridor."

Transport for NSW: Information

There is lots of interesting material available which has been released under the NSW Government Information (Public Access) Act which can be accessed at <https://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/about-us/access-to-information/disclosure-log>

However (there is always a "however"), many of the items require further email requests. Also, some of the items on the website seem to be more redacted than

major national security documents, for example, a document about improving the Zig Zag tunnels to suit new rolling stock is almost entirely blacked out.

Possibly the most interesting document is a **Rail Corridor Strategy Sydney to Wollongong** prepared in 2014. Most of this paper is released, but even it has two pages blacked out, as well as all costings. It canvasses a variety of possible upgrading measures. These are Erskineville crossovers, Sutherland-Waterfall-curve easing, Thirroul-North Wollongong curve easing and level crossing removal, Waterfall station upgrade, Thirroul station upgrade, Coniston grade separation, Unanderra-Dapto duplication, Kembla Grange stabling yard, and level crossing removal south of Wollongong.

But by far the most important, of course, is a new Thirroul tunnel. This would avoid the existing slope instability, the slow, curvy section from Waterfall to Thirroul, the problematic Stanwell Park viaduct, and the single track through the Coal Cliff tunnel. Three tunnel options are discussed. The longest tunnel option would require the retention of the existing line for diesel hauled coal trains.

The paper suggests that, if construction is commenced now, by the 2031 timetable there would be a saving of 23.5 minutes from Sydney to Wollongong, being 9 minutes from rolling stock improvement, one minute from timetable improvement, and 13.5 minutes from infrastructure improvements.

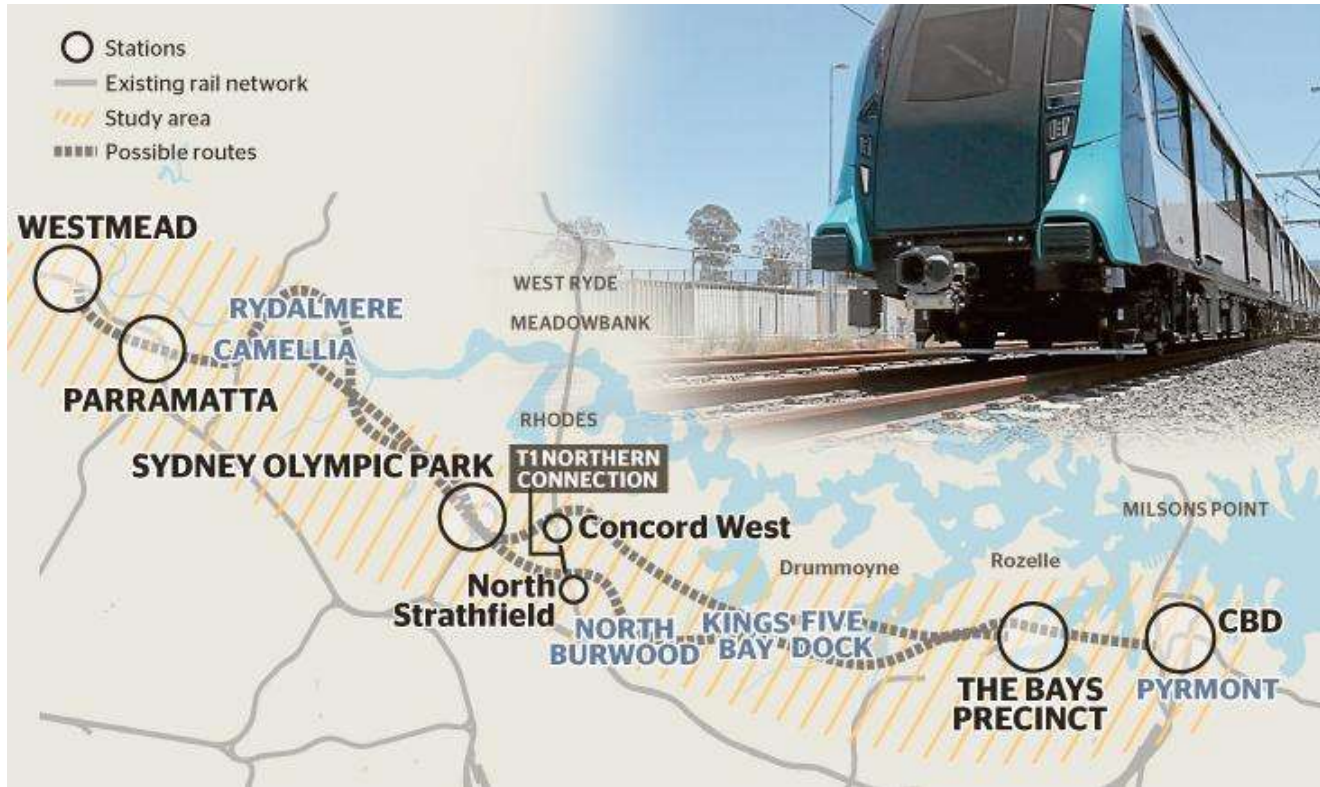
The paper states that if a stabling yard is built at Kembla Grange, the 4.7 km Port Kembla branch would be closed for passenger trains, which would be replaced by buses. Buses also could replace stops at smaller stations between Austinmer and Helensburgh.

A document labelled on the log as **Information about train passenger numbers from the Blue Mountains to Redfern**, in fact, also includes notes to the Minister about other aspects of the introduction of the Sydney Trains timetable on 26 November 2017. This includes discussion of the date to commence the timetable; and discussion about the increase in off-peak passenger train frequency, meaning that any freight train arriving at the boundaries of the network late may not be able to obtain a path, and hence "a greater level of precision will be required from both passenger and freight operators to run to time."

Sydney Metro

The proposed metro-style railway to Western Sydney will extend as far as Westmead and include a connection to the existing T1 Northern Line at either Concord West or North Strathfield, the NSW government announced on 23 March. Previously

announced stations will in the CBD, The Bays Precinct, Sydney Olympic Park and Parramatta, Stations are also being considered for Camellia/Rydalmere, North Burwood/Five Dock, Kings Bay and Pyrmont, with further consultation to take place. The government will ensure the network can be extended in the future.



Map from Sydney Morning Herald

ARTC and V/Line: Albury line

The Australian Rail Track Corporation spent more than \$4m on infrastructure renewal and annual maintenance improvement works in NE Victoria on the weekend of 17-19 March. Nearly 40 projects targeted everything from track resurfacing to bridge upgrades and level crossing improvements as part of the works package. The \$4 million renewal maintenance in March includes \$3 million for replacement of seven bridges, which is part of the scope of works for the Federal Government's \$100 million commitment to the North East Rail Line. With the scope nearing agreement, ARTC will work alongside Victorian agencies to talk with the community about the detail of the scope, with additional work likely to begin in the middle of the year. Works were:

- Approximately 40km of track re-surfaced (tamped and regulated/compacted)
- Seven existing bridges upgraded with new concrete ballast top decks replacing aging timber decks and transoms
- Track re-conditioning and road re-surfacing at five level crossings

- Approximately 500 metres of mud holes removed
- V-crossing build ups and replacements undertaken to increase asset life and improve ride quality
- Early phase geotechnical investigations at Murray Valley Highway near Barnawartha for inland Rail
- Two level crossings commissioned with boom protection by VicTrack.

The usual 20 freight and passenger trains daily were suspended. Buses replaced V/Line and NSW TrainLink trains.

Rail advocate Tim Fischer wants XPT trains to replace the "ancient" V/Line rolling stock to provide more reliability to passengers. The former Deputy Prime Minister said using the NSW sets could be a stopgap move until new V/Line trains are bought for the service. "One interim solution V/Line might look at is having two old XPT units and running them on the corridor to Melbourne," Mr Fischer said. "The XPT has zero problem with the rails between Wodonga and Seymour. 90% of the problem is the ancient carriages and bogies that V/Line has allowed to be continued to

use on the Albury service. Even having one XPT set for a morning and evening run on the V/Line service “would be an improvement”. However, there is a lack of spare capacity in the existing XPT fleet of 60 carriages and 19 diesel locomotives.

V/Line: Regional upgrades

The Federal government will release \$1.7 billion for Victoria’s Regional Rail Revival program after Victoria formally signed up to cooperate on the Inland Rail project. Victoria has agreed to negotiate a new long-term lease with the ARTC, which will support the extension of the North East Rail corridor as part of the Inland Rail line. Victoria is the first state to sign an Inland Rail agreement.

\$1.57 billion of the funding will go towards the Regional Rail Revival program, and \$135 million towards the upgrade of the North East Rail Line to a class 2 standard. Regional Rail Revival includes a \$557 million, two-stage upgrade to the Ballarat Line, a \$91 million upgrade to the Bendigo Line, \$110 million for the Geelong Line, \$530 million for the Gippsland Line, and \$114 million for the Warrnambool Line. Total listed spending planned for the North East upgrade is \$140 million, and the program also includes \$10 million to identify potential improvements to enhance freight capacity around Shepparton. The Ballarat line upgrades will fund improved stabling near Ararat Station allowing extra services to run, and signalling and track works for additional freight trains anticipated from the Murray Basin Rail Project.

V/Line: Murray Basin Rail Project

A standard gauge container train operated on Monday 25 and Tuesday 26 February from Ararat to Maryborough, Dunolly, Birchip and Ouyen. This was the first standard gauge train between Ararat and Maryborough, and Birchip and Ouyen following conversion of these lines from broad gauge. Part of the Victorian government’s \$440 million Murray Basin Rail Project, the works also involved increasing the line’s axle loading from 19 tonnes to 21 tonnes, which will allow trains to carry additional freight.

On 2 March a train departed Melbourne for Merbein (just beyond Mildura) conveying containers for the Wakefield Transport group. A train carrying wine, grapes and almonds left Merbein on 6 March afternoon bound for the Port of Melbourne via Ararat.

V/Line: Promises

The Liberal/National Opposition on 4 March promised that if elected at November’s State election, it will move quickly to order a long-distance version of VLocity DMUs for services to Albury, Shepparton, Swan Hill, Warrnambool and Bairnsdale.

V/Line: Gippsland line

Work has begun on upgrades to Victoria’s Gippsland Line, with geotechnical and site investigations underway at the Avon River rail bridge in Stratford to remove the current 10km/h speed limit. More than 50 boreholes and 120 test pits around the bridge and

other locations along the Gippsland line will be carried out over the coming months to ascertain current ground conditions and soil quality. The information gathered will inform the project’s design and construction phases. The \$530 million project will include level crossing upgrades, track duplication Bunyip-Longwarry and additional platforms at Bunyip, Longwarry, Morwell and Traralgon stations.

V/Line: Denilquin line

\$1 million in improvement works will be carried out on the Echuca to Denilquin line between 1 and 11 March. The package of works will include replacing the bridge deck in Moama, maintenance work on other bridges, additional ballast and track welding and repairs to sections of the track.

V/Line: Shepparton line

Shepparton line upgrades are to be fast-tracked to enable a fifth service in 2019 rather than 2020. \$43 million will be provided for new train stabling facilities at Shepparton and a crossing loop near Murchison East (with the final location soon to be determined). The Melbourne Metro Rail Authority (MMRA), under the auspices of the Victorian government’s Regional Rail Revival Program, will oversee the delivery of the upgrades. Work is reportedly to begin soon, with site investigations near the rail line that will determine final design and planning processes.

Since 2017, the Shepparton Line has received nine additional services. 29 coach services will eventually be added between Seymour and Shepparton in advance of the future additional train services next year.

V/Line: Warrnambool line

On Sunday 18 March, Warrnambool trains were suspended beyond Waurin Ponds due to bushfires. Track was damaged near Terang, as well as the electrical power to level crossings.

V/Line & Pacific National: Freight timetable alteration

Commencing 19 March the following alterations to Pacific National freight operations took effect:

- 1150 Saturday Appleton Dock North Geelong (arrive 1342) via Werribee cancelled;
- 1500 Saturday North Geelong-Appleton Dock (arrive 1645) via Werribee cancelled;
- 0010 Monday to Friday additional if required Appleton Dock-North Geelong (arrive 0140) via Werribee;
- 0255 Monday to Friday additional if required North Geelong-Appleton Dock (arrive 0425) via Werribee.

Melbourne freight terminals proposals

The Victorian government is reported to be considering the construction of new inland freight hubs to move tens of thousands of trucks off suburban streets and on to rail. A major facility will be developed at

Truganina, 22km west of the CBD, and a smaller one at Beveridge, 42km north of the city, with an interstate connection.

Industry leaders believe the Port of Melbourne must move 30% of its freight to rail as the city population surges. At present, containers coming from interstate on rail to Melbourne are taken to a terminal in Dynon, next to the Port of Melbourne, and then trucked to the outer suburbs.

The Western Inland Freight Terminal at Truganina would move much of this freight to warehouses in Melbourne's west, reducing freight traffic on suburban streets and cutting down travel times. It will be supported by a \$58 million scheme, which the Federal and Victorian governments are currently seeking bidders for, to build rail shuttles to the Port of Melbourne. It will also accommodate the Inland Rail Project, which will feature longer trains with double-stacked containers.

Rails Future Institute president John Hearsch says trains currently carry just a fraction of the imports arriving in Melbourne. "At the moment the proportion of freight from the port that's on rail is quite small, about less than 10%. There's no real suitable facility at the port yet to handle these rail port shuttles so that's where the attention and effort needs to go. Governments are really going to have to step in and make this happen. If people in the western suburbs perceive it as a problem now I'm afraid they haven't seen anything yet."

Melbourne construction: Don't travel at Easter

Metro Trains Melbourne:

Cranbourne and Pakenham lines: Between 30 March and 15 April, two level crossings will be removed in Clayton. Buses replaced trains between Dandenong and Cranbourne from 2000 Friday 23 March to last service Sunday 25 March. Buses replaced trains between Oakleigh and Dandenong from first service Friday 30 March to last service Monday 2 April. Buses replaced trains between Caulfield and Westall from first service Tuesday 3 April to last service Sunday 15 April. Once trains ran again, they used the 1.4 km section of the new elevated rail line and stopped at the new Clayton station.

Frankston and Stony Point lines: Buses replaced trains between Moorabbin and Stony Point from Friday 6 April to last service Sunday 8 April.

Hurstbridge line: From March 16, a 44-day shutdown of the Hurstbridge line enabled the removal of level crossings at Lower Plenty Road and Grange Road, and the completion of final works on the new Rosanna Station and duplicated track from Heidelberg to Rosanna. Buses replaced trains between Clifton Hill and Macleod from 2015 Friday 16 March to last service Sunday 29 April. Buses replaced trains between Clifton Hill and Greensborough from 2015 Friday 16 March to 6am Saturday 17 March. Buses

replaced trains between Macleod and Greensborough from 1945 Thursday 29 March to last service Monday 2 April.

Sunbury line: Buses replaced trains between Sunshine and Sunbury from first service Friday 30 March to last service Sunday 1 April. Buses replaced trains between Watergardens and Sunbury from first service to last service on Sunday 15 April.

V/Line:

Bairnsdale and Traralgon lines: Buses replaced trains between Southern Cross and Bairnsdale/Traralgon from first service Friday 30 March to last service Sunday 15 April.

Bendigo line: Buses replaced trains between Southern Cross and Bendigo from Friday 30 March to Sunday 1 April.

Yarra Trams:

Route 58: Buses replaced trams between Toorak Road West and Park St from Sunday 1 April to last service Tuesday 17 April.

St Kilda Road: During the school holidays, buses replaced trams along much of St. Kilda Road to enable works for the construction of Metro Tunnel project's Anzac station under the road. Buses replaced trams between Commercial Road and Stop 19 (Shrine of Remembrance) from Friday 6 April to last service Tuesday 17 April affecting routes 3, 3a, 5, 6, 16, 64, 67 and 72.

Metro Trains Melbourne: Disruption 7 March

Commuters had a bad morning on Wednesday 7 March with an equipment fault crippling train services on most lines. Services on the Alamein, Belgrave, Glen Waverley, Hurstbridge, Lilydale and South Morang lines were halted about 0825 after a temporary loss of power affected signals between Flinders St and Jolimont. Trains were stuck between Clifton Hill and Victoria Park for 15 minutes before returning to Clifton Hill because of a "serious equipment failure". Metro spokesman Marcus Williams said: "Services resumed around ten minutes after the power loss but we will have major delays as we work to recover the timetable." Uber price rates surged following the outage, with a seven minute ride costing about \$60.

Route 82 trams were disrupted between central Footscray and Gordon St due to a car crash.

Victorian Fares and Ticketing Manual

The Victorian Fares and Ticketing Manual has amendments with effect from 1 March. The updated edition, and the regional bus supplement, can be accessed at <https://www.ptv.vic.gov.au/tickets/general-information/victorian-fares-and-ticketing-manual/>

Victoria is the only state which places comprehensive fares information on the web in this manner.

SCT expands

SCT has added an additional Melbourne-Perth and v.v. service, bringing these trains to five a week.

Bowmans Rail

A tiny section of the Leigh Creek line in SA will be re-opened from Stirling North 7 km north to Bungala, the site for a new container terminal for Bowmans Rail.

TransWA: Australind changes

From 7 April, the weekend/public holiday timetable of the Australind will change. Service 108 departing Bunbury 1445 arriving Perth 1715, will now leave Bunbury at 1645 and arrive at Perth at 1912. Service 105 departing Perth 1755, arriving Bunbury 2024, will now leave Perth at 1955, arriving in Bunbury at 2218. The weekday timetable remains the same. The new timetable is online at

<http://www.transwa.wa.gov.au/Bookings-and-fares/Timetables#Rail-All-4>

KiwiRail North Island

Work to reinstate the railway from Napier to Wairoa started at the end of February, days after the NZ government announced \$5 million in funding for the project through the Provincial Growth Fund. The Fund, designed to boost economic development in regional areas, will also provide for upgrades to the Whanganui line. The first log trains are expected to be able to use the Wairoa line by the end of the year; however, the project will take two years to be completed.

KiwiRail South Island Main North line I: Damage

The South Island Main North Line between Picton and Christchurch along the Kaikoura coast was damaged by Cyclone Gita on 20 February. Heavy rainfall – exceeding 200mm over 18 hours in some areas – caused approximately 300,000 cubic metres of material to spread across 60 sites between Parnassus and Clarence in landslips. This led to the shutdown of both the railway and the state highway. Freight trains

were suspended for about a week. The line had only recently been re-opened for freight trains after extensive work to repair damage from the 14 November 2016 earthquake in the Kaikoura area. Passenger trains have not yet resumed after the earthquake.

KiwiRail South Island Main North line II: Marlborough Flyer

The Marlborough Flyer is a new steam train operation which commenced on 1 December 2017. It traverses KiwiRail tracks and uses AB 608 4-6-0 locomotive built in 1915. It operates in conjunction with cruise ship visits to Picton, at the northern end of the South Island. Trips are offered from Picton to Blenheim and return, 28.5 km – actually it is extended empty to and from Vernon Loop, a further 8 km. On selected “Super Sundays” it operates two round trips designed for locals and at a much reduced fare. Details are at <https://www.marlboroughflyer.co.nz/>

Auckland Transport: Easter closedown

Planned civil engineering works mean that all trains were replaced by buses during the Easter period except for Britomart to Manukau via the Eastern line.

Amtrak: No more printed timetables

In 2016, Amtrak, the US long-distance passenger train operator, discontinued their system timetable book. From late 2017 they also discontinued printed copies of individual route timetables. However, both the system book, and individual timetables are still available in PDF format from their website, www.amtrak.com

Thanks to Tony Bailey, Scott Ferris, Victor Isaacs, Geoff Lambert, Ross Morrison, James Ng, Len Regan, www.railexpress.com.au, www.railpage.com.au, *Catchpoint Passenger Train Journal* (US), *Railway Digest*, *Transit Australia*, *Age*, *Australian*, *Border Mail* (Albury-Wodonga), *Courier-Mail*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Herald Sun*, and *Sydney Morning Herald* for Rail news

BUS NEWS

New South Wales/ACT

New **NSW TrainLink** bus routes are reported in the Rail news section above.

Marulan Coaches have re-established a bus service between Marulan-Goulburn-Canberra following withdrawal of the Greyhound bus last year. It was introduced on a trial basis, and needs to show a commercial return to ensure its continuation. The service commenced on Monday 19 March and runs twice each way on weekdays excluding public holidays: Marulan 0630-Goulburn 0700-Canberra 0815, Canberra 1105-Goulburn 1215, Goulburn 1330-Canberra 1440, Canberra 1715-Goulburn 1820-Marulan 1840. Services will extend to/from Canberra Airport on prior booking. There is a long history of unsuccessful attempts to run a Goulburn-Canberra bus service.

From 1 March, changes to **Sydney NightRide** services were introduced, including:

- Route N20 (Riverwood to Rockdale), extended to run to and from the Sydney CBD via Redfern, Green Square, Mascot and the International Terminal.
- New route N81 from Sydney CBD to Parramatta, via Rhodes, Wentworth Point and Sydney Olympic Park. This service runs Thursday to Saturday nights.
- New route N91 from Bondi Junction to Macquarie Park via Sydney CBD and Chatswood. This replaces route N100 which ran on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays.
- Enhancement of route N71 to provide services between the Sydney CBD and Schofields seven days a week.
- Adjustments to timetables for other Nightride services.

Transit Systems has been announced as the new operator for Region 6 bus services, replacing STA.

Punchbowl Bus have minor changes to wheelchair accessible services from Monday 12 March due to changes in vehicle scheduling. Their timetables are at <http://punchbowlbus.com.au/timetables/guides-and-information>

Queensland

Brisbane City Council will extend the Maroon CityGlider route to the Coorparoo Junction development hub. The service currently carries more than 1.2m passengers a year. The extension will extend the service to Stop 23 at Coorparoo Square. The service costs the BCC about \$6m a year and the expansion from Stones Corner to Coorparoo Junction will cost an extra \$144,000 a year, to be equally funded by BCC and TransLink.

South Australia

Some additional changes to Adelaide services from 17 December, not yet recorded, are:

- 400, 421, Elizabeth-Salisbury North and Salisbury-DSTO has moved from version 7 to 8 whilst retaining the 26/1/16 start date. The only change is the movement of stop 52 North Bound from Brian St to Commercial Road on the map and a change of zone for Southbound services at Salisbury Interchange. All times and services remained the same.
- City-Blackwood via Unley Road, 195, 196, 197X has moved from revision 11 to 12, whilst retaining the 17/12/17 start date.
- 224, City-Elizabeth via Salisbury Hwy has moved from revision 11 to 12, whilst retaining the 17/12/17 start date.
- 542, City-Fairview Park has moved from revision 7 to 8, whilst retaining the 17/12/17 start date.
- 400, 421, Elizabeth-Salisbury North & Salisbury-DSTO has moved from version 7 to 8 whilst retaining the 26/1/16 start date.

A driverless shuttle will be trialled, beginning September, on the beachfront at Glenelg between Moseley Square and the Broadway Kiosk by local company SAGE Automation and US manufacturer Local Motors

Victoria

Information about the Victorian Fares and Ticketing Manual and Regional Bus Supplement is in Rail news above.

Western Australia

TransPerth is seeking feedback on proposed changes due to the opening of the new Curtin Central Bus Station:

Route 30 is proposed to undergo a route change in the Waterford and Karawara area. Route 30 would no longer travel via Manning Road, Lawson St and Hayman Road to access Curtin University Bus Station. It is instead proposed Route 30 travels via Manning Road and Kent St via Curtin Central Bus Station, and then via an internal road to stop at Curtin University Bus Station. There will be minor timetable changes but no changes to the number of trips operating.

Route 34 would travel the normal route, before turning onto an internal road at Curtin University off Kent St to stop at the new Curtin Central Bus Station before continuing on the normal route. There will be minor timetable changes but no changes to the number of trips operating.

Route 70 would no longer follow the length of Hayman Road to Curtin University Bus Station. It is proposed Route 70 instead travels via Hayman Road and turn onto Kent St to access the new Curtin Central Bus

Station, before following an internal road to Curtin University Bus Station and then turning back onto Hayman Road. There will be minor timetable changes but no changes to the number of trips operating.

Route 101 would extend from the current Curtin University Bus Station to the new Curtin Central Bus Station via an internal road. There will be minor timetable changes but no changes to the number of trips operating.

Route 284 is proposed to travel via the normal route to Curtin University Bus Station and extend via Hayman Road and an internal road to Curtin Central Bus Station.

Route 960 is proposed to travel via Kent St to stop at the new Curtin Central Bus Station and then via an internal road and Hayman Road to Curtin University Bus Station. It is proposed that the Route 960 no

longer service Hayman Road between Kent St and Allen Crescent via TAFE Polytechnic West in Bentley. There will be minor timetable changes but no changes to the number of trips operating.

TransPerth is also seeking feedback on the proposed new Route 353 which would operate between Ellenbrook Transfer Station and Bassendean Station, via Marshall Road, Altone Road and Lord St. In addition to improving access for residents in Brabham and Dayton, it will provide another option for passengers impacted by disruptions to Routes 955 and 956, resulting from construction works on the new Lord St Project. Route 353 is proposed to operate every 20 minutes in peak, and every 60 minutes in off-peak periods and during the day every day.

Thanks to Paul Brown, Victor Isaacs, Alex Sims and Lourie Smit for Bus news.

AIR NEWS

Domestic

Rex will commence services Perth-Carnarvon-Monkey Mia from 2 July. Carnarvon will receive 12 air services a week each way - a 20% increase in frequency, and Monkey Mia a 50% increase to six return flights per week. Perth Mon-Sat 0735-Carnarvon 0945. Carnarvon-Mon-Sat 1020-Perth 1230. Perth Sun-Fri 1350-Monkey Mia 1535. Monkey Mia Sun-Fri 1600-Carnarvon 1630/1705-Perth 1915.

The WA government has contracted with **Skippers Aviation** to continue the Northern Goldfields services with three flights a week between Perth and Laverton, Leonora, Meekatharra, Mount Magnet and Wiluna.

Virgin Australia will inaugurate a new route from Brisbane to Alice Springs from 19 June. Flights will be on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

International

Two budget airlines are entering the Victorian market. **Cebu Pacific** will provide direct flights from Manila to Melbourne Tue, Thur, Sat from 14 August: Manila 0605-Melbourne 1550. Melbourne 1705-Manila 2315. **Scoot** will fly daily between Melbourne and Singapore.

Virgin Australia is to add one weekly service (from Melbourne?) to the Cook Islands. Virgin Australia is planning, subject to government authorisation, to start daily services between Sydney and Hong Kong from mid 2018.

Qantas will start daily Melbourne to Denpasar (Bali) services on 23 June.

Vietjet Air, Vietnam's largest budget airline, will fly from Ho Chi Minh City to Brisbane from 2019. This is Vietjet Air's first destination in Australia.

Thanks to Alex Sims, Tris Tottenham, Victor Isaacs, *Herald Sun* and the *Australian* for Air news

About Table Talk

Table Talk is published monthly by the Australian Timetable Association Inc. (Registration No. A0043673H) as a journal of record covering recent timetable news items. The ATA also publishes the **Times** covering timetable history and analysis. Contributions are invited and are very welcome. Please send these to the appropriate Editor. ABN 74248483468.

The **deadline for Table Talk** is the last weekend of the month, but contributions are welcome at all times.

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Back issues of **Table Talk** are available on the Australian Timetable Association's website, [Austta.org.au](http:// Austta.org.au), after two months.

Table Talk Newswire is an advance monthly email of Rail news. To obtain this, contact the Rail Editor.