

Welcome

Welcome to the first edition of the Surat Basin Rail project newsletter, which aims to keep the community informed about the project.

Over the past year, the project team has been working with stakeholders in the area to develop a preferred route for the rail alignment and to get the views of landholders who may be affected.

Whether you've been involved in the planning so far, or if this is your first exposure to this proposed major development, we hope you find some useful information and contact points in this first edition.

The Project

Planning is now underway for an open-access, multi-user rail link connecting the vast coal reserves west of Toowoomba with the Port of Gladstone.

The proposed Surat Basin Rail will be approximately 210 kilometres in length linking existing railways at Wandoan and Banana.

The railway is expected to be a single line with passing loops structured at spacing that will match demand.

In July 2007, the Queensland Government awarded an unconditional Exclusive Mandate to the Surat Basin Rail Joint Venture, comprising the Australian Transport and Energy Corridor Pty Ltd (ATEC), Industry Funds Management, Anglo Coal, Xstrata Coal and QR, to investigate the development of a rail link through the Surat Basin.

This Exclusive Mandate allows the project to undertake the preliminary studies necessary to progress the Surat Basin Rail to a point where a decision can be made on whether or not to proceed with the project.

The Joint Venture has appointed a technical consortium consisting of Connell Hatch, Parsons Brinckerhoff and Maunsell AECOM to undertake engineering and environmental investigations to identify the preliminary route.

The project team is currently working on the detailed design for the rail alignment, including investigations required for environmental assessment and approval.

Over the next 18 to 24 months, the project team will seek to bring the Surat Basin Rail to bankable financial close.

Benefits

The Surat Basin Rail can potentially bring a number of benefits to business, industry and community at both small and large scales.

- Create employment opportunities for local communities in construction, mining, rail and support industries.
- Deliver a transport solution enabling approximately four billion tonnes of coal reserves in the Surat Basin to become a viable economic resource.
- Provide an open-access railway, with sufficient capacity for other users with appropriate commercial arrangements.
- Provide an efficient freight rail link between the existing western rail system and the Port of Gladstone.
- Contribute greatly to the economic development of regional Australia and support the continued growth of Australia's largest export industry - coal.
- Deliver environmentally friendlier means of transport for coal and other freight.



Why is the Surat Basin Rail important?

The proposed Surat Basin Rail (previously referred to as the Dawson Valley Rail or the Southern Missing Link) travels through an area with significant coal reserves and has the potential to provide vital rail infrastructure critical to enhancing the export capacity of the rail network.

The coal-rich Surat and southern Moura basins in regional Queensland contain up to four billion tonnes of coal, which have remained largely untapped due to a lack of direct access to suitable infrastructure.

The Surat Basin Rail represents a key strategic development, which could have significant implications for transport infrastructure and port linkages.

Importantly, it has the potential to enhance the rail network's export capacity, particularly meeting requirements for exporting thermal and coking coal, as well as freight.

Where does the preferred alignment run?

The preferred alignment broadly runs from Wandoan to Banana in a largely north-south direction, following major roads and property boundaries where possible.

The alignment generally avoids urban areas, passing mostly through more sparsely populated areas used for dryland cropping, and cattle grazing and breeding.

It is anticipated that the majority of the railway will be approximately 60 metres wide, with wider sections at passing loops and deep cuttings or embankments.

The width of the final rail corridor will depend on the operating scenario selected and the width of formation required for

construction and operation (this in turn depends on the height and slope of cuttings and embankments).

An assessment of potential social, environmental and economic impacts is presently being undertaken through the development of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

Rail alignment decisions

A number of corridor studies have previously been undertaken that considered linking the existing western and Moura rail networks.

As part of the current investigations, these previous alignments were reviewed to determine their feasibility, given present day conditions.

We have evaluated these earlier studies against a number of criteria and developed a preliminary study area and preferred alignment based on the engineering, environmental and social assessments completed so far.



The Environmental Impact Statement

We have identified a broad corridor of interest, which includes a study area approximately one kilometre wide.

The project team is conducting a number of investigations to help identify the preferred alignment within this study area.

These investigations include the development of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), which assesses social, cultural, economic and environmental impacts of the project.

The scope of the EIS will be determined through a Terms of Reference (ToR) developed by the State Coordinator-General.

The ToR represents a check sheet that will enable government and non-government agencies to ensure the EIS has addressed all of the key topics.

The EIS will require data to be obtained and analysis undertaken on topics as diverse as flora, fauna, water, cultural heritage, traffic, noise and many others.

Local community, business and the broader public will have the opportunity to provide comments and feedback on the Draft EIS when it is released in late 2008.

The publication of the Coordinator General's Report will then represent the final sign-off on the EIS.

Walk the line

In December, Surat Basin Rail's Community and Stakeholder Relations (C&SR) Team initiated a major on-the-ground effort to speak to every landowner within the study area.

The team met with over 100 landowners representing privately owned properties in the study area between Wandoan and Banana.

Landowners shared valuable local knowledge about the proposed rail route with the team, and suggested ways to improve potential outcomes associated with agri-business operations and lifestyle.

Using the latest information obtained during field studies, the Joint Venture resolved at its March meeting to eliminate two alternative routes east of Wandoan that would have restricted the growth of the town and wedged it between the proposed rail line and the Wandoan Mine development.

The Joint Venture also eliminated an alternate route through Cracow Creek, thereby delivering a single study area.

While many local residents accept that change is likely, they have an important role to play in shaping the project.

We're very grateful to local landowners for allowing us to visit their properties, and for giving us really valuable suggestions and feedback.

Access issues top concerns

Access issues emerged as the major concern for landowners during our recent round of community engagement meetings with landowners in the study area.



Over 45% of those contacted nominated access as a significant concern, reflecting the regional context and the nature of farming operations in the study area.

Landowners noted a number of factors, including safe access to properties and impacts on vehicle and stock movement.

Concerns from those landowners who had access issues within their farms (when the preferred alignment traversed well within the property boundaries) included:

- provision for adequate movement of stock and access for farm machinery
- issues related to permanent watering points, and
- the potential relocation of farm infrastructure as a result of access complexities posed by a preferred alignment.

Other top 10 most commonly raised concerns noted during discussions included the location of the preferred alignment, impact on business operations, livelihood impacts, safety, noise, property value, social and cultural impacts, future plans and the land acquisition process.

As the project team, we will continue to listen and factor these concerns into our decision making process.

Our aim is to reach a workable solution, which delivers safety to this major infrastructure undertaking.

The project team is committed to carrying out ongoing consultation throughout the project.

Where to from here?

Following on from earlier visits to landowners within the project's study area, the project team will continue a program of consultation with the wider community, including a number of community information days where members of the project team will be on hand to explain aspects of the proposed rail project.

It is anticipated that the State Government will release the Draft Terms of Reference, outlining what the EIS is to include, in mid to late April 2008 for public and agency comment.

The project team will continue in-depth investigations of the social, environmental and economic impacts of developing the Surat Basin Rail. The final preferred route for the rail will be explored in detail as part of preparing the EIS.

For more information about the types of investigations that will be carried out, please refer to our 'Land Access Fact Sheet', which can be downloaded on the project's website (details below). The Surat Basin Rail project is striving to deliver the project within the key milestones opposite.

How can I find out more?

Input from local residents, businesses and the broader community is an important part of the Surat Basin Rail project.

The project team will hold a variety of consultation activities throughout the life of the project.

Information on these activities will be publicised closer to each event. However, if you want to find out more about the project or would like your details added to our mailing list, please contact the project team on the details shown.

Key project milestones

Appoint engineering consultancy to plan and design railway	Jul 2007	✓ Completed
Finalise preferred route between Wandoan and Banana	Nov 2007	✓ Completed
Submit Initial Advice Statement (IAS) to Coordinator-General	Jan 2008	✓ Completed
Submit Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to the Coordinator-General for public comment	Late 2008	📄 Future stage
Complete Business Case (includes financial model)	Mid 2009	📄 Future stage
Agree with the Queensland Government on the principles for a development agreement	Mid 2009	📄 Future stage
Achieve financial close	Late 2009	📄 Future stage

** All time frames are indicative only. The ongoing feasibility of the project will be assessed at the end of each stage. Whether the project progresses to the next stage will depend on the outcome of that assessment.*

Community information days

Surat Basin Rail's project team will be available to talk to you about the project at the following community information days:

Date	Location	Time
Saturday, 19 April 2008	CWA Hall, The Boulevard Theodore QLD 4719	10 am – 2 pm
Monday, 21 April 2008	Wandoan Show Grounds, Wandoan QLD 4419	9 am - close

We look forward to seeing you there.

For more information on the Surat Basin Rail project, contact the project team on free call 1800 112 143.

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