

Rail Freight Network Review

On 21 December, the Minister for Public Transport, Lynne Kosky released the report of the Rail Freight Review, Switchpoint – The template for rail freight to revive and thrive! led by the Hon. Tim Fischer AC (and including MAV CEO Rob Spence). Mr Fischer said the report “laid out a strong blueprint for the way forward with rail freight in Victoria, including enhancing rail road hubbing and setting investment priorities over the network.” Minister Kosky responded to the report by announcing the Government will increase subsidies for grain shipments to ensure transportation of grain by rail over the next 12 months. Key recommendations by the Committee include:

- Proposed priorities and levels of investment to upgrade Victoria’s rail freight network;
- The establishment of a Grain Logistics Taskforce to coordinate the grain supply chain and facilitate collaboration on grain handling and marketing;
- Commissioning a government entity to champion and develop rail freight business and facilitate collaboration between stakeholders;
- Establishment of a Rail Freight Development Fund to facilitate rail freight opportunities via (seed) capital contributions to rail freight facilities;
- Establishment of an ongoing asset management regime to maintain the network at designated speed after capital rehabilitation; and
- Higher priority for freight trains on Melbourne metropolitan rail network through improved metropolitan rail system planning.

For a copy of the report, go to www.doi.vic.gov.au/freight.

Council Roads for B-doubles and Higher Mass Limits Vehicles

Following VicRoads’ letter to councils calling for greater access by B-double trucks and higher mass limit vehicles to local roads by recommending councils provide blanket approval with exceptions, the MAV convened a meeting with approximately 60 councils and VicRoads’ representatives on 19 December at Flemington. The meeting discussed the matter at length and agreed on the following:

- Councils have the right to decide and control which local roads are suitable for access by B-double vehicles;
- The preferred system of route classification is for councils to identify those routes on which B-double vehicles can travel (in preference to the alternative

process of providing a blanket approval with exceptions);

- **Councils to respond by 15 February 2008** with comments in relation to the recommended process (see below) for reviewing their road networks in the future, for access by B-double vehicles. Comments must be emailed to jhennessy@mav.asn.au. VicRoads is proposing to update its publication listing roads approved for use by B-doubles, and unless they receive updated information from councils, will repeat the existing information; and
- Councils will assess information provided by the MAV Truck Impact Working Group (involving MAV, councils, VicRoads, The National Transport Commission and the Victorian Transport Association) in April 2008. This group will identify the nature of the freight challenge for Victoria, the impacts of various types of freight vehicles and suggested processes for local government to manage the situation into the future, including a route assessment framework. The process recommendations for the approval of local roads for B-doubles in to the future are:
 1. The status quo (VicRoads listing of approved B-double local roads) be extended beyond March 2008;
 2. Councils review the Latrobe City Council process (contact John Hennessy, 9667 5525, jhennessy@mav.asn.au) and provide feedback to the MAV. (This process starts with an audit, then updates the list of approved roads, which goes out for extensive community consultation, and the council then decides on a final listing);
 3. Councils be given until June 2009 to complete the review of their road network, including the assessment of Performance Based Standards (PBS) routes;
 4. Councils take account of the outcomes from the MAV Truck Impact Working group re: suggested ‘good practice’ assessment processes, and related matters;
 5. Any council is able to:
 - a. Complete an update at any time and forward it to VicRoads
 - b. Use any process it deems appropriate to assess B-double routes; and

VicRoads can determine the most suitable timing for producing the updated list of approved roads, given that it will happen on a cyclical basis.

Go to: www.mav.asn.au/transport

Transport Legislation Review

Following the recent release by the Department of Infrastructure (DoI) of a discussion paper on a new legislative framework for transport in Victoria, MAV submitted its response to the review (see attached). The ideas generated from submissions will inform a position paper, which will identify draft objectives for a new Act, referred to as the *Transport Integration Act*, which will seek to provide a common way forward for Victoria's transport legislation (currently comprising four core Acts and approximately 12 Interface Acts). The MAV intends to be closely involved with the drafting of the position paper and any subsequent consultation on the development of a new Act, and welcome all local government involvement. Unfortunately, the time afforded to the MAV for response to the review was limited, making distribution of a draft submission difficult. However, local government contribution to stage two of the process is greatly welcomed. **Way forward:** Copies of the MAV submission is available at www.mav.asn.au/transport/resources. Please forward any comments on the review and/or MAV's submission to Skye Holcombe, 9667 5533, sholcombe@mav.asn.au.

L2P Program

Under Victoria's new Graduated Licensing System, from 1 July 2007, all learner drivers under 21 years must obtain a mandatory 120 hours of supervised driving practise to qualify for a probationary licence. For the majority of learners, supervised practise will be readily available. However, for those who do not have access to licenced drivers and/or suitable vehicles, the community-based L2P program aims to provide the required resources. VicRoads, using funding provided through the Transport Accident Commission, is trialling the Program which is designed to operate under the auspices of local government. Nine million dollars has been allocated to fund the program, which is entirely voluntary. For interested councils, the operation of the program may be undertaken by councils or by agreed arrangements with specialist service provider agencies operating within the local government area. Under the agreement, VicRoads provides funding, specialist expertise, contact networks and program guidelines. Interested councils should contact Kelly Imberger, 9854 2752, kelly.imberger@roads.vic.gov.au. For other inquiries, contact Skye Holcombe, 9667 5533, sholcombe@mav.asn.au.

Liveability Inquiry – Call for Ideas

The Hon. John Lenders has directed the Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission (VCEC) to conduct an inquiry into enhancing Victoria's liveability. It will investigate links between liveability and the competitiveness of the state, and to consider ways in which the government can best enhance Victoria's status as an attractive and vibrant place to live, while ensuring that sustainability issues are taken into account. In particular, the Commission is to:

- Explore the link between liveability and enhancing Victoria's competitiveness;
- Examine the efficiency advantages of good planning and community infrastructure and evaluate the economic costs of poor urban design;
- Discuss dimensions of liveability that are different in provincial Victoria than in Melbourne;
- Report on the planning, design and implementation of sustainable urban concepts and systems in other jurisdictions that are focused on achieving liveability goals; and
- Identify opportunities for government action to enhance the liveability of Victoria, and suggest ways of overcoming challenges.

The MAV is compiling a response to the VCEC's Issues Paper, released in October 2007, and invites councils to contribute. A draft submission will be sent to councils for feedback in mid-January with final submissions due by 31 January 2008. The Issues Paper is available at www.vcec.vic.gov.au. Contact Emma Fitzclarence, 9667 5532, efitzclarence@mav.asn.au

Saferoads Conference – Call for Ideas

The MAV is calling for ideas from councils for the 2008 Saferoads Conference planned for October. The biennial conference provides stakeholders, practitioners and decision makers the opportunity to share information about the latest trends and initiatives in road safety. VicRoads is seeking to develop a community-focussed agenda and would like to attract as much local government input and participation as possible. Contact Skye Holcombe, 9667 5533, sholcombe@mav.asn.au.

East-West Link Needs Assessment

Sir Rod Eddington and team are due to hand down their East-West Link Needs Assessment report, including recommendations to government in early 2008. The MAV has maintained close contact with the study team throughout the consultation and will continue to do so after the report is released. For further information go to www.doi.vic.gov.au or contact Skye Holcombe, 9667 5533, sholcombe@mav.asn.au.