

Submission to the Infrastructure Victoria Draft 30-Year Infrastructure Strategy from Fastrack Australia

Fastrack Australia argues that High Speed Rail (HSR) will be instrumental in improving the lives of Victorians. It will enable greater regional population settlement, provide better connectivity for regional centres, and reduce carbon emissions.

It will provide for environmentally sustainable and economic alternative travel choices, compared to air and road.

Fastrack submits that a recommendation to develop a clear infrastructure strategy to determine the ultimate Victorian HSR route together with a sound process for selecting the location of the HSR stations is a fundamental omission from the Infrastructure Victoria's 30 Year Draft Strategy.

Fastrack Australia welcomes Infrastructure Victoria's (IV) release of the Draft 30-Year Infrastructure Strategy.

However, High Speed Rail (HSR) and its integration with the overall Victorian proposed transport network is a significant omission from the draft report in regard to facilitating IV's economic, social and environmental objectives.

As stated in the draft report, Victoria faces challenges in achieving these objectives, but the benefits of well-planned HSR in Victoria will facilitate:

- Reducing the impact of climate change and other risks
- Providing viable opportunity for population growth and settlement outside, and within short travel times, of Melbourne
- Victorians having good access to housing, jobs, services and opportunities

In the last few decades Australia has vacillated between aiming for high-speed rail and settling for the more modest concept of faster rail. So far, however, little has been achieved on the ground. The Federal Government has recently committed to building high-speed rail between Melbourne and Brisbane, starting with the Sydney – Newcastle corridor, having apparently abandoned earlier efforts at faster rail.

As is well-known, Sydney – Newcastle is the most difficult part of the whole East Coast Route. But if this succeeds and is constructed, then the rest of the legs of a Melbourne - Brisbane HSR route will follow over time.

Melbourne and Victoria need to enshrine the future HSR route, the regional stations, train stabling and, very importantly, the location of a Melbourne HSR Terminus, that will provide for optimal connectivity with Melbourne's existing and future metro system, into its transport and land use planning.

The HSR terminus in Melbourne should be planned to be located to provide optimal passenger connectivity with the existing City Loop, the MM1 and MARL, SRL and the future MM2. For example, options might include Town Hall Station and State Library Station in addition to Southern Cross Station.

Based on a decision on the location of the Melbourne HSR Terminus, the above-ground corridors and tunnelling routes into Melbourne should be imbedded in all transport and land use planning documents.

There have been a number potential HSR corridors into Melbourne suggested in previous public and private studies. The key, from a HSR perspective, is the need for a direct and fast entry into Melbourne CBD (rather than the circuitous and slow route via Sunshine), and the need for a northern HSR Melbourne station, with east-west links via the SRL to Melbourne Airport and to the suburban rail lines to northern Melbourne.

Selection of the preferred HSR corridor might also take due cognisance of the Beveridge Intermodal Freight Terminal.

The Victorian Government needs to capture the future economic, social and environmental benefits of this long-term project through ensuring that the planned route, infrastructure locations and mode of operation for HSR is enshrined in all its transport and land use planning documents.

In this regard, it is requested that Infrastructure Victoria includes in its Recommendations and Future Option in its Final Report, for the development of strategic plans for the Victorian HSR route, station developments and network integration for Melbourne and Victoria.

High Speed Rail facilitates and enhances the following key IV imperatives:

- Victorians have good access to housing, jobs, services and opportunities
- Victoria has a thriving natural environment
 - Reducing greenhouse gases
- Victoria is resilient to climate change and other future risks
- Victoria has a high productivity and circular economy
 - Create and preserve opportunities to build major infrastructure projects which might be required in the long term.

Fastrack Australia would welcome Infrastructure Victoria's serious consideration of including a Recommendation or Future Option for the strategic planning of this very important economic, social and environmental future transport infrastructure for the benefit of Victorians.

Syd Herron
Administrator


teamfastrackaustralia@gmail.com

<https://www.fastrackaustralia.net/>

Fastrack Australia is a not-for-profit organisation which advocates for High-Speed Rail (HSR) as a way of addressing key challenges facing Australia. We have no commercial links to rail manufacturers, land developers or other organisations. Our research and advocacy is purely voluntary.