REGIONAL FREIGHT
TRANSPORT & LOGISTICS SYSTEMS AND INFRASTRUCTURE
TO SUPPORT REGIONAL COMMUNITIES

REGIONAL FORUMS PROGRAMME
AGGREGATE REPORT
NOVEMBER 2008
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NOTE: This report represents the views of the Regional Freight Forum participants and does not necessarily represent the views of SAFC or its Members.
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Purpose

The South Australian Freight Council (SAFC) committed to hosting regional workshops/forums across the State so as to canvas issues of importance to the individual regions, report on project outcomes, and publicise the work of the council and others.

The SAFC Regional Forums Programme proceeded under the auspices of the SAFC Executive Committee of Management. The issues raised have in turn been used to inform the development of SAFC’s Forward Work Programme.

1.2. Process

SAFC determined that, so as to deliver more value to regional attendees, and increase attendance, it made sense to partner with other local groups. The foremost partner in the Regional Forums Programme was the local Regional Development Boards (RDBs), which enable SAFC to highlight the regional emphasis of individual Workshops.

Over the 4 years of the programme, forums were held at the following locations:

- Port Augusta covering the Upper Spencer Gulf Area in association with the Upper Spencer Gulf Common Purpose Group
- Port Lincoln covering the Eyre Peninsula in association with the Eyre RDB
- Loxton covering the Riverland in association with the Riverland Development Corporation
- Mt Gambier covering the South East area in association with the Limestone Coast RDB
- Tanunda covering the Barossa Valley area in association with Barossa and Light RDB
- Kingscote covering Kangaroo Island in association with the Kangaroo Island DB
- Ardrossan covering the Yorke Peninsula in association with the Yorke RDB
- Burra covering the Mid North area in association with the Mid North RDB
- Mt Barker covering the Adelaide Hills area in association with the Adelaide Hills RDB
- Reynella covering southern metropolitan Adelaide in association with the Cities of Onkaparinga and Marion
- Elizabeth covering northern metropolitan Adelaide in association with the Wakefield Group.

Invitations to the forums were issued under the joint hand of SAFC and the local partners. Attendees at the various forums included State and Local Government officers and office bearers (including many Mayors and Councillors), Regional Development Board members and staff, freight service suppliers and customers across a variety of industry sectors.

The forums followed a common format of 1 hour of presentations on a variety of matters of interest to the area and involving presenters arranged by both SAFC and the local partner and included speakers from industry, as well as State and Local Government. Following a short break a 1 hour issues raising forum was facilitated by SAFC.

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1 The Wakefield Group is an informal alliance of local governments that make up the Federal Parliamentary seat of Wakefield. The Councils involved are: Clare and Gilbert Valleys; Gawler; Light Regional; Mallala; Playford; Salisbury; and Wakefield Regional. The Barossa Council sits on the group as an observer.
Issues raised were recorded and covered a variety of topics across all 4 modes: Road; Rail; Sea; and Air.

Forum discussions highlighted a variety of existing and expanding industry sectors and the associated transport and logistics implications, both within the region and with other regions and markets. Industry sectors discussed included:

- Wine and Grapes; Horticultural products (fruit and vegetables); Timber/Woodchips; Mining; Warehousing; Livestock; Grain; Poultry, Pork and other Meats; Water; Salt; Seafood; Tourism; and Defence.

A 1 hour networking session followed the forums and gave participants an opportunity to clarify any outstanding issues and network with friends and colleagues.

The forum write-up was then prepared by SAFC, verified with the local forum partner and following clearance by the SAFC Executive Committee of Management referred to the SA Minister for Transport to note, as well as to all attendees, and was loaded to the SAFC Website for public consumption. The document was also referred to relevant SAFC Working Groups to note and for comment and action where appropriate.

SAFC would like to thank a variety of organisations that contributed to the hosting of the Regional Forum Programme including:

- The Department of Transport, Energy and Infrastructure which provided speakers for the forums, including members of the Transport Network Strategy Unit and/or Regional Offices. These Officers provided an update of local developments and projects underway or in the planning stages.
- Regional Development Boards which coordinated local speakers and provided introductory comments at the forums, issued invites and arranged venues and catering.
- Local Government which also provided introductory comments and a general view of issues in the region.
- Industry Players such as the SA Road Transport Association, Flinders Ports, DP World (Adelaide), FreighLink and PAE/PIL shipping line which provided speakers where appropriate and participated actively in discussions.

Participants at the Barossa Valley and Upper Spencer Gulf Regional Forums.
2. INFRASTRUCTURE

Infrastructure issues across all 4 modes – road, rail, sea and air - were the dominant points of discussion at all forums. All communities expressed an opinion that a failure to adequately deal with their local infrastructure issues will constrain their ability to achieve the economic development objectives of the local community and collectively – the State and nation.

A vast array of infrastructure enhancements were discussed, incorporating known and new projects and proposals across all four modes: road, rail, sea and air.

There was a general acknowledgement that the rapidly expanding freight task is, and will continue to place pressures on existing infrastructure, some of which is already showing signs of degradation and disrepair.

Some issues were relatively minor in terms of state-wide impact, while others were of a broader nature. All issues raised deserve to be discussed and considered further. The South Australian Department of Transport, Energy and Infrastructure’s active participation in the forum programme assisted immensely in this regard.

The benefits of existing State and Commonwealth transport infrastructure developments were widely discussed and industry input on specific proposals and projects will assist in the design of appropriate infrastructure.

Nonetheless, there was a widespread belief that Governments ‘awash with GST funds’ should be spending more on enhancements to the transport network.

It was also recognised that, in general, bipartisan political support and widespread community acceptance are required for new infrastructure proposals to proceed. A coordinated and united approach by industry would also contribute to successful outcomes.

2.1. RAIL

Rail provides a crucial link to markets for some key commodities produced in regional areas, including grain, limestone, iron ore, coal and gypsum.

Rail infrastructure proposals discussed at the forums included the enhancement of existing rail infrastructure and the development of new intermodal terminals. Issues impinging upon terminal operations were also highlighted as growing in significance.

Overall, in light of the rapidly expanding freight task, it was generally acknowledged that there is a prime-facie desire for a shift of freight from road to rail where economically feasible.

Intermodal terminal proposals discussed included:

- Tailem Bend which was seen as having potential to handle Riverland produce and already has significant grain facilities. Output from the Mt Barker and Adelaide Hills area might also access a Tailem Bend intermodal facility
• Whilst volumes were presently considered insufficient to warrant a rail terminal in the immediate vicinity, consideration should be given to the future potential for an intermodal terminal at Mt Barker and/or the Monarto area.

• Stirling North was seen as the best location for a terminal in the Port Augusta region, favoured over proposals for a terminal to be established at Port Augusta West (topographical and locational issues) and Spencer Junction (too close to the township).

• A potential siding at Cultana (between Whyalla and Port Augusta) to service the expanding defence activity in the area.

• Increased usage and expansion of the existing terminal at Bowmans in the mid-North which is considered to have potential for the transfer of freight from road to rail for the Roxby Downs development as well as servicing the Mid-North and Yorke Peninsula communities. The existing relationship with the Port Lincoln tuna industry was also highlighted.

• Developments in the northern areas of Adelaide, centred around industrial land becoming available around RAAF Base Edinburgh was seen as driving the need to establish a terminal in the vicinity. The pending construction of the Northern Expressway should also be considered when identifying suitable sites as this road development has the potential to funnel freight into the intermodal terminal (eg: from the Barossa Valley and Riverland areas).
The need for longer term planning for terminal sites so as the most appropriate site was identified and land reserved for future purposes was emphasised as was the need to allow for significant buffers to isolate environmental concerns relating to noise, dust and the like. The “gentrification” of existing and potential terminal sites will constrain existing operations and future development opportunities as communities agitate against the negative impacts of terminal operations. The ‘Not-In-My-Back-Yard’ (NIMBY) mentality will need to be monitored and dealt with by Governments, such that terminal operations can continue in an efficient but consultative and open manner.

High capacity road transport access to intermodal terminal areas (B-Double, Double Road Train, B-Triple and other emerging innovative road combinations) is viewed as being a useful mechanism to facilitating a transfer of freight from road to rail. In addition, the establishment of “open access terminals”, particularly if public funding is involved in the establishment of the terminal, is viewed as the most attractive option which will deliver the greatest benefit to rail customers.

Closely tied to discussion of new intermodal terminals and reinvigoration of existing terminal sites was discussion of the need to reinstate the regional rail network to a condition that would improve the movement of the current and expanding rail freight task. The regional rail network is viewed as being in decline for a variety of reasons including relatively low volumes and seasonal usage, coupled with a competitive road freight sector which has resulted in development of a poor business case for the maintenance and upgrade of branch-lines.

Regional rail network proposals and issues canvassed included:

- The reopening of the South East Rail network to accommodate the expanding woodchip and pulp task, as well as for other elements of the freight task in the region
- The state of the narrow gauge Eyre Peninsula rail network and the need for prompt action to ensure the integrity of the network and the grain export system
- The state of the Loxton line and the establishment of an associated terminal at Tailem Bend where this line links with the Interstate Mainline track travelling between Adelaide and Melbourne (to accommodate Riverland and Murraylands freight requirements)
- The potential utilisation of the existing tourist train route at Snowtown for grain movements into key silo sites
- Providing a standard gauge connection to Port Stanvac was seen as an opportunity to attract development for the site and would result in a through connection to the Interstate Mainline (currently connected by the broad gauge metropolitan passenger network)

Other rail based issues discussed in the forums included:

- An increased focus on rail level crossings in the wake of some recent high profile accidents involving trains and heavy vehicles. The Jamestown rail crossing (adjacent to Jamestown Saleyards) is a safety issue, which will likely become a greater risk as freight
volumes increase. Level crossings on Eyre Peninsula are also considered to represent a safety risk for both road and rail users

- The potential for increased usage of “road-railers” on the Adelaide-Darwin line
- Potential to export containerised grain through Darwin using the Adelaide-Darwin line
- The need for double stack rail capability on the Adelaide to Melbourne Interstate Mainline, coupled with longer trains (1800m national maximum length) which would boost capacity and reduce unit costs
- The facilitation of a shift of freight from road to rail through the use of a system of industry credits that would reward the use of rail through reduced Government charges in other areas (such as vehicle registration). This system would acknowledge the environmental, safety and road wear benefits that would accrue to the wider community from increased use of rail.

2.2. ROAD

Road freight is the dominant and most visible mode of transport, and, all regions acknowledge its significance to their daily lives and economic well being, openly discussing proposals to enhance road infrastructure to accommodate the growing freight task.

The interaction of trucks and other road users, particularly in the vicinity of rural townships is a key concern for local communities, and town bypasses are seen as an appropriate solution where freight traffic volumes are growing in line with economic development (both in the local area and beyond). Through the forum programme, town bypasses were proposed for many major centres including:

- Port Wakefield, which would improve safety at the junction of the Port Wakefield-Port Augusta Road and the Port Wakefield to Wallaroo Road
- The junction of the Port Wakefield-Port Augusta Road and the Balaklava Road
- Port Broughton on the Upper Yorke Peninsula
- Renmark in the Riverland, which is located on the principal freight route to the Sunraysia area, and NSW and Queensland in general, attracts large volumes of ‘through traffic’ as well as local freight (citrus, grapes/wine etc). Heavy vehicles comprise a significant proportion of total traffic at key seasonal times
- Port Augusta at the top of Spencer Gulf, where several key national road freight networks converge, giving the town its “Crossroads of Australia” tag. Yorkeys Crossing already acts as a bypass for Port Augusta in the event of a blockage to the main route travelling through Port Augusta, and forms part of the oversize and overmass route for freight travelling to the west and north of the State. An upgrade is required to ensure that Yorkey’s Crossing is available in all weather conditions and can cope with growing volumes of freight
- Burra and Kapunda which are experiencing increasing freight volumes
- Mount Gambier in the South East of the State, accommodating timber and woodchip movements as well as general freight
- Port Lincoln at the bottom of Eyre Peninsula. It was considered that this bypass would alleviate the need for large volumes of freight to travel through the township to access the deep water export port. Freight from the eastern side would be funnelled around the city centre to enter the township from the western side. It was noted that freight costs for trucks entering from the eastern side of Eyre Peninsula may increase by up to $2.00 per tonne if use of the Bypass became mandatory
- A North-East Bypass of Gawler (but not incorporating Julian Terrace) was proposed to ease conflicts between freight traffic, tourists and the local community
- It was also proposed that it should become mandatory for heavy vehicle traffic to use the Wallaroo Bypass so as to avoid the built-up area.

The Map below depicts the location of various towns that were discussed as potential bypass candidates at the Regional Forums.
Several freight route development proposals were discussed in the forums including:

- The addition of the full South Rd route (from the Southern Expressway to the Port River Expressway) to the national Auslink network. An associated upgrade of this corridor would assist regional producers on the Fleurieu Peninsula, as well as in the southern suburbs, as would incorporation of the Cross Road link (from South Rd to the Toll Gate). Congestion on this key route is leading to intensive competition for available road space.

- The Border Road concept in the State’s South East (running along the SA-Victorian border) devised to service the growing timber and woodchip industry in the area. The potential for this road to be developed as a toll road was also proposed at the SE Forum.

- Bower Boundary Road (linking the South Eastern Freeway to the Princes Highway – from the Sturt Highway via Burra) which would benefit all industries including the emerging local pork industry. Bower Boundary Road would link with the existing “Back of Hills” route travelling from the SE Freeway at Monarto through Cambrai, Sedan to the Sturt Highway. The full route would then have potential to act as a bypass of Adelaide itself, for freight that does not need to stop in Adelaide and is travelling on longer routes such as Melbourne to Port Lincoln, Perth or Darwin.

- An Outer Hills Ring Route, linking through McLaren Vale and Echunga to the South East Freeway (and then connecting to the Back of Hills route (Monarto-Sedan-Sturt Hwy discussed above) will benefit movements too/from the Fleurieu Peninsula and Southern Vales.
- A proposed new route linking the Adelaide Hills to the Southern suburbs of Adelaide to facilitate growing freight movements and to reduce the need to travel via the Crafers Freeway/Cross Rd route was discussed at the Adelaide Hills Forum. This development may also assist in the revitalisation of the Southern suburbs.

- Development of an alternative to the Horrocks Pass route through the Flinders Ranges. Road Trains must break down into single combinations to pass through the Pass, and then reconfigure on the other side, resulting in serious inefficiencies.

- The Northern Adelaide Forum expressed strong support for the Northern Expressway development linking the Sturt Highway to Port Wakefield Road, and emphasised that the shortest possible route with minimal delays was required, as was the need to ensure that the route avoided built up areas (especially housing) wherever possible. Nonetheless, the ongoing significance of Main North Road (and the need to ensure ongoing enhancement) was emphasised so as to ensure that it can cater for the task.

- High capacity routes are required to ensure viability of the emerging blue gum woodchip industry on Kangaroo Island. A new bulk port will need to be developed to accommodate this and other potential mining related bulk traffics and larger combination heavy freight vehicles will need access from the forests (and mines) to processing facilities and the new port (probably in the Ballast Head area).

- Attendees at the Kangaroo Island Freight Forum highlighted their belief that the Kangaroo Island Ring Route incorporating the South Coast Road, West End Highway and Playford Highway should be added to the arterial road network (under the care and control of the State Government) thereby benefitting industry, tourists and the community as a whole.

2 Note: The Kingscote-Penneshaw Road and Playford Hwy (Kingscote to Parndana) already form part of the arterial road network.
The Bald Hills Freeway Access at Mount Barker should be planned for now so as it can be delivered in the not-too-distant future and Adelaide Hills Forum participants believe that the “back of Callington Rd” may be required to be developed as a freight route in the future.

Little Dublin Road (behind Nairne) should be developed for heavy vehicle access as it has been identified as an area for future industrial development.

A connection between Clarendon and Meadows will be required.

Necessary enhancements to existing Infrastructure that were discussed include:

- Duplication of the Riddoch Highway and Mt Gambier-Nelson-Portland Road to cater for expanding timber and woodchip volumes in the State’s South East and to improve the interaction of freight traffic with growing tourist volumes.
- Duplication of the Dukes Highway from Tailem Bend to the SA-Victorian Border and beyond (this road becomes the Western Hwy on the Victorian side of the border).
- Replacement of the Paringa Bridge on the Sturt Highway in the Riverland which is currently speed limited at 30 kph, as well as being width limited. (Note: any proposed Renmark Bypass could accommodate the Paringa Bridge replacement option.)
Several specific intersections were discussed, principally from a safety perspective, including:

- A need to upgrade the Gepps Cross Intersection in metropolitan Adelaide which will benefit metropolitan and regional South Australia alike. The Gepps Cross intersection is a significant congestion point and grade separation is required.
- Improvements in traffic control at the junction of the Monash Bypass with the Sturt Highway
- The need to improve the existing “Y” junction of the Coast Road and Minlaton Road (south of Ardrossan) to improve safety
- Improvements in traffic control at the junction of Main North Road and the Barrier Highway
- Improvements in traffic control at the intersection of Main North Rd and Port Rd (near Auburn)

- A Parking Bay (Double Road Train capable) and Road Train Staging post is needed at the Crystal Brook (Princes’ Highway junction) where Heavy Vehicle access is reduced from Double Road Train to B-Double capability

- The lack of Parking Bays on Eyre Peninsula capable of accommodating Double Road Trains was a key concern raised by industry

- Several bridge upgrades were discussed in the forums including:
  - The need to upgrade the DV Fleming Bridge near Noarlunga to remove weight limitations;
  - An upgrade of the Gulnare Bridge to facilitate B-Double access; and
  - The need to upgrade the Stone Hut Bridge and Skilly Bridge in the State’s Mid-North

- The requirement for further upgrades of the Noarlunga to Cape Jervis section of the network to remove length limitations for B-Double trucks, improve the interaction of freight vehicles and other users (such as tourists and commuters) by providing passing opportunities and a general upgrade in safety on the route (which is currently “hilly” and “windy”)

- The need to upgrade culverts on the American River to Kingscote section of the Penneshaw to Kingscote section of the network to allow unfettered access for fully laden B-Double trucks

- The need to improve traffic control at the junction of the Wallaroo Road and Kadina-Port Broughton Road) so as to improve safety

- Lifting Tapleys Hill Road to B-double standard was discussed as it can represent a better option for some freight movements. It was also highlighted that the existing load limitation on Tapleys Hill Rd near “Cement Hill” needs to be rectified

- It was noted that the Southern Expressway (reversible carriageway) can be confusing for some drivers (especially tourists) but that it had also improved travel times to the South. It was noted that the system is not ideal, but is workable. Nonetheless it was highlighted that it is problematic for Just-In-Time manufacturing that requires frequent deliveries in assured timeframes. The high volumes of traffic on the route creates a bottleneck at Bedford Park arising from the “funnel effect” of the route. It was also suggested that
during commuter peaks that alternative routes can be quicker. Duplication of the route to allow 24 hour access in both directions is necessary.

- Improvements to Marion Road are required in addition to an upgrade of South Rd. The Marion Rd-Anzac Hwy intersection and the Marion Rd Tram Crossing are seen as significant choke points requiring attention (and potential grade separation).

- It was acknowledged that the existing road network is struggling to cope with the expanding wine industry’s freight needs. Links between wine regions require upgrade to cater for increasing freight volumes and movements between regions – Langhorne Creek links are required as a priority. Improvements are also required to links between the Barossa Valley and the Sturt Highway, catering for high capacity vehicles moving between production facilities (especially Riverland/Barossa Valley movements).

- It was noted that the roundabouts on Liverpool Street in Port Lincoln were difficult for trucks to negotiate (and it was also noted that it is rare for the main street of a rural city of this size to also serve a role as the principal freight route).

- The need for an increased number of Overtaking Lanes so as to improve the interaction of trucks and other users (tourists, commuters etc) was prominent at the forums. Specific routes where action is required include:
  - Sturt Highway (linking the Riverland (main route to Sydney) with the Barossa Valley and northern Adelaide). Several new overtaking lanes have been installed in recent years but more are needed.
  - Noarlunga-Cape Jervis Road (a steep and windy route linking southern metropolitan Adelaide to the Fleurieu Peninsula and Kangaroo Island).
  - The Coast Road on Yorke Peninsula(south of Ardrossan).
  - Improvements to the Kohinoor Hill overtaking lane (Kangaroo Island) which has safety issues.
  - On the Eyre Peninsula in general, but especially on the Lincoln Highway (eastern side of Eyre Peninsula).
  - Throughout the Adelaide Hills where passing opportunities are limited and tourist and commuter numbers are high.

- The construction of slip lanes to access key facilities and at key junctions on key freight routes will improve safety and allow traffic to flow more freely. The Riverland was highlighted as one area were significant benefits would accrue from the construction of slip lanes.

- The need for a truck wash facility on the Yorke Peninsula was also raised at the Ardrossan Forum.

- Network maintenance needs were widely discussed at the forums. It was acknowledged that many regional roads were designed and built decades ago and therefore are struggling to cope with the access needs of modern high capacity freight vehicles (Old Norton Summit Road is one example and the old Princes’ Highway is another). Unsealed roads are particularly vulnerable to damage caused by repetitive use by heavy vehicles. An extensive programme of works is required to facilitate heavy vehicle access and maintenance should form a key part of any Transport Plan produced. The growing
implications of the maintenance backlog on operations and the need for a greater focus on the issue was emphasised, with specific maintenance requirements discussed for:

- the Barrier Highway, and between Saddleworth and Manoora and Clare and Spalding
- Main North Road in general, but especially the Gawler-Clare section
- throughout the Adelaide Hills area where road edges are crumbling
- Majors Road between the Lonsdale Highway and South Road
- Marion Road
- The need to improve roadside vegetation management on Kangaroo Island
- The poor state of fords and bridges on Kangaroo Island which limits operations
- Road width on Kangaroo Island, which is viewed as limiting freight access and in some instances, is a key safety concern

Funding issues for local government faced with maintaining and enhancing a rural road network that was built to accommodate farmers’ trucks and not modern high capacity freight vehicles were prominent at all forums. It quickly became evident that local government finances are straining under the pressure to provide access for larger vehicles, expanding industry sectors and facilities, as well as to maintain their vast network of roads. The present situation is considered to be unsustainable and increased State and Federal road funding for Local Government will be necessary to ease the burden.

It was also highlighted that the upgrade and maintenance of some less used roads in rural areas were diverting funds away from more “worthy” routes that would benefit industry and the community. A greater concentration of efforts on these more “worthy” routes was required, with the outcome being that some less used routes may need to be closed or allowed to deteriorate to a level commensurate with their usage and value to the wider community. It was also emphasised that the limited funds which are available for maintenance should be allocated on a priority needs basis and not following political considerations.

Toll roads were seen as one possible solution to the emerging conflict between the demand for efficiency and access for innovative and larger combination freight vehicles pitted against the funding crisis faced by local government which does not have the means to fund any meaningful route upgrades.

Ultimately, it was generally agreed that fuel taxes collected for road usage should be returned to roads through investment in, and maintenance of, the road network. The general level of fuel taxes was discussed widely and generally agreed to be too high.

2.3. SEA

Many regional areas feature a specific-purpose port established to service one or a few industries (generally grain). Whilst throughput is generally low in a modern context they still perform a vital role for regional communities and provide employment opportunities, both directly in port operations, as well as within key user industries.

For the Kangaroo Island community, the port represents their key lifeline to the outside world, facilitating the movement of island residents and tourists too and from the mainland as well as moving freight to markets and farming and general freight inputs onto the island and into production, supermarkets and the like. The Kangaroo Island community highlighted their belief that the comparative costs of doing business on the Island are high and that freight costs are a
major contributor to this differential, sometimes accounting for up to 25% of the final product value in its markets.

Specific port infrastructure issues discussed at the forums included:

- The future of Port Stanvac, with proposals ranging from recommissioning of the oil refinery to industrial or residential development being aired. The resultant need for efficient and effective transport links featured

- The future viability of Port Pirie was discussed in the face of declining throughput, and the impact that this may have on remaining users that may need to cover port costs spread across a declining volume. Potential new throughputs emanating from the expanding mining industry were highlighted

- The need for a new port in the Ballast Head area (Kangaroo Island) to accommodate woodchip exports was highlighted

- The KI Forum participants felt strongly that the State Government’s application of wharfage charges on Kangaroo Island ports (including Cape Jervis) was not justified as the funds collected were not being fully returned to the maintenance and enhancement of facilities

- The increased export of grain in containers is reducing throughput at regional ports which only have bulk loading facilities. It is unclear as to whether this trend is long-term in nature (or merely a short-term reaction to relatively high bulk ship charter rates as compared to container shipping rates).

2.4. AIR

Only limited volumes of air freight are flown too/from regional airports, which can lack appropriate freight handling facilities and equipment, and generally do not receive air services that can easily accommodate freight requirements. Consequently, a majority of “air freight” from regional areas is consigned by road to capital city airports (principally Adelaide, Sydney and Melbourne) for subsequent handling and on-forwarding by air.

Adelaide International Airport is the key facility for the State’s exporters and commuters, providing the crucial link to other national and international destinations, as well as acting as the key origin/destination for flights to regional centres.

Nonetheless, regional airports play a critical role in providing crucial and time-sensitive access for communities, in terms of both passengers, and some time-sensitive freight.

Specific airport infrastructure issues discussed at the forums included:

- The development of an airport in the State’s mid-North area to handle regional produce, although it was acknowledged that volumes would need to grow dramatically for this action to become viable

- The need to lengthen the Whyalla airport runway to cater for defence purposes associated with increased activity at the Cultana site
3. REGULATIONS

In many ways transport regulations control the use of infrastructure. Regulations are used by Governments to control access to specific routes, vehicle mass and dimensions, stipulate safety requirements, control activities and hours of operation, and control manning levels to name just a few areas. For some modes regulations can act as a price control over elements of the transport system such as access to key facilities (eg: ports) and services (eg: rail), whilst for other modes, such as roads, pricing is left to the market to determine (given that taxes and charges are roughly equal amongst users of the road network).

- The need to consider the “last mile” aspect of key freight routes. Efficient and high capacity access to key freight nodes, such as grain silo complexes, can be hampered as large combination vehicles do not have access to some facilities. The Crystal Brook silo complex can not be accessed by Double Road Trains as the last 500 metres of the route is not available to these vehicles. The result is that a larger number of smaller combinations are used with attendant economic, environmental and social (safety) risks. Local access to the Gladstone silo complex was also raised in this context, as was access from the Princes Highway to the Bowmans Intermodal terminal in the State’s mid-North.

- The need for high volume access to key sites (such as grain silos and rail terminals) was considered to be a priority development at several of the forums.

- Regulations controlling heavy vehicle access are perhaps the most contentious issue in the road freight industry. The need for expanded access for larger vehicles, especially B-Doubles was raised at all forums. The wine industry in the Barossa Valley in particular is eager for improved access by B-Doubles and larger combinations to wineries so as they can capitalise on this level of access.

- Some forums called for B-Double vehicles to be given ‘General Access’ status across the State, negating the need for permits, whilst other forums called for 26 metre B-Double access on roads under the care and control of Local Government.
• Those areas where B-Double access is currently the norm (such as in the Riverland), called for an increase in access levels to Double Road Train standards. Kangaroo Island producers also called for improved access for higher productivity vehicles. Double Road Train access for sections of the Yorke Peninsula and Mid-North was also called for including: Pt Wakefield-Pt Giles, Pt Wakefield to Bowmans. A general increase in access from B-Double to Double Road Train access across the State was also seen as an opportunity to improve efficiency and limit the impact of the expanding freight task.

• Given that the level of heavy vehicle access changes at various points along the network, the need for load consolidation (and deconsolidation) points was raised. The intersection of the Tod and Eyre Highways on Eyre Peninsula is a case in point. Access levels change from full Double Road Train to smaller units, yet there is no designated area where Double Road Trains can be made up or broken down into smaller units for delivery down the centre of the Eyre Peninsula.

• Increase of access levels for larger vehicles under lower speed conditions should be investigated to determine the extent of this opportunity.

• There was also a perception that some road permits were being denied by authorities in an effort to artificially “prop-up” rail operations.

• Some road operators reported unacceptable delays in receiving approvals for permit access from both State and Local Government.

• It was reported that the overall perception that road permits were becoming increasingly difficult to get is acting as a disincentive to reinvestment by road operators (and that this is looming as a safety issue as the road fleet ages). Operators require some consistency and surety in the permits system if they are to confidently invest in new equipment.\(^3\)

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\(^3\) It should be noted that the Permit system is progressively being replaced by gazettal of routes through the Heavy Vehicle Access Framework (see Section 6).
4. SKILLS SHORTAGES

The looming skills shortage was discussed at most forums with the truck driver shortage raised as one of the most significant issues facing the industry today.

The difficulties associated with getting insurance coverage for young drivers (under 25 years of age) is seen as a serious limitation in developing new drivers and attracting them to the industry in the first instance.

The need for new young drivers to obtain suitable qualifications was emphasised. Indeed, the need for training and skills development was seen as representing an industry development opportunity in itself.

The functionality and content of the South Australian Freight Council’s Logistics Information and Navigation Centre (LINC) was highlighted at all forums and was well received. Amongst other features, this site – www.the-linc.com.au – incorporates 70 Career Briefs which outline what it means to work in this industry and how to gain the necessary qualifications and experience to progress up the corporate ladder.

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5. OTHER ISSUES RAISED

A variety of other issues which do not fit neatly into the categories already discussed in this paper were raised at the forums, including:

- The reality that when operating costs increase for freight service providers, then freight rates will increase for service users, and ultimately prices will increase at the point of sale (be that at the supermarket checkout or the factory gate). Consequently, the desirability of keeping operating costs to a minimum was emphasized for all modes and in all regions.

- When industry changes its logistics patterns there is a corresponding impact upon the surrounding transport network and local communities which is not always taken into account by the industry concerned. Industry sectors discussed in terms of their changing logistics patterns included the grain industry (increased use of some strategic silo complexes eg: Tookayerta in the Riverland with a corresponding decrease in the use of other sites as well as an increasing trend towards on-farm storage) and the wine industry which is increasingly moving grapes and juice between producing regions and facilities for processing and blending purposes.

- The conflict between larger heavy vehicles and smaller local and tourist traffics is a widespread concern for local government and communities and needs to be addressed in a manner which improves the respective understanding by each user of the requirements of other users. The fact that the peak harvest periods often coincide with peak holiday/tourism periods exacerbates this problem (ie: the grain harvest is in full swing in the lead up to Christmas).

- The act of “slip-streaming” by trucks is a concern to other road users and represents a serious safety risk to both other network users and the “slip-streamers” themselves. Passing opportunities are also limited when slip-streaming is occurring due to the compound effect of the length of the “convoy”.

- Curfews at the livestock facilities in Lobethal can create coordination issues for Kangaroo Island transporters that need to ensure their vehicle is back at Cape Jervis in time to catch the final ferry back to the Island.

- The need to consider other non-financial benefits that accrue from the use of sea freight was also discussed. These environmental and safety benefits, as well as savings in road wear should be recognised and used as justification for increased use of ports and allocation of funds by governments for port improvements.

- As an island community, Kangaroo Island is heavily dependent on reliable and efficient sea freight services. Potential new barge and ferry services and possible improvements to existing services were discussed at the Kangaroo Island Forum. The potential to treat the Kangaroo Island sea crossing as an extension of the road network, similar to the way the Federal Government treats the Bass Strait crossing, was canvassed.
• Improved back loading and load co-ordination on the existing Kangaroo Island freight services was viewed as a means of improving efficiency and placing downwards pressure on freight rates. This view extended to both the ferry and barge operations

• The need for a competitive option to existing ferry services with a view to reducing ferry freight rates was emphasised by the Kangaroo Island farming community. Paradoxically, it was also noted that short term ferry competition may have a negative impact upon existing operators, and cause difficulties in the system

• There is a general need to improve the understanding of the community as to the key role that freight plays in our daily lives

• There is also a need to educate the community (especially tourists) on how to interact with trucks on the network. This could deliver significant safety benefits to the community as a whole

• There is limited knowledge of air freight capacity at regional airports, both in terms of facilities available (eg: cold storage) and flights capable of carrying freight in addition to passengers

• There is a perceived reticence amongst operators to accept less than full container loads (LCL) or less than full truck loads (LTL) resulting in difficulties in accessing LCL/LTL services in some areas and communities. This ultimately is a constraint on small business operators seeking to access markets in an exploratory manner – consigning small loads in the first instance to test the market. Similarly, access to a cold chain delivery service for small consignments can be difficult and similarly hampers industry expansion. It was also noted
that operators would provide the service if it were profitable to do so. Nonetheless, the critical shortage of a dedicated ‘food service’ was noted in several areas

- A general shortage of food grade shipping containers is being experienced in many regions, particularly by smaller, ‘irregular’ shippers, and this is hampering their ability to access export markets in a cost effective manner, and in some cases, at all

- The southern suburbs forum highlighted a shortage of “flat-racks” used for transporting bulky freight items

- The lack of a waste liquids receival and storage facility in Port Lincoln leads to a necessity to travel to Whyalla to access facilities in that town (with an associated cost of travel), and encourages illegal dumping

- Some regions saw the industry itself as a development opportunity (logistics centres / hubs) that could be exploited
6. ACTIONS ALREADY IMPLEMENTED

All forum write-ups have been forwarded to the SA Minister for Transport for noting and referral to relevant sections of the Department of Transport, Energy and Infrastructure.

To the credit of the Agency, and in many cases in conjunction with Local Government and industry, some significant activities have been progressed (and continue to receive consideration), including:

- DTEI has implemented its Heavy Vehicle Access Framework which guides heavy vehicle access in the State and included the introduction of ‘Commodity Routes’ to cater for seasonal agricultural production. This Framework also included the promise to remove 3000 permits from the system, replacing them with gazetted routes where an access permit is no longer required. As at 30 June 2008, 3051 Permits have been converted to gazetted routes through the Heavy Vehicle Access Framework process. 41 of the relevant 47 regional councils and 3 of 7 metropolitan councils have now gazetted commodity networks. Work continues with outstanding Local Government areas.

- DTEI quickly moved to allay any fears that Heavy Vehicle Permits were not being issued on the Eyre Peninsula and clarified any misunderstandings held by industry as to why some specific permits had not been issued.

- The Back of Hills Route involving a route from Strathalbyn to Langhorne Creek – Monarto – Cambrai – Sedan – Sturt Highway is available for B-Double use and acts effectively as a ‘Back-of-Hills’ Bypass of the metropolitan area for traffic that does not need to come all of the way into the city area. This is particularly of benefit to the expanding wine industry and ‘through traffic’. An upgrade of Ferries McDonald Rd has commenced.

- The State Government has commenced works on the North-South Freeway concept with the commencement of construction of the Anzac Highway-South Rd Underpass works. The South Rd Tram Crossing, just south of this intersection will also be grade separated, with completion of both projects expected in late 2009. The State Government has also announced a grade separation of the Grange and Port road intersections with South Rd, as well as the Outer Harbor rail line (600m tunnel). Widening of South Road between Port and Torrens roads has been announced, as has a grade separation of the Sturt Rd Intersection.

- The current Australian Government led by Kevin Rudd, PM has undertaken to add the South Rd element (Southern Expressway to Sir Donald Bradman Drive – linking to the existing Auslink section running from Sir Donald Bradman Drive to the Port River Expressway) to the national Auslink network and has promised funding to commence the upgrade process and to plan the whole route. This development should result in the acceleration of works along the entire route and will allow works to proceed in a coordinated manner. The Federal Government has also indicated a priority for grade separation works in the area of the Wingfield rail crossing. The planning element of the project has commenced.

- The DV Fleming Bridge on Fleurieu Peninsula (Main South Rd crossing of the Onkaparinga River) has been upgraded and is no longer weight limited.
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- The $550m AusLink\(^4\) funded Northern Expressway project, incorporating development of an expressway standard route between Gawler and Port Wakefield Rd, as well as an upgrade of Port Wakefield Rd from the junction south of Virginia to the Port River Expressway has commenced. The State Government has also announced the commencement of investigations into the proposed shared road and rail corridor project – the Northern Connector – which if it comes to fruition will provide an expressway standard link between the Port River Expressway and the Northern Expressway.

- The junction of the Monash Bypass with the Sturt Highway has been upgraded to improve safety.

- An upgrade of the Paringa Bridge was completed in 2007/08 year.

- The State Government has committed $15m towards the costs associated with a Penola Bypass (estimated total cost $25m) whilst the District Council of Grant has reserved a corridor for the proposed Mt Gambier Bypass.

- The State Government has issued a Development Plan Amendment aimed at rezoning land in the Penfield area to facilitate establishment of the proposed Northern Adelaide Intermodal terminal, adjacent to the Northern Expressway where construction has recently commenced.

- Relevant parties have developed a strategic alliance aimed at progressing establishment of an intermodal terminal in the Monarto area. Relevant studies are underway.

- The State Government has formed its Future of Freight Task Force involving State Government Officials, which will work with industry in an effort to devise strategies to overcome the looming shortage of truck drivers. SAFC will participate in that process at the appropriate time.

- The South Australian Freight Council has established the Logistics Information and Navigation Centre (LINC) in an effort to lift awareness of the transport and logistics industry as a potential career. The site contains some 70 Careers Briefs each outlining possible career pathways; required education, aptitudes and experience; and work pay and conditions. It enables users to map out an entire career, following from job to job, and identifying the requirements to move from one to another. The site has been extensively promoted at Careers Expos and amongst school Careers Counsellors and is currently undergoing enhancement through incorporation of information for other states and completion of the migration of the site to a more technologically advanced platform (the national Transport and Logistics Centre’s TILIS technology).

TILIS is a web based portal technology developed for the T&L industry which allows the SAFC to edit, update, manage and grow LINC in many directions. TILIS is the engine that drives LINC, and LINC is the vehicle that carries information and ideas to young people and mature workers across Australia.

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\(^4\) AusLink projects involve a funding partnership between the Federal and State Government.
TILIS gives anyone access 24/7 to LINC, from any public internet terminal, in a café, a school or at home. It allows people to share data and applications, to engage with each other and with the experts. It is a true collaborative web enabled technology. It has the ability to video stream, as well as the capacity to provide specific State-based information, dependent on the location of the visitor to the site.

It can be accessed at http://www.the-linc.com.au/

- A national rail level crossings policy has recently been developed and is progressing towards implementation

- A $40m upgrade of the Eyre Peninsula rail network (incorporating some road upgrades as well) is underway. This project involved a joint funding arrangement involving the 3 levels of Government and industry (Genesee and Wyoming Australia, ABB Grain and growers on the Eyre Peninsula)

- The State Government has allocated $10m towards the costs associated with the upgrade and conversion to standard gauge of the South East Rail Network. In addition, a joint SA/Victorian Ministerial Group has recently been formed in an effort to progress development of the SE transport network, both road and rail, in a coordinated manner

- The Federal Government has allocated $3m towards the costs associated with a study of alternative rail routes around the Adelaide Hills. This development may facilitate double-stacking of trains operating between Perth and Melbourne (it should be noted that additional works would be required on the Melbourne end of the route, and the benefits of an ‘Adelaide Rail Bypass’ for existing rail based customers in Adelaide and South Australia have not been established as yet)

- The Minister for Urban Development & Planning, the Hon Paul Holloway, MP has issued a Penfield Intermodal Rail Freight Facility Development Plan Amendment incorporating a proposal to rezone a 52 hectare parcel of land at Penfield to facilitate establishment of a new intermodal rail freight facility in the area

- An alternative route to Horrocks Pass, running from Peterborough and joining the Princes Hwy near Crystal Brook has been developed by DTEI and is available for Double Road Train operations

- A Kangaroo Island Transport Strategy has been developed by key players, and included SAFC in the process. This Strategy is currently being progressed by the KI Development Board, KI Council and the community

- The Kangaroo Island community has appointed a Consultant to develop the case for addition of the KI crossing to the Federal Governments transport equity schemes (similar to those that apply to the Bass Strait Crossing linking Tasmania to the mainland, and both King Island and Flinders Island to Tasmania)

- The Port Augusta community has appointed a Consultant to investigate road and rail traffic management issues in light of the forecast increases in traffic associated with the imminent
growth in freight and passenger movements expected to be generated by the expanding mining industry in the Far North and West of the State

- Additional passing lanes have been installed on various sections of the road network, including the Dukes Highway, Riddoch Highway (near Nangwarry), Sturt Highway and Highway 1 (Port Wakefield-Port Augusta). An additional passing lane has also been added to the Noarlunga to Cape Jervis section of the network (at Lady Bay) (although more work needs to be undertaken on this corridor)

- The 2008-09 State Budget has allocated funds to various broad projects that may address some of the road infrastructure concerns raised at the various forums. These programmes include:
  - $8.85m for long life roads (shoulder safety and targeted safety initiatives)
  - $1m for the Overtaking Lanes Programme (regional arterials)
  - $23.7m for Road Resurfacing and Rehabilitation Works (sealed arterial and national networks)
  - $2.5m Roadside Rest Areas Strategy ($10m total over 4 years)
  - $8.1m Rural Road Improvement
  - $7.2m Shoulder Sealing (high priority rural roads)

The extent to which individual infrastructure issues are addressed is at the discretion of the State Government, taking into account various government priorities and strategic directions.

- The grains industry (with some assistance from the SA Freight Council) has pooled its resources to progress regulatory change proposals that could lead to an increase in the availability of shipping containers suitable for exporting grain. If successful, this development could potentially benefit other industry sectors involved in food exports

It should also be acknowledged that some of the proposals highlighted were already under active consideration within Government and/or have been developed independently of the Regional Forums Programme. Nonetheless, these actions have contributed to addressing many of the issues raised through the forum programme.

It should also be acknowledged that other issues continue to receive attention and assessment against competing priorities, whilst other proposals are not considered to be viable at this time.
7. NEXT STEPS

This report will be formally referred to:

- the State and Federal Ministers responsible for transport and logistics
- Regional Development Boards
- Local Government Bodies (including specific Councils and the LGA’s)
- Peak Industry Bodies with an interest in Transport and Logistics
- All attendees at the various forums held around the State.

SAFC will continue to monitor the uptake and implementation of initiatives identified through the programme and formally seeks input from relevant bodies.

So as to continue to mine the valuable source of information and issues identification opportunities in the regions SAFC will review its Regional Forums Programme with a view to recommencing the series during the 2009/10 financial year and will actively seek new and existing partners to contribute to the programme.

All Inquiries should be directed to:

Neil Murphy
General Manager
SA Freight Council Inc
296 St Vincent St
Port Adelaide SA 5015
Email: SAFCAadmin@flindersports.com.au
Tel: (08) 8447 0688