

NEWSLETTER No 1/2004



Railway Technical Society of Australasia
SA Chapter
Engineering House, Bagot Street
NORTH ADELAIDE SA 5006

JANUARY 2004

NEXT MEETING

**THURSDAY 5th FEBRUARY AT BAGOT ST,
NORTH ADELAIDE - Nibbles at 17:30 for an
18:00 meeting.**

ASSESSING THE NETWORK PERFORMANCE AND RELIABILITY OF RAILWAY SYSTEMS

A heavy topic you may think, especially coming off the holiday season. Do not be fooled – this is a subject of considerable interest as well as being of increasing importance to rail industry operators and owners. Professor Michael Taylor, Director of the Transport System Centre at UniSA will discuss this project which is to develop a suite of decision support tools for assessing network performance and reliability. The project seeks to develop the tools necessary to analyse and assess existing rail networks, and to plan and evaluate proposed infrastructure improvements and access provision using congestion pricing models. The outcome will be a set of high-level tools for strategic planning of the long-term development of rail networks.

The specific aim of our project is to develop The recent problems on the New South Wales network, exemplified by the Menangle Bridge closure and the consequent need for rerouting of trains through other parts of the network to avoid that link, have provided a good indication of the need for these analytical tools at the network level.

This project is part of a major research program through the CRC for Rail Technologies and Engineering, aimed at the development of optimal traffic control and scheduling systems which will improve rail productivity by developing good network infrastructure, good schedules, good recovery techniques, good driving and good communications.

The presenter, Mike Taylor, is Professor of Transport Planning and the Director of the Transport Systems Centre at the University of South Australia. His expertise is in the areas of 'Intelligent Transport Systems', transportation planning and engineering, engineering systems analysis and engineering management. He received his BE, MEngSc and PhD degrees at Monash University, where he was an academic on two separate occasions (in the mid 1970s

and the mid 1980s). His work experience includes time as a consultant with the Road Transport Research Programme of OECD, and as a research scientist in the Division of Building Research of the Australian scientific research organisation CSIRO. He provides expert consultancy advice to governments, industry, and community groups. Taylor is a Fellow of the Institution of Engineers, Australia, the Chartered Institute of Transport and Logistics, and the Institute of Transportation Engineers.

FUTURE MEETINGS

There are a few loose ends yet to be tied up but the program for the first half of 2004 is along the following lines. Note that the dates are OK, just the topics are a bit variable depending on circumstances.

4th March: Joint meeting with PWI as the host at their normal North Terrace venue – topic to be confirmed

1st April: Archival film of Mile End Freight Yard, from the NRM archives and presented by Bob Sampson

3rd June: Joint meeting hosted by PWI at their normal North Terrace venue on the topic of the 'AK' track condition monitoring train.

20th to 23rd June: CORE2004 in Darwin – a not to be missed event. Registration brochures have been mailed to all members but if for some reason you have missed out (or need additional copies) contact the CORE2004 Secretariat at techrev@core2004.on.net or by writing to GRMS Media at PO Box 595, Prospect East, SA, 5082 without delay.

Late June / early July: An eminent speaker tour is being arranged to follow CORE2004 – the speaker, date and venue for Adelaide will be confirmed in a future Newsletter.

THE YEAR AHEAD – A VIEW

2004 is shaping up to be something of a watershed for rail in Australia. Firstly there are the positive events. The formal opening of the long awaited Darwin railway earlier this month drew very large crowds in the Adelaide and Mid North to witness the first freight train, emphasising the value of this event in re-awakening public awareness of rail (don't forget the first Darwin Ghan of around 46 cars (1100 metres) departing about

NEWSLETTER No 1/2004



Railway Technical Society of Australasia
SA Chapter
Engineering House, Bagot Street
NORTH ADELAIDE SA 5006

JANUARY 2004

midday on Sunday next (1st Feb) which will probably draw even bigger lineside crowds). Secondly there is a conclusion to the long running negotiations to allow ARTC to have management of the 'country' NSW rail network, thus unlocking in excess of \$800 million in funding to bring that network to at least an acceptable national standard.

Beyond these two 'good news' events there are a number of events that could go either way for rail. Sometime this year there will be a federal election. Somewhere in that contest, unless there is another distraction such as a 'Tampa', the issue of AusLink should get a mention. In fact it probably already has with the announcement that the highway system between Gympie and Geelong via the Pacific and Hume Highways will be four laned by 2020, involving probably half the total length being duplicated. At the same time an extension of the Roads to Recovery program amounting to \$1.2 billion was also announced. AusLink is supposed to provide a policy and planning framework which would avoid the excesses of knee jerk politics – something that we in the rail industry can only hope it does.

Creation of the National Transport Commission (NTC) from the bones of the NRTC has the potential to keep the AusLink concept honest, providing impartial policy development and analysis underlies its activities.

Closer to the industry is the future of Freight Australia, which Rail America (their owner) has acknowledged as being for sale. A number of suitors have been mentioned, but the recent Pacific National decision to walk away and start competing with FA instead sounds very much like an exercise in trying to reduce FA's value in the market place – do not be surprised to see PN back in there in the fullness of time. Of course there may be another interested party who is willing to pay a premium A major issue with the FA sale is the 'value' of the track. FA claims it paid around \$60 million for the track lease and now wants to see that back in RA's pocket as a result of the sale. However even a simple survey of the FA property will show that accrued maintenance (maintenance that should have been done but hasn't, to the detriment of track condition and train speeds) is now in the region of twice the initial lease cost and growing daily. It would have to be a supreme optimist who would buy out the track at FA valuation, knowing that it would have to pay twice as much again to get it back in reasonable 'fit for purpose' condition, while it is subject to an access regime in any case. The appropriate outcome would be for the track to revert to

VicTrack (where it should have remained all along), thus solving a sticking point that has be-devilled every attempt to improve the rail network in Victoria since the much lauded sale of V/Line Freight.

At the same time PN have ordered new narrow gauge locomotives so they can compete with QR on narrow gauge tracks, ostensibly hauling QRX inter-modal traffic although the locomotives look very like they would have a 'heavy haul' premium as part of their construction cost. One way or another it would seem that the industry will go through a few more hoops yet before there is anything approaching stability. There is a tendency to say 'all we can do is sit and watch' but in fact we (individually and collectively) should be taking every opportunity to make sure rail is placed high and remains on the agenda, particularly given the rare free kick that we have been given with the Darwin opening.

KEY RTSA CHAPTER COMMITTEE CONTACTS

Rob Schweiger	8238 3412	Chairman
George Erdos	8218 2209	Treasurer
Roger Wyatt	8344 6939	Secretary
Malcolm Menadue	8270 2873	N/L despatch
Max Michell	8390 3300	N/L Editor

Articles or editorial comment for Newsletter are more than welcome. Well over 100 members locally must have stories, events or developments of interest that should be the basis of an interesting article in Newsletter. Articles, information, letters etc are all welcome although anything for publication in electronic format would be appreciated. After all part of the function of RTSA is to keep members in touch with what is going on in the industry and with each other.

Send copy to the Editor, Max Michell at samrom@bigpond.com or fax to 08 8390 3772