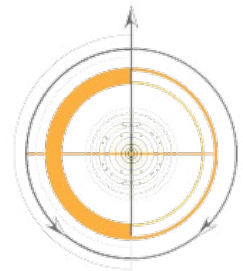




InterCity:

HOW REGIONAL RAIL CAN
RE-BALANCE POPULATION GROWTH
AND CREATE A “STATE OF CITIES”
IN VICTORIA



Report
Summary

Rail Futures Institute
August 2016

Growth Pains

Victoria's population is projected to grow to 10.1 million in 2051, and Melbourne will grow by 92% to over 8 million. This growth is almost unprecedented in Victoria's history. To understand the scale and pace of development required, you have to go back to the gold rush period from the 1860s to 1890s that gave rise to 'Marvellous Melbourne'.

Melbourne is again experiencing the difficulties of such rapid growth. Melbourne's urban form cannot continue to sprawl, or soar, without a robust development strategy to keep the city liveable.

The current projected regional growth for Victoria is 693,900 additional people or around 51% to 2051. A new bolder strategy could set targets for additional growth of 1 million in the regions.

Strategic Policy Gaps

Our analysis uncovers major gaps in strategic policy and governance:

1. The Government's statutory planning obligations require that Victoria's population be rebalanced from Melbourne to regional Victoria, yet the growth projections reveal that in 2051 Melbourne will dominate regional Victoria even more than now.
2. Successive Victorian Governments are yet to show how they will integrate regional and metropolitan planning to create a "State of Cities".
3. Planning policy is not integrated with transport strategy, therefore the Government is not meeting its obligations under the Transport Integration Act 2010 (TIA).
4. Recent reports by the Government auditors (VAGO) identify deeply-embedded governance issues, including an absence of strong central leadership, a dearth of strategic policy and a lack of clarity in role and responsibilities.

The Government needs to address these strategic policy gaps and governance issues in order to meet its statutory obligations, and present a robust strategy for achieving regional development and growth.

Key Propositions

Our *InterCity* report presents a blueprint for regional rail to enable and support regional growth, based on three propositions:

1. Population growth needs to be rebalanced from Melbourne to regional Victoria.
2. A "State of Cities" requires well-defined development policy integrated with transport strategy.
3. Investment in infrastructure to underpin faster, more frequent and more reliable rail services is essential to enable and lead regional growth.

A new strategy should set targets for additional growth of 1 million or more in the regions. Much improved rail service is a powerful and effective tool for redirecting growth to regional centres. It can help distribute economic and social benefits across the State.

Victoria has a strong rail foundation on which to build a new regional network to support growth. This rail legacy would cost billions of dollars to construct today. It is an invaluable asset.

The Blueprint: Intercity

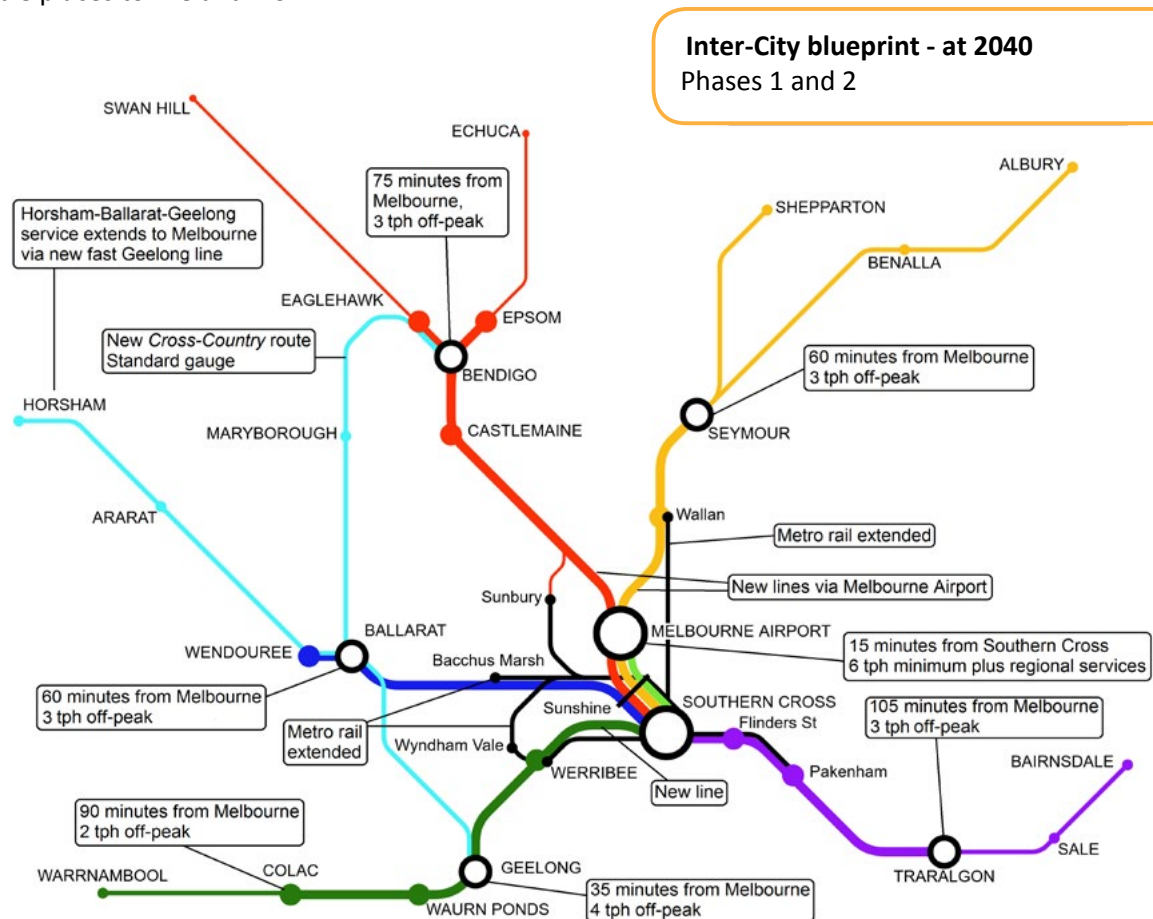
InterCity is our blueprint for fast rail in regional Victoria. This will be a key enabler of a “State of Cities” and regional growth, and provide a regional rail network fit for the 21st Century.

InterCity involves a phased program of investments over 10-25 years: Phase 1 to 2026 and Phase 2 to 2040. The improvements in Phase 1 will yield significant benefits in improved journey times, service frequency and reliability including new high-performance rolling stock. Phase 2 provides a step-change in journey times, frequencies and connectivity through a major program of new fast lines.

The key features include:

- faster, regular rail services linking major regional centres, with clear route patterns;
- a major new Melbourne Airport hub new line served by regional rail, an airport shuttle and designed for future High Speed Rail (HSR);
- new fast lines on the Geelong, Bendigo and Seymour routes, fully segregated from the metropolitan rail network;
- removal of impediments to fast running through the metropolitan area for Ballarat and Gippsland services by track quadruplication and provision of long passing loops;
- Cross-Country regional rail routes directly linking regional cities to each other; and
- much-improved service reliability, through more robust infrastructure, new rolling stock, institutional changes and greater proficiency in operational and engineering management.

The new network means that regional centres will be better connected to Melbourne, to each other and to their rural hinterlands. This transforms how people and businesses regard these regional centres as desirable places to live and work.



A Melbourne Airport Rail Hub

InterCity incorporates a Melbourne Airport rail link to become Victoria's next major transport project after Melbourne Metro. It will bring transformational benefits to Melbourne and regional cities, speed access to the Airport and reduce traffic congestion.

Melbourne Airport will become a key rail hub - in line with many cities overseas – so that travellers to most of Melbourne and any regional town or city can continue their journey effortlessly without waiting in taxi queues or traffic jams. Purpose designed trains will run every 10 minutes providing a reliable 15 minute journey to the CBD.

InterCity trains to Bendigo, Seymour/Shepparton and Albury will run via Melbourne Airport. The Airport rail link will connect to every metropolitan and regional rail route – at the Airport, Sunshine or Southern Cross station. It will also provide a properly engineered corridor for future High Speed Trains from Sydney to reach Melbourne's CBD.

Seamless linking of the air, regional and metropolitan rail and road networks (including provision for future High Speed Rail) through Melbourne Airport is the next major transport project that Victoria needs.

A New Strategic Policy Framework

Government needs to take strong leadership in addressing strategic policy gaps on growth, planning policy, transport integration and rail governance.

These strategic policy gaps are a result of a “planning deficit”, including a serious absence of policy integration, an erosion of in-house capability and a weakening of the role of government. Core capabilities need to be rebuilt in government, particularly in rail strategy, planning, engineering and operational management.

Providing for a population of 10 million in Victoria by 2051, while maintaining overall livability, will require a step-change in expenditure on infrastructure and services. The scale of investment required transcends decision-making within election cycles. It will require very significant ongoing commitment from Government. Victoria's growth strategy needs to be understood and owned by the community and across the political spectrum.

Our *InterCity* blueprint is ambitious but achievable. Economically, it is preferable to the alternatives of 'business as usual' or focusing growth on Melbourne. Indeed, Victoria cannot afford not to invest in *InterCity*.

InterCity needs to be part of a strategic program that goes well beyond the provision of rail infrastructure and services. *InterCity* has a much broader purpose in seeking to lead and support the re-balancing of population growth from Melbourne to regional Victoria. The policy and governance challenges posed by growth projections for Victoria require this long-term strategy to become embedded and enduring.

A blueprint such as InterCity can then become an effective enabler of growth and help create a vibrant Victorian “State of Cities” that is proactively meeting 21st Century challenges.

**Read the full *InterCity* story at
www.railfutures.org.au**

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