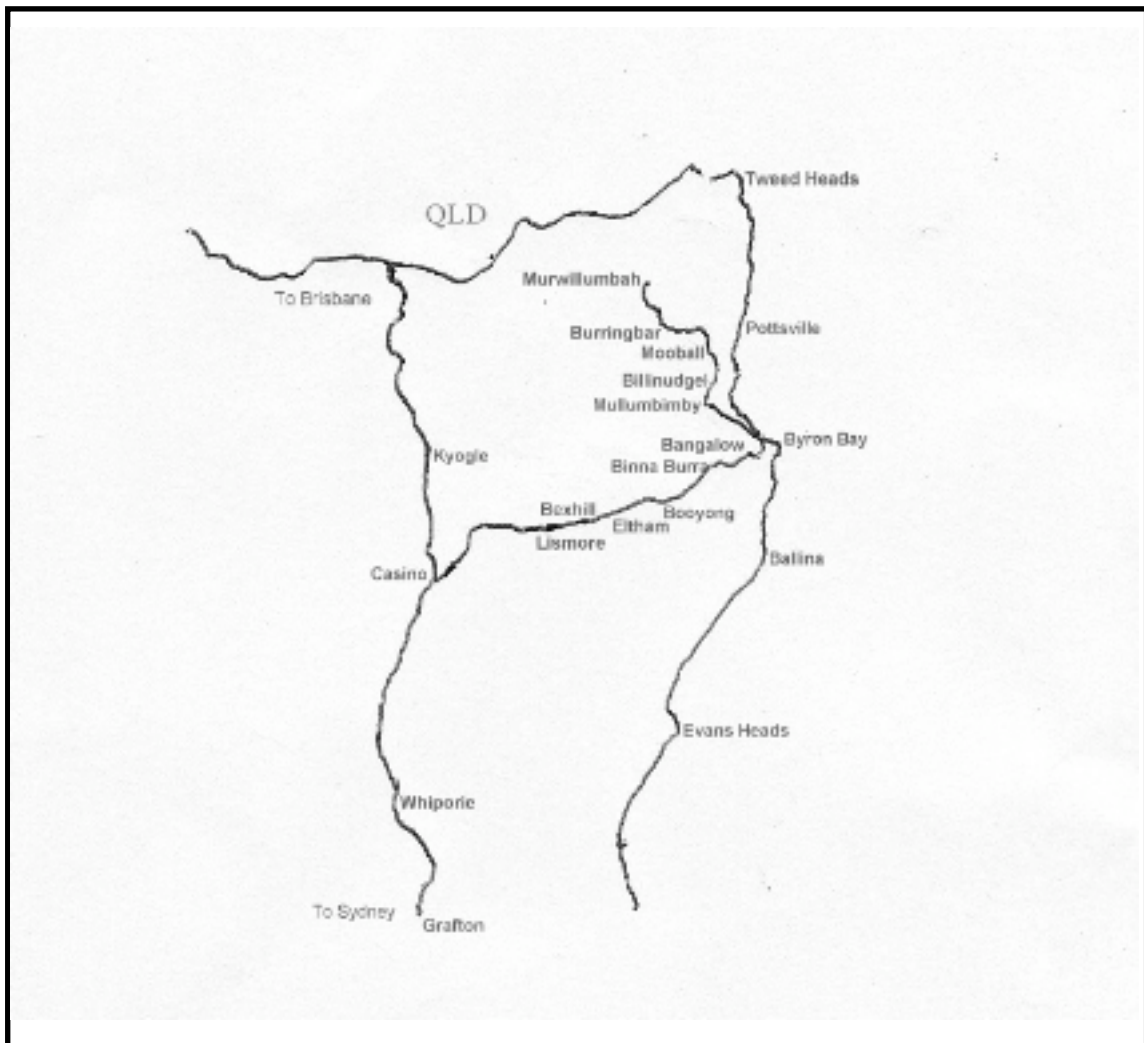




Trains On Our Tracks

A Sustainable Transport Vision for the Northern Rivers



'up to 16 local passenger trains a day between Casino and Murwillumbah'

**Presented by Northern Rivers Trains for the Future Inc.
(NRTF)**

Who are NRTF?

NRTF is a community based not for profit organisation formed in January 2003 out of community concern about the under utilisation of existing rail infrastructure, in particular the Casino to Murwilumbah line.

Our Mission

Working in consultation with governments, operators, regional councils and other interested parties, Northern Rivers Trains for the Future Inc. (NRTF) aims to be the recognised voice of the community in promoting the social, economic and environmental benefits of rail services as part of an integrated regional public transport system.

TOOT Values

Transport systems that deliver positive social outcomes:

- maximise the range of transport options for the greatest number, particularly those without access to private transport.
- ensure efficient access to community services and thus reduce the need to duplicate services.

Transport systems that are environmentally sustainable

- help to reduce dependence on non-renewable energy sources.
- create minimal disturbance to the natural environment.
- support communities to live sustainably.

Transport systems that ensure sound economic outcomes

- support the development of vibrant local economies.
- promote viability of a range of transport modes within a regional transport network.
- provide access to and develop regional employment opportunities.

TOOT Principles

To achieve outcomes that reflect the values outlined above, TOOT believes the following principles are vital to the development of a sustainable regional transport strategy.

- **Local and Regional needs** should be paramount in the design of transport infrastructure and networks, however it will still be important to consider how regional networks connect with systems outside the region.
- **Multi-modal approach** where buses, taxis, cycleways, walkways, wheelchairs are considered as this will maximise alternative transport options.
- **Integration** of all transport modes that link with each other is essential to the success of a multi-modal approach that delivers social outcomes and economic viability.
- **Planning** for an **integrated** regional transport system has long been neglected and has led to the development of localised and isolated public transport services that become marginalised and unattractive to potential users. The excessive dependence on road based private transport in our region can not be successfully challenged unless serious **planning** for an **integrated regional transport system** is undertaken.

Trains On OurTracks - A Vision for an Integrated Regional Transport System

We suggest that a great step forward in linking existing public transport services, increasing patronage and providing a major boost in viability of localised services can be achieved by running regular passenger trains on the Casino to Murwillumbah rail line.

We propose that up to 16 services a day can be run with the following major benefits:

- Use of existing infrastructure that links most major centres in the Northern Rivers and acts as the spine of an integrated transport system.
- Significantly expands the range of potential destinations for passengers using localised bus and other services providing opportunities to increase passenger numbers as well as enhanced viability of such services.
- Boosts access to services for those without private transport access and helps make service delivery more efficient.
- Environmentally friendly.
- Reduces need for infrastructure development that disrupts communities.
- Provides links between local labour markets expanding job opportunities and promoting vibrant local economies.
- Potential to be the basis of a sustainable tourism strategy that moves visitors and tourism dollars around the region.
- Links the region to XPT services to Sydney, Brisbane and elsewhere through connection with the main line at Casino.

Future developments that may increase the range of benefits significantly include:

- Build a rail link between Murwillumbah and the Gold Coast to provide direct links to Coolangatta and Brisbane airports.
- Develop light rail infrastructure to link to the existing line including services between Lismore, Ballina, Lennox Head and Byron Bay as well as a Tweed Coast line connecting with Murwillumbah and Tweed Heads.
- Develop freight services and the create a freight hub at Casino with the potential to reduce the level of heavy road transport using local roads.

Feasibility and Costs

- In 2004 a feasibility study conducted by PriceWaterhouseCoopers estimated the cost of upgrading the line and running a 16 service a day light rail commuter train to be \$55.3 million over 20 years* or an average annual cost of \$2.65 million or \$662,500 for each local government area serviced.
- We believe the savings from reduced motor accidents, road repairs, environmental and other costs as well as the benefits to communities and local economies make such a proposal worthy of serious consideration in the search for a sustainable transport strategy for the region.

* *'Feasibility Study for Passenger and/or Commuter Services on the Murwillumbah to Casino Branch Line.'*, Tweed Shire Council, September 2004, p 66.