

BLACKWOOD/BELAIR AND DISTRICT COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION (Inc.)

**P.O. Box 15
Belair 5052**

President: Stewart Mitchell – phone 8278 2047
Vice President: Brian Thoman - phone 8208 8261
Immediate Past President: Heather Beckmann - phone 8278 2150

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The Administrator,
Adelaide Rail Freight Movements Study
Department of Infrastructure, Transport,
Regional Development and Local Government
GPO Box 594
CANBERRA ACT 2601
Submitted by email to sarailfreight@infrastructure.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam,

Comment on Adelaide Rail Freight Movements Study

The Blackwood/Belair and District Community Association (BBDCA) aims to improve the environment and living conditions in Mitcham Hills, an area that is severely impacted by the Adelaide-Melbourne rail freight corridor as it currently exists. We strongly support the current Study and wish to comment as follows.

Several BBDCA members have reviewed the options presented in the October 2009 Discussion Paper and unanimously favour the Option 3 Northern Bypass. Not surprisingly our views align closely with those of our local government authority, the City of Mitcham, and we basically support that submission.

We note the six points where the Study Review Team is seeking input and regret that as a community group, we are not really in a position to help. However, there is one more question that seems to be missing and that could be expressed as *“What is the impact of each option on the social and environmental amenity along the proposed route, both through the hills and metropolitan area?”*

We accept that a project of this magnitude must stack up economically but equal value should be given to the social and environmental implications which over time could deliver less directly obvious benefits to South Australia, like tourism, increased land values and improved road traffic flow. The possibility of a two way commuter rail service to Mount Barker or even Murray Bridge should not be overlooked for its potential to deal with the huge population increase planned for metropolitan Adelaide over the next 30 years.

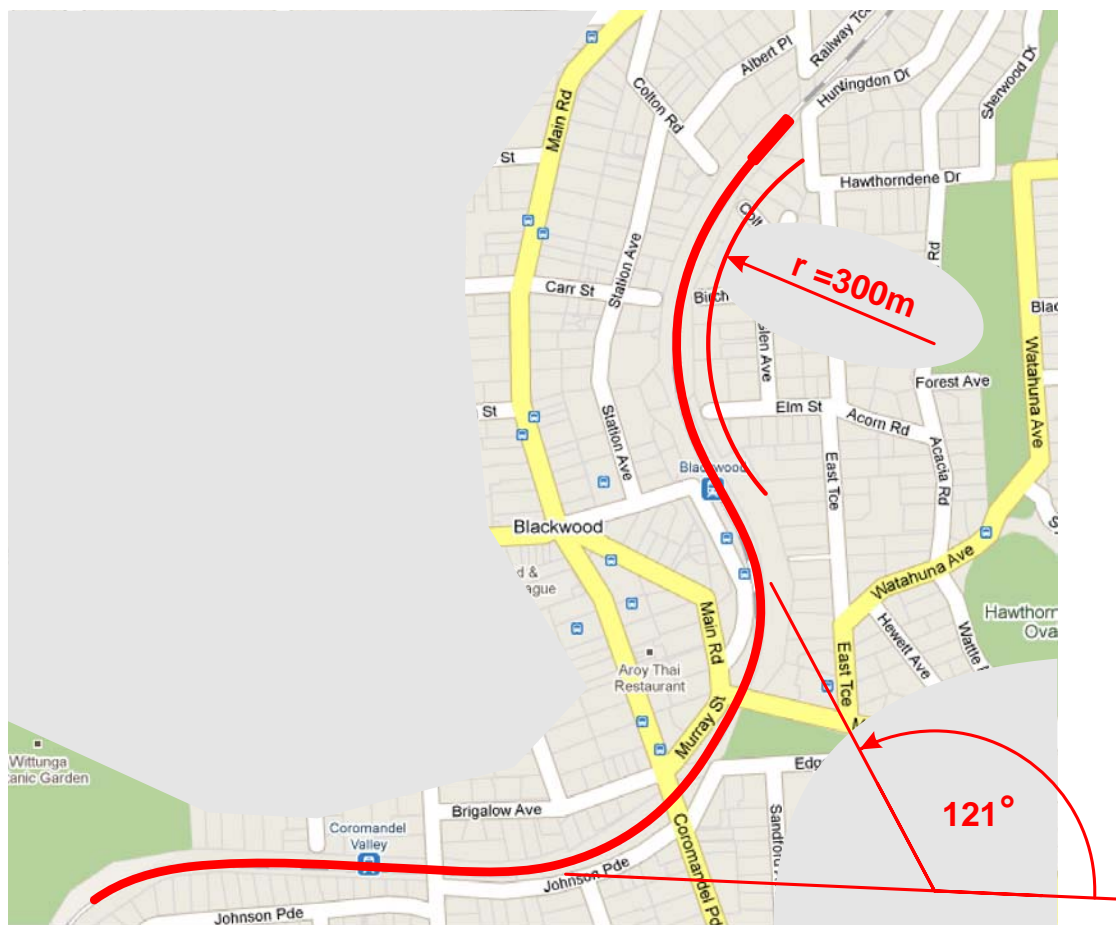
OPTION 1 – Upgrade of existing route

Even with larger bend radii, extra passing loops and level crossing separations, this still will have continued impact as well as being dangerous due to 1800 m trains simultaneously blocking two or more crossings and particularly in event of accidents and during fires or the evacuation traffic expected under the new [fire warning ratings](#).

The issue that started this whole process – the squealing of metal on metal as the wheel flanges of heavily laden rolling stock grinds against the inner edge of the rails will only get worse as trains get longer and tonnage increases two to four times the current amount as proposed in the Study.

We have to submit that the flanged wheel is a flawed technology in as much as the surface speed at the other edge of the flange is greater than the flat in contact with the rail. This is of little consequence on straight track, but a long train being pulled uphill around a tight bend causes these two surfaces to interfere (rub) with a huge pressure and differential speed – hence the squeal that no amount of lubricant will silence. Another school of thought holds that solid axles are to blame – again only a problem on bends – but either way it comes down to long and heavy trains on tight curves. We note there are several significant bends of radius 300 m or less in our area. All of these would have to be re-aligned – causing major disruption in our community.

The following diagram shows a 1.8 km long train being hauled around the tight curves passing both Coromandel and Blackwood Stations. At one point the locomotives are pulling almost the opposite direction (actually 121 degrees) to the centre of mass of the load. Whilst there may be examples of well lubricated or lightly loaded systems that pull well around corners (the chain drive for example) the flanged rail wheel was never intended for such extreme (ab)use. The ARTC and other rail transport operators have progressively over-extended this 1800s invention. Changing technology is out of the question but we have to recognise its limits and increase bend radii – or shorten trains.



The BBDCA knows the area intimately. We believe any attempt to straighten the bends will involve wholesale compulsory property acquisition which will be political suicide. And we have seen the result of derailment in a sloping residential area – the 2004 event when freight trucks speared into private property at Glenalta and could well have demolished houses and taken lives.

We believe that continuing to enter Adelaide from the south will be to the future detriment of the SA economy. Indeed we would expect that some time in the future freight trains will not penetrate as far as Islington but stop north of Grand Junction Road where most of the freight depots are established. Or perhaps 100 years from now the main transport hub could be as far north as Two Wells. This may be pure speculation on our part but as the pressure of residential development drives it out, it is far more likely to move north than south of the GPO.

OPTIONS 2 and 3 Northern Bypasses

From our perspective both of these options are acceptable. The Study dismisses Option 2 itself at one point which we support. That leaves Option 3 which would appear to impact on very few communities and all we can ask is for the heritage, amenity and safety issues to be properly addressed along this route which we believe offers the best investment of taxpayer funds.

OPTION 4 Southern Bypass

Apart from the travel time benefit to ARTC we find no redeeming value in this option whatsoever. There are numerous projects across Australia that could justify such a tunnel much more than this. If it surfaced at Islington, *that* would impress us, but without a lot of expensive infrastructure improvements in the inner suburbs it will only feed longer, noisier and polluting trains into Unley Park, Goodwood and through to the northern suburbs. The tunnel will probably pass under Coromandel Valley and/or Glenalta at an unspecified depth and we would expect to be informed about noise or vibration in those areas during construction and operation. There are some known geological faults to be drilled through in constructing the tunnel. And we have to ask where the ventilation shafts will come out and if there is to be a parallel service tunnel or some plan to deal with underground accident or fire. The surface corridor past Mount Bold to Callington is relatively unspoilt at this time and would suffer in environmental and amenity terms. We think the cost estimated is already too high and likely to blow out as most underground projects do. And it does not sit well with the data projections showing more freight bypassing Adelaide to Perth/Darwin in future.

BUSHFIRES

We are very conscious of bushfires in our area (Blackwood, Belair and Belair National Park). Assuming one of the bypass options goes ahead, the removal of long trains gives us some comfort that CFS vehicles will not be impeded at level crossings. As it stands, we will continue to lobby for the cessation of freight movements through the area in days of Severe, Extreme or Catastrophic fire danger. On such days we would even suggest that the Overland passenger service should use the bypass for the safety of passengers.

CONCLUSION

The BBDCA acknowledges the work of the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government in consulting stakeholders at this stage of the project. This is a very important matter to BBDCA and the community it represents. This community was established alongside the railway track we would not

wish to lose it entirely, however the recent increases in freight tonnage and train length on this winding corridor, completed in 1887, are completely inappropriate today.

We have considered the various options presented in the Discussion Paper at length and based on the limited data available we favour the route proposed in Option 3 as the best outcome for SA, the transport industry and the Australian taxpayer.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to comment.

Yours sincerely,

Stewart Mitchell
President

