

Notes from Meeting with West Coast Rail held on Thursday 28 June 2001 at 6:30pm

Present – Gary McDonald
Don Gibson } West Coast Rail

Sue Kedgley MP
Roland Sapsford
Mayor Jill White (Palmerston North)

Cr Macaskill
Cr Gibson
Cr McQueen } WRC
Cr McDavitt
Mr Stone
Dr Watson

Mr McDonald explained what WCR has bought and what the situation was with other Tranz Scenic services. Main points were:

- TranzRail has retained an interest in the Tranz Scenic business.
- There is a three month transfer process.
- The Capital Connection will continue to operate as is, with the current upgraded rolling stock. The service is expected to be further improved.
- The following Tranz Scenic services will continue to be operated by Tranz Rail for three months but need to attract annual funding from another service for the coming three years if they are to be taken over by WCR.
 - The Southerner (annual funding required \$4-600,000)
 - Bay Express (annual funding required \$2-300,000)
 - Gyserland Express (annual funding required \$6-700,000)
- WCR has bought all Tranz Scenic carriages, 25 BR cars for refurbishment and the Silver Fern cars, plus some locomotives which need overhaul (only ten locomotives are in working order).
- They would need to buy two locomotives for the Bay Express, second-hand at \$1.5 million.
- WCR head office will be in the Wellington Station.
- Suburban stations stay with Tranz Rail but many others now owned by WCR. (List of stations to be sent to us shortly).

- WCR purchased contract business.
- Currently WCR operate a 267 km rail service between Melbourne and Warrnambool as a franchise operator. Features are:
- Three trains a day.
- Patronage risen from 276,000 to 460,000.
- Started in 1993.
- Franchised to 2004 then new franchise to 2009 on the market.
- Operate steam engines at tourist periods.
- WCR not connected with CONNEX.
- Have access agreement with Tranz Rail to the track (not prepared to disclose price of access).
- Tranz Rail will maintain track to 100km per hour standard.

A discussion took place between those present about the Bay Express.

Sue Kedgley stated that she understood funding could be obtained through Transfund (as an ATR) or from the Regional Development Fund.

If any action was going to be taken it needed to be done within the next month to provide some certainty to WCR.

All Councils along the route would need to support action being taken and make a joint request for funding.

Stuart Macaskill pointed out that this was not an urban service and may therefore be outside the legal mandate of Regional Councils.

WCR were asked if they could supply more details on the current cost of the service and revenue, so that a reasoned case could be established.

West Coast Rail concluded by stating:

- they needed a 'yes or no' answer to the funding question;
- that they were interested in being involved in the urban services but not on their own;
- that they were here for the long haul as they had bought services, not a franchise like in Australia;
- they would visit the Regional Council next week.