

**Northern Rivers Trains For the Future Inc. (NRTF)**



**This “Needs Analysis” looks at the people in our community that would benefit from commuter trains on our tracks. Each town and village along the line is included.**

**Needs Analysis – Transport for the Casino-Murwillumbah rail corridor\***

TOOT believes an integrated system of passenger and freight traffic that gives people options and provides for the efficient delivery of human services is essential for a future that is environmentally, socially and economically sustainable.

**1. ‘Short term’**

In the ‘short term’ we need to be better able to utilise existing infrastructure such as the Casino-Murwillumbah rail line to meet local needs

We note that the mayors of the region are in full support of addressing the transport needs of the region through the development of commuter rail services that provide the spine of an integrated regional transport system. Current providers of local bus services would have an incentive to adjust and expand timetables to connect with such services thus linking currently isolated services.

Incorporating a ‘rail experience’ into tourism strategies as a method of moving visitors around the region with fewer impacts also provides a means to move the economic benefits of tourism around the region and decentralise the demand for tourist infrastructure and services from coastal zones to those around rail stations in each town on the line. In turn the need for high levels of infrastructure in coastal towns such as Byron Bay would be moderated and traffic congestion may ease.

Set out below is a needs analysis and user profile for each centre on the Casino-Murwillumbah line.

## **2. Needs analysis**

Looking at the main centres currently linked by the rail line, it is possible to demonstrate profiles of likely users. Integration with local feeder bus services potentially expands service to cover a wide area where little or no public transport currently exists.

### ***Description –Casino***

- Closest to typical rural profile
- Rail and road transport hub able to connect passengers and freight with Sydney-Brisbane rail services
- Agricultural service town drawing workers and students from surrounding area.
- Strong labour market linkages with Lismore and region generally.
- Primary and Secondary schools.

### ***Current unmet needs -Casino***

- Employees travelling to work in Lismore and other locations on the line
- Students travelling to University, TAFE and schools in Lismore.
- Jobseekers wishing to expand access to employment opportunities across regional labour market.
- Young people, families and others without access to private transport travelling to coastal locations for sport and recreation
- Aged and disabled travellers
- Providing access to retail and services (including specialist medical)in Lismore for anyone without access to private transport.

### ***Description –Lismore***

- Regional hub for retail, financial services, education, health, aged care and government services
- Draws large numbers of workers, students and consumers from surrounding areas, particularly Richmond Valley, Byron and Ballina shires.
- Base hospital, St Vincent's hospital and various aged care facilities
- Primary, secondary schools, TAFE and University.
- Centre of regional labour market with linkages to Casino, Byron Shire and Ballina local labour markets as well as the Tweed/Lower Gold Coast regional labour market.

### ***Current unmet needs -Lismore***

- Mainly inbound traffic as described from other centres with especially high numbers of students, workers, tourists and consumers.

- Jobseekers, particularly young and/or without private transport to expand employment and training opportunities to all locations on the line.
- Young people, families and others without access to private transport travelling to coastal locations for sport and recreation.
- Aged and disabled travellers.
- Inability to access retail and other services (including specialist medical) for those in other locations without access to private transport.
- Potential to link services throughout Lismore City covering suburban and outlying areas of Nimbin, Coraki, Goonellabah and surrounding districts.
- Connection for local tourism features including Nightcap ranges, Rainforests, Lismore and village markets, sporting and cultural events and historic villages.

### ***Description -Bexhill***

- Village approx. 8 km east of Lismore with potential to connect workers and students from Corndale, Numulgi and Rosebank valleys with all points on the line.

### ***Description -Eltham-Booyong***

- These locations provide considerable scope to connect workers, students and others with all points on the line through one of the busiest corridors on the line.
- Potential to service Clunes, Nashua and surrounding districts.
- Booyong was previously a junction for a spur line to Ballina.

### ***Description -Bangalow***

- Market town popular with tourists for its restaurants, shops and monthly markets.
- 10 km from Byron Bay.
- Geographic centre for overlapping local labour markets of Byron Bay, Lismore and Ballina.

### ***Current unmet needs –Bangalow***

- Worker and student travellers to Lismore, Byron Bay, Mullumbimby, Brunswick Heads, Ocean Shores and Murwillumbah,
- Jobseekers, particularly young and/or without private transport connecting to all points on the line.
- Aged and disabled access to Lismore and other points on line.
- Young people, families and others without access to private transport travelling to coastal locations for sport and recreation.
- Potential to service Brooklet, Fernleigh, Newrybar and surrounding districts.
- Potential for integrated bus services to connect Ballina and district communities for passengers travelling to Lismore or Byron Bay and beyond to all points.
- Providing access to retail and services (including specialist medical) in Lismore for anyone without access to private transport.

### ***Description -Byron Bay***

- Coastal tourist town with over 1.2 million staying visitor and 500,000 'day trippers' a year.
- Significant proportion of international tourists are backpackers usually without private transport.
- Limited potential to expand access to town by development of roads due to geographical proximity to wetlands.
- Strong labour market growth with linkages to surrounding local and regional labour markets
- Primary, secondary schools as well a diverse range of private training establishments.
- Centre for arts and light industry
- Gateway for coastal tourism operators and events.

### ***Current unmet needs -Byron Bay***

- Inbound and outbound workers, travellers, students and consumers to/from all points on line with most commuter traffic between Lismore and Byron Bay.
- Students and jobseeker traffic accessing training and labour markets at all points on line, particularly Lismore.
- Aged and disabled access to Lismore and other points on line.
- Potential to connect with buses servicing Lennox Head and Ballina.
- Providing access to retail and services (including specialist medical) in Lismore for anyone without access to private transport.
- Huge untapped potential to develop tourist subsidised services to transport visitors to other points on line linking with localised tourism providers and helping to share the wealth effect of Byron Bay's tourism boom. Murwillumbah, Mullumbimby, Bangalow and Lismore are all potential destinations for such traffic.

### ***Description -Mullumbimby***

- 'Biggest little town in Australia '
- Main service centre for Brunswick valley
- Location of Byron Shire Council Chambers and offices.
- Primary and Secondary schools

### ***Current unmet needs -Mullumbimby***

- Inbound and outbound workers, travellers, students and consumers to/from all points on line with most commuter traffic between Murwillumbah, Byron Bay and Lismore.
- Students and jobseeker traffic accessing training and labour markets at all points on line, particularly Lismore, Murwillumbah and Byron Bay.
- Aged and disabled access to Lismore and other points on line.
- Potential to increase tourism visitors (especially from Byron Bay)through rail 'experience '.

- Providing access to retail and services (including specialist medical) in Lismore for anyone without access to private transport.
- Potential to service communities in upper Brunswick Valley and at Brunswick Heads.
- Connection point for tourism operators servicing the Brunswick Valley.

### ***Description -Billinudgel***

- Service town for Pocket area
- Potential to provide rail access for significant population at Ocean Shores.

### ***Current unmet needs –Billinudgel/Ocean Shores***

- Worker and student travellers to Murwillumbah, Mullumbimby, Byron Bay, Lismore and other points on the line.
- Jobseeker and youth travellers accessing training and labour markets in Murwillumbah, Byron Bay, Lismore and other points on the line.
- Aged and disabled access to services at all points on line, particularly Murwillumbah and Lismore.
- Provide access for Ocean Shores population historically isolated by lack of public transport.

### ***Description -Brunswick Valley integration.***

- As described rail access can be provided to Brunswick Valley communities, particularly main population centres of Mullumbimby, Brunswick Heads and Ocean Shores. This can be achieved through a southern access point at Mullumbimby and a northern access point at Billinudgel with integrated bus services linking the two access points and collecting passengers from Brunswick Heads and Ocean Shores. This could overcome major disadvantage suffered by these communities with generally higher needs (due to socio economic profiles) isolated by a lack of public transport options.

### ***Description -Crabbes Creek-Yelgun***

- Rural valley communities in high growth corridors with potential to provide access to students and commuter traffic, particularly to schools and businesses in Murwillumbah.

### ***Description –Burringbar***

- Tweed Valley town
- Dormitory suburb for Murwillumbah with increasing tourism development
- Potential student, worker, youth, aged/disabled passengers for training, employment and services access, particularly in Murwillumbah.

### ***Description -Stokers Siding***

- Hamlet in high growth corridor with student/commuter potential from surrounding Valleys
- Tourist potential

### ***Description -Murwillumbah***

- Main centre servicing Tweed Valley (currently fastest growing region in NSW)
- Terminus for branch line
- Primary, secondary schools and TAFE
- Hospital, health and aged care services.
- Potential to link rail transport with Gold Coast rail and bus services.
- Labour market linkages with regional and Byron Shire labour markets.

### ***Current unmet needs -Murwillumbah***

- Mainly inbound traffic as described from other centres with especially high numbers of students, workers, tourists and consumers.
- Jobseekers, particularly young and/or without private transport to expand employment and training opportunities to all locations on the line.
- Young people, families and others without access to private transport travelling to coastal locations for sport and recreation.
- Aged and disabled travellers.
- Providing access to retail and services (including specialist medical)in Lismore for anyone without access to private transport.
- Tourism potential as linking point for service providers throughout Tweed Valley, as entry point to a rail ‘experience’ drawing on the tourism hot spots to the north (Gold Coast) and south (Byron Bay). Connecting point for tourist draws including Mt Warning National Park, World Heritage Border Ranges rainforests and historic villages.

### ***Description -Murwillumbah -Gold Coast (the missing link)***

- Construction of the missing rail link between Murwillumbah and the lower Gold Coast would dramatically increase commuter rail traffic with Queensland centres, provide door to door connections with Coolangatta and Brisbane airports for tourists and others, further enhance integration with transport systems in surrounding regions, boost sustainable tourism in an area dependent on maintaining its natural beauty as well as being a sound investment in sustainable planning for future growth.

### 3. 'Long term'

In the 'long term' we propose an integration of New South Wales and Queensland rail systems by constructing a link between the Casino-Murwillumbah line and the Gold Coast.

TOOT notes that the provision of a rail link with Queensland would provide a safe, attractive and environmentally sustainable alternative to private road transport options within the Pacific Highway/Motorway corridor that connects directly with Coolangatta and Brisbane Airports as well as providing the opportunity to integrate the movement of domestic freight through the Far North Coast and South East Queensland regions.

By providing accessible public transport options for many in our region who do not own or have difficulty accessing private transport, a rail link provides many benefits.

- Greater efficiency in the delivery of human services.
- Reducing the demand on some human services (eg community transport).
- Reducing the cost of some human services due to access to preventative and better health services.

As a rail link would provide the opportunity for commuters, tourists, airport users, students and many other groups to switch from road to rail, there are a number of potential savings to be made in relation to the maintenance and development of expensive road infrastructure.

- \* This "Needs Analysis" was developed from the following submissions made by **Northern Rivers Trains for the Future (NRTF)**..

Northern Rivers Trains for the Future (NRTF) *Response to Interim Report of Ministerial Inquiry into Sustainable Transport in NSW*, 7 October 2003.

Northern Rivers Trains for the Future (NRTF) *Submission to 'Inquiry into Infrastructure Provision in Coastal Growth Areas'*, 6 May 2005.

Copies of Submissions made by NRTF can be downloaded at our website [www.toot.org.au](http://www.toot.org.au)