

South West last month. Credit: Zoe Keenan

'BUNBURY HERALD'

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- The company that owns the lease for the dilapidated railway line between Greenbushes and Bunbury believes reopening the line might be a viable option to transport lithium.
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- Calls have continued to reinvigorate the dilapidated railway line to transport increasing volumes of lithium throughout the South West, and get more trucks off the road.
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It follows Talison Lithium's announcement of their expansion at their Greenbushes mine site, which would see 200 trucks a day transporting lithium, according to South West Greens MLC Diane Evers who has been pushing for the line to be reopened.

Yesterday Arc Infrastructure general manager, commercial and development, Nathan Speed said a review carried out during the past 12 months indicated it could be viable to use the line.

"A review of potential supply chain options was carried out over the past 12 months which indicate that it may be viable to upgrade the Greenbushes line as an alternative heavy haulage transport option in the South West," he said.

"Arc is now supporting Talison and the South West Development Commission with a more detailed feasibility study which will continue throughout 2020 and will include a regional community consultation program.

"Arc is hopeful that the parties will be able to identify a solution for the upgrade of the Greenbushes rail line in conjunction with the associated infrastructure upgrades at the mine and ports."

Nationals South West MLC Colin Holt and leader of the Nationals Mia Davies were in Bunbury last month to get an update from Talison.

Mr Holt said trucks from the timber industry never presented a strong economic case to reopen the line but said with the ramp up of the lithium operation there was real potential to use the line.

But according to Liberal South West MLC Steve Thomas, major works would be required to re-open the line, which he estimated would cost towards the \$250 million range.

“Critically, if the business case for rail does not stack up, it will be essential for the State Government to invest in further upgrades of the South Western Highway to ensure community safety,” he said.

“If \$250 million to upgrade the rail line is unviable, I can see a good case for \$100 million going into the highway for more overtaking lanes and road shoulder improvements.”