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Online Submission

Feb 24

p To:

The future prosperity of Newcastle and the Hunter Region will in part depend on the quality of its transport links to Sydney. Here, an improved rail link is essential.

"As Newcastle and Wollongong grow in size and importance to the NSW economy, they need faster and more efficient links to Sydney" (Transport for NSW 2012, Draft Transport Master Plan as noted by the 2012 State Infrastructure Strategy of NSW) Infrastructure NSW.

This report "assesses how faster rail journeys from the Illawarra and Central Coast to Sydney would help enable this integration and support these regions." ... also, this 2012 report on page 107, notes "An incremental program to accelerate the intercity routes is proposed, with a target of one hour journey times to Sydney from both Gosford and Wollongong, and a two hour journey time from Newcastle. The focus of the program will be operational improvements supported by targeted capital works to reduce journey times."

In winter 2014, TfNSW commissioned a study by AECOM on options of speeding up Sydney-Newcastle, Sydney-Wollongong, and Sydney-Canberra trains.

Faster trains to Newcastle

Faster trains between Sydney and Newcastle were promised in 1998 in the official NSW Action for Transport Statement to be delivered - the first stage c2007.

The worst aligned sections of track linking Hornsby and Newcastle are now overdue for realignment. This section is now the most congested section of double track in Australia, albeit more from frequent passenger trains rather than from commercial freight activity. It was understood (Laird, P Michell, M Stoney, A and Adorni-Braccesi, G, 2005, Australian freight railways for a new century AusRail Conference Proceedings, Sydney) that design work, c2000, "was undertaken by consultants for the former Rail Access Corporation on a high speed Newcastle line that would have allowed reduction of the XPT transit time from Sydney to Broadmeadow from over 2 hours to 90 minutes. Complex engineering, high costs and unrealistically high expectations seem to have condemned these plans to the archives. ... A modified proposal with steeper grades for passenger trains (all passenger trains are electric multiple units or high power diesel multiple units) might be more realistic."

One simple strategy would be to revert to the alignment in place in the late 19 th century. As noted by Singleton (1966) as part of a policy of a ruling grade of 1 in 75 for up trains, a number of deviations were built in the early 20 th century. They included

* Morisset (123.21 km) to Dora Creek (127.24 km) easing a 1 in 50 grade, with a new 1m 50c (one mile, 50 chains) deviation replacing a 1m 30c section. "Here, the insertion of a 20 chain and a 16 chain curve did nothing to improve the speeds of fast trains."

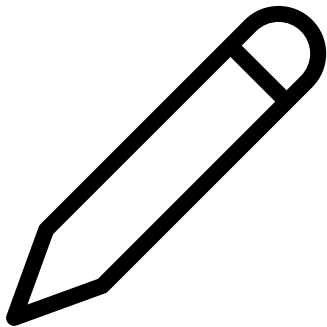
* Dora Creek (127.24 km) to Awaba (137.38 km) easing a 1 in 40 grade, with a 2 m 62 c deviation replacing a 2m 27c section. Where "its series of sharp curves spoiled any chance of fast running on this section of track."

* Awaba (137.38 km) to Fassifern (142.41km) easing a 1 in 40 grade, with a 2 m 20 c deviation replacing a 1 m 17c section placed into use 1 February 1903 ".an extra mile of permanent way. At one stage, serious consideration was given

to reverting to the original route by lowering this, when supplying filling for Broadmeadow Marshalling Yard...". The tight curves continue past Booragul (146.45km) and onto Teralba (147.74km).

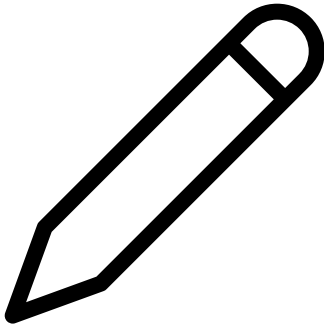
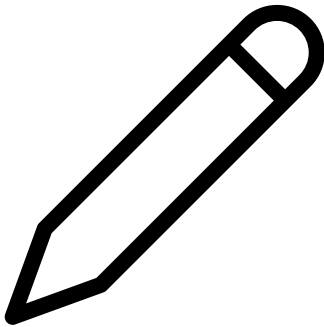
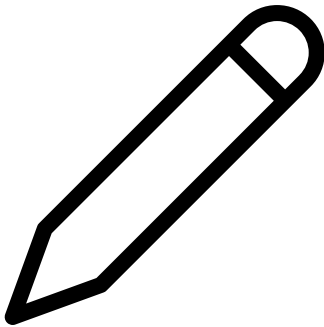
A further option is to link Fassifern (142.41km) via Hexham to Stround Road with new track. This was also outlined in a 2007 Federal Parliamentary report (the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Transport etc The Great Freight Task: Is Australia's transport network up to the challenge?) which noted benefits for construction of some 67 km of new track would get rid of 97 km of steam age' alignment, cut train transit times from 82 to 42 minutes, and reduce fuel use in the track section by 40 per cent.

The decision to truncate the railway line at Wickham is a dubious one. The investment of some \$350 million for track upgrades to allow for faster trains from Newcastle to Sydney would do much more for Newcastle than cutting the track at Wickham and installing light rail at a cost of some \$350m.



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