

# Freight rail in Western Australia



An effective freight transport network is essential for the long-term development of Western Australia.

A strong freight network ensures metropolitan, regional and remote communities and business have reliable access to goods and services. It underpins the capability to move these goods efficiently and sustainably into, around and out of the State thereby making a substantial contribution to the overall prosperity and liveability of Western Australia.

For these reasons, it is in the interest of all Western Australians to ensure that the State has an effective freight network and that key infrastructure can continue to meet the State's freight task to 2031 and beyond.

## Rail's role in the freight network

Ports, roads and rail make up Western Australia's freight network. They are all part of a broader supply chain which moves goods from point to point.

The State's rail network will play an increasingly important role in moving freight across Western Australia in the future, a task which is estimated to increase by about 50 million net tonnes per annum to more than 126 million net tonnes per annum by 2030.

Similarly, the volume of import/export containerised freight through Fremantle Inner Harbour is forecast to triple by 2050. Freight rail lines connect with our 24/7 operating ports to assist the smooth, efficient transition of freight from port to rail to distribution points around the State and across Australia. An efficient and coordinated freight system can save costs which usually benefits the consumer.

Current State government strategy is to increase the use of freight rail to transport containers and reduce potential impacts on the metropolitan road network and road users.

## Who's involved in Western Australia's freight rail network

The Public Transport Authority (PTA) is responsible for managing the State's freight rail network through the long-term Rail Infrastructure Lease.

This lease is held by Arc Infrastructure which manages and operates the 5,500 kilometres of rail network across the South West of Western Australia. It is responsible for maintaining the rail and communications networks as well as for controlling the freight rail traffic 24/7/365 (much like air traffic control for airports).

In the north of the State, private railway operations transport iron ore to ports in the Pilbara region and the interstate railway east of Kalgoorlie is managed by the Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC).

Aurizon, Watco Companies, Pacific National and SCT Logistics are rail freight operators that move hundreds of thousands of tonnes of freight along the Western Australian freight rail network every day on behalf of their customers across Australia. These companies are responsible for purchasing and maintaining the rollingstock (locomotives and wagons) operating on Western Australia's rail system.



## Types of freight on the rail network

Freight rail is used for a variety of different industries. When the rail lines were first developed they were mainly for transporting people and consumer goods to regional and remote communities. Today, they move large volumes of bulk freight into and out of the ports, including:

- agricultural products
- household goods
- minerals and aggregates
- iron ore
- grain and other agricultural products
- industrial products
- bulk liquids
- import/export containers.

## How freight rail is different to passenger rail

Aside from freight rail transporting goods and passenger rail moving people, there are some other differences between the two types of rail services.

Freight rail uses only diesel locomotives in Western Australia, while passenger trains, within the Perth metropolitan area, are electrified. Freight is moved on long and heavy trains, whereas passenger trains tend to be short, light and fast. Another difference is that freight trains run on single tracks with crossing loops; double tracks are used by passenger trains. Further, most passenger and freight trains on Perth's rail system are separate and do not share track, a major advantage for Western Australia's competitiveness for freight rail.

The biggest and most important difference between freight and passenger rail is the highly variable operational nature of freight rail. Freight movements

are driven by customer demand (for example, when grain is ready for transport to export or when a ship is waiting for an iron ore delivery) and are considered within the entire supply chain (such as the link from mine/farm to port for export). In contrast, passenger rail services are designed in accordance with highly predictable demands both in terms of operating times and frequency of service.

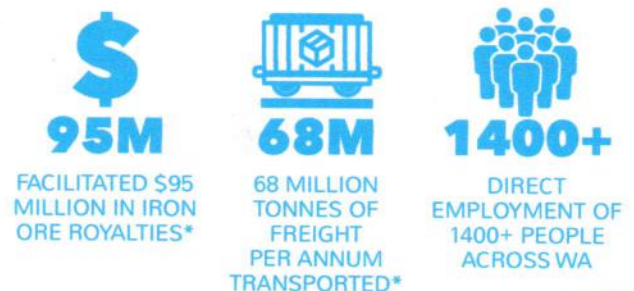
## Benefits of rail

Rail is one, complementary part of Western Australia's freight network.

Government policy is to increase the volume of freight transported by rail because it:

- contributes to improved road safety
- reduces vehicle congestion on the metropolitan road network
- eliminates unnecessary road transport movements
- reduces road infrastructure wear and tear and maintenance costs
- is more efficient and environmentally sound than road on a per tonne/kilometre basis
- is more environmentally sound because it produces fewer diesel and other greenhouse gas emissions on a per tonne/kilometre basis
- supports growing populations (that is, more people in the city, more freight).

## Contribution to the WA economy



\*across the Arc Infrastructure rail network  
(see freight rail WA network map)

For more information and a list of contacts please visit  
[www.transport.wa.gov.au/Freight-Ports/freight-rail](http://www.transport.wa.gov.au/Freight-Ports/freight-rail)

