

SUBMISSION NO. 131



Hunter Business Chamber

Submission to
House of Representatives
Standing Committee of Transport and Regional
Services

January 2006

Towards Improved Transport Infrastructure

Introduction

The Hunter Region of NSW is a significant contributor to the economic strength and growth of the nation. Its regional economy is diverse with major coal mining and exports. The region has a considerable manufacturing sector, large education and health sectors and successful business services. It has strong wine and tourism industries as well as rural business.

This submission deals specifically with transport services to and within the Hunter.

The region's significant transport infrastructure elements include:

- The Port of Newcastle
- Major rail connections to Sydney and the North and Central West regions
- Major highways including the Pacific, New England and F3
- Australia's fastest growing airport

Its infrastructure needs are:

- Extension of the F3 into the Hunter Valley
- Development of the multipurpose terminal in the Port of Newcastle
- Fassifern to Hexham Rail Corridor
- Ardglen Rail Tunnel (Murrurundi)
- Gulgong to Maryvale rail link
- Upgrading of the Golden Highway between Belford and Dubbo

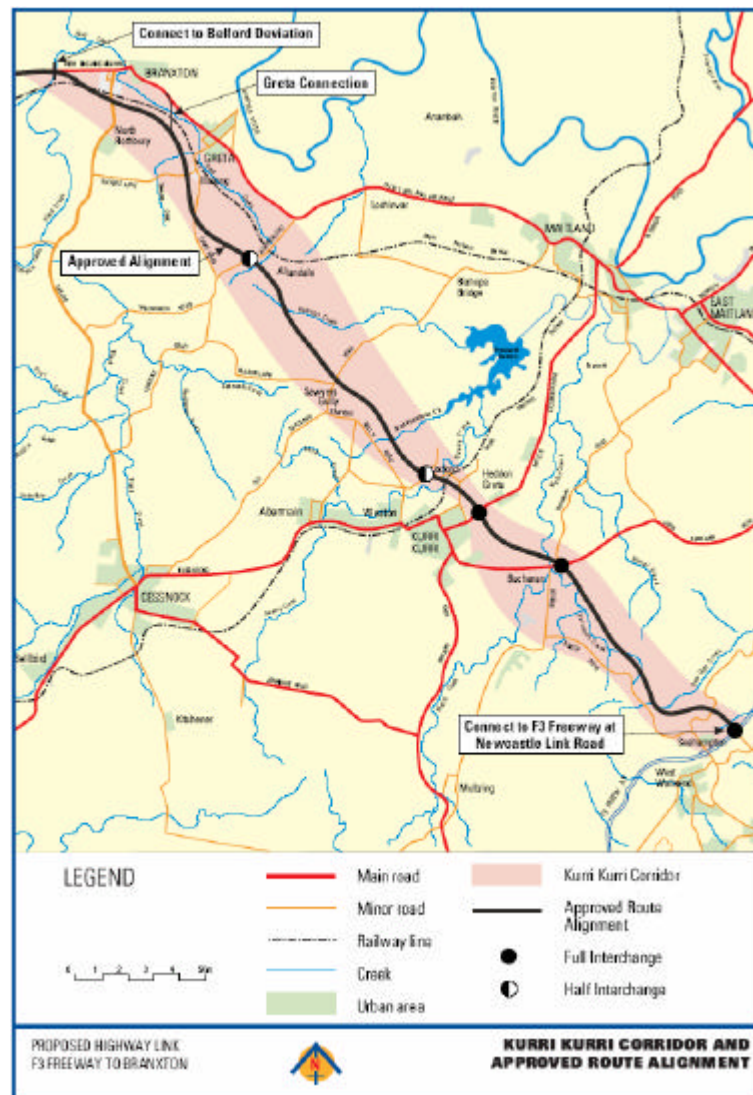
Extension of F3

The extension of the F3 further into the Hunter Valley (at Branxton) is widely regarded as the number one road priority in terms of economic value.

As with the above rail links this extension will provide considerable savings in freight costs, significant safety improvement and both social and environmental benefits. The movement of freight to the Port of Newcastle and between the North West, Central West, the Hunter, Central Coast and Metropolitan Sydney will be much improved.

That part of the New England Highway in the Hunter Valley sadly has a disastrous safety record yet is required to carry considerable heavy traffic on a roadway that is mostly side by side one way lanes.

The estimated cost is \$750 million.

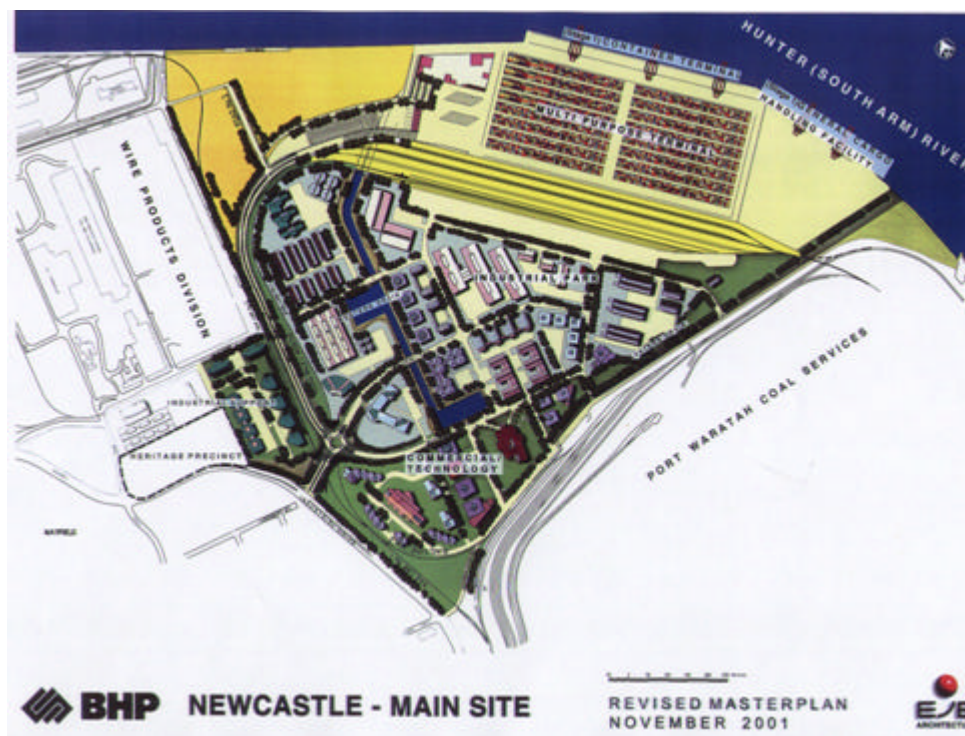


Multi Purpose Terminal

The Port of Newcastle is a major Australian trade infrastructure element and has the capacity to expand that role with the construction of a multi purpose terminal.

Such a terminal is planned as part of the NSW Government's "Three Ports Policy".

It is planned that a terminal be constructed on part of the former BHP Steel Works site, now vacant but funding is not yet allocated.

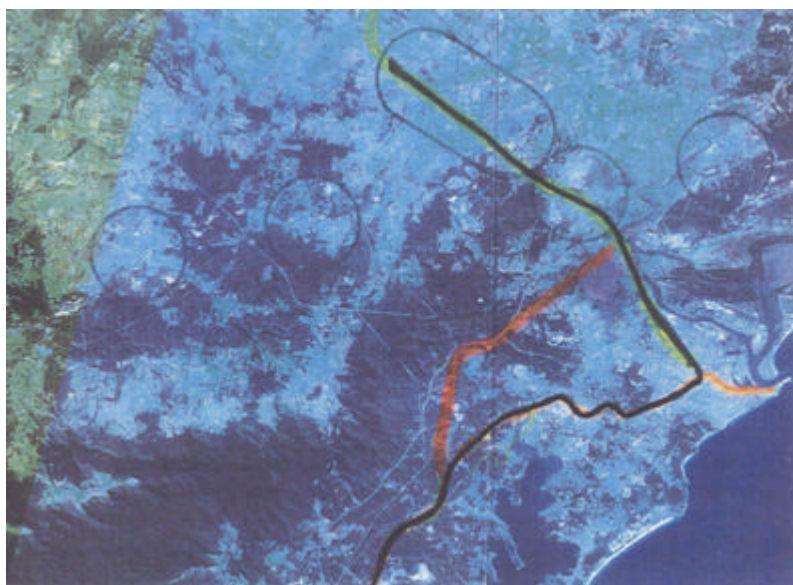
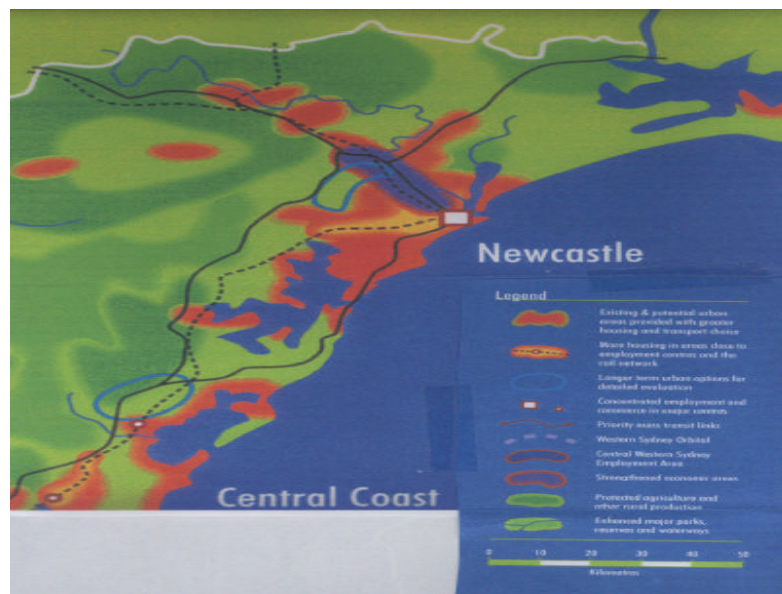


Fassifern to Hexham rail

All rail traffic between the Metropolitan Sydney and regions beyond the Hunter must pass through suburban Newcastle. This historical connection adds considerable costs, negative environmental and social impacts and could be easily avoided by a direct link between Fassifern and Hexham.

Such a link can much better serve Sydney, Newcastle, Upper Hunter and northern regions than the existing connection.

The estimated cost is \$95 million.



The Ardglen Tunnel

The six kilometre tunnel at Ardglen would deliver a 40 minute saving in travel time that in turn would produce savings of up to 750,000 litres of diesel each year and resulting freight costs reductions.

It would strengthen the competitiveness of products both nationally and internationally reduce the number of trucks on roads and open up opportunities for new business.

Also among the benefits it would produce are:

- 1,750 indirect permanent full time jobs in regions and at export facilities.
- Direct links from Inland Rail Expressway to NSW ports
- Cost effective transport corridor

Refer to Attachment A



Gulgong to Merrygoen Rail Link

The Gulgong to Merrygoen rail link will provide considerable economic opportunities for the Central West, the Hunter and Metropolitan Sydney.

With added duplication of the rail line east of Muswellbrook the Central West link would reduce impacts of so much freight traffic through the metropolitan regions and access the considerable potential of the Port of Newcastle.

The faster links to Newcastle will reduce costs and remove the need for multi handling of containers at Ingleburn to reach Port Botany.

At the same time this link will provide the Central Coast, Hunter and Mid North Coast will a vital and direct connection to that part of the national rail system to be developed between Victoria and Queensland.

Refer to Attachment A



Golden Highway upgrade

The Golden Highway, between the Hunter and Dubbo is a “forgotten” asset that has the potential to vastly improve economic results in both the central West and the Hunter.

Like the New England it is a below standard roadway that requires urgent upgrading. Its capacity to deliver trade more cost effectively through the Port of Newcastle and thus reduce transport impacts in Sydney should not be underestimated.

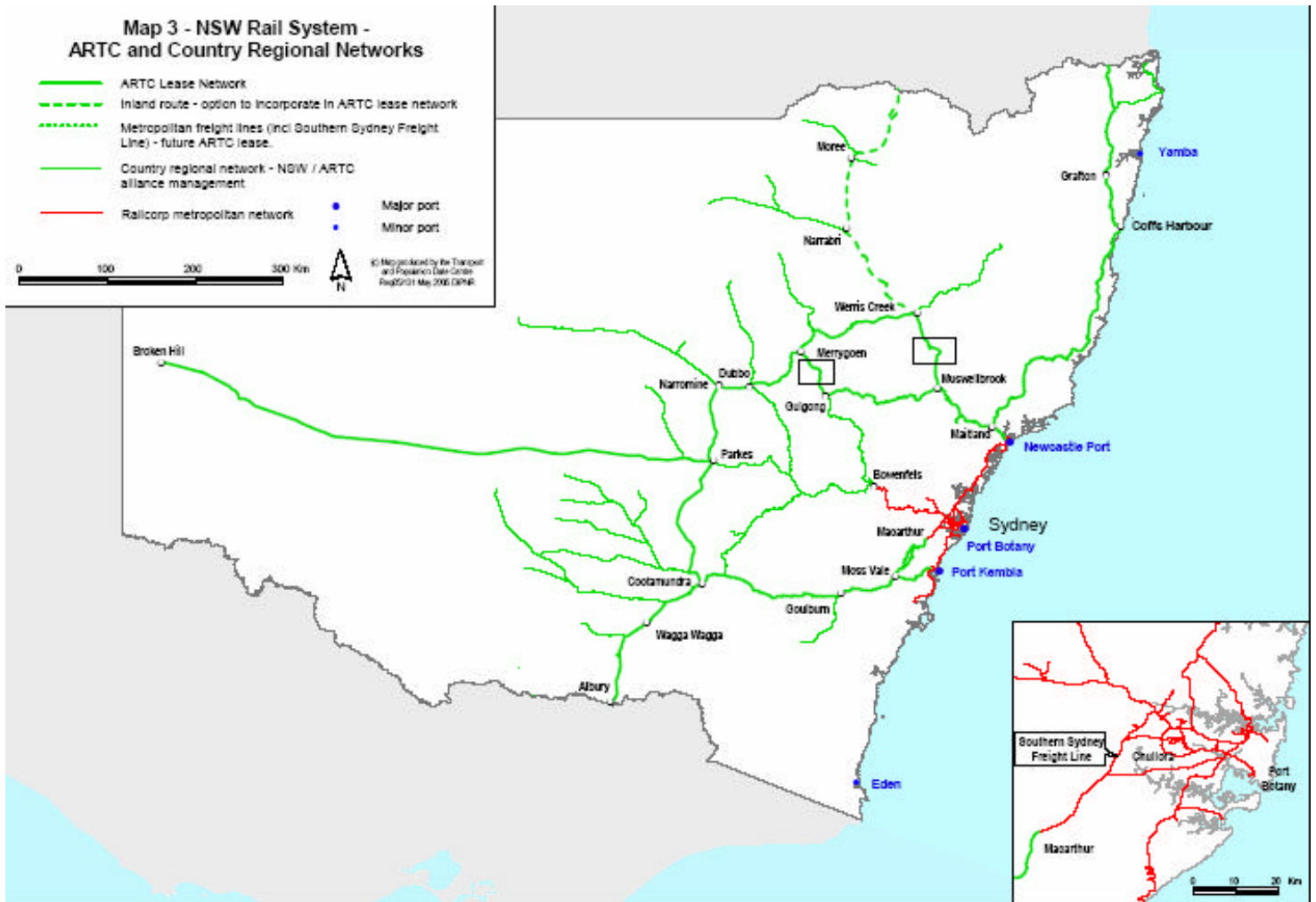
Refer to Attachment B

Recommendations

Hunter Business Chamber calls on the Federal Government to

1. Adopt the above mentioned as priority infrastructure projects for the Hunter Region.
2. Provide budgets for those projects that are Commonwealth responsibilities.

Attachment A



Attachment B

