

The Train to Cessnock: A vital link for our community

The Train to Cessnock campaign seeks that the NSW State Government acquires the existing, disused rail corridor from Maitland to Bellbird from its current owners and work towards getting passenger services operating on the corridor as soon as possible.

Upgrading transport options along this corridor, and establishing passenger rail services between Cessnock and Newcastle, has featured in State and regional planning strategies for many years.¹

Cessnock LGA is now the second-fastest growing area in NSW. The time to move on this important initiative is now.

The Train to Cessnock will...

Provide a vital transport service to over 50,000 people who live along the rail corridor.²

Connect our community to work, school, university, health, community and leisure facilities.³

Integrate Cessnock LGA, “a well-known public transport blackspot⁴,” into the wider public transport network.

Provide transport options for the many in the community that cannot drive or do not own a car.⁵

Support the rapid housing development that is taking place along the corridor.

Reduce car dependency in the Cessnock LGA, assisting to relieve traffic congestion and greenhouse emissions.⁶

Be a valuable re-use of an important community asset.

1 - Enhanced transport and/or passenger rail services are noted in the Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan 2036 (2018) and all subsequent planning documents.

2 - 2021 census showed that some 54,900 people live along the corridor.

3 - Train to Cessnock will connect Cessnock LGA directly to Newcastle and Maitland CBDs, to several high schools, two TAFE campuses and Newcastle University, as well as (via connection) to Maitland Hospital, Macdonald Jones Stadium and Newcastle beaches.

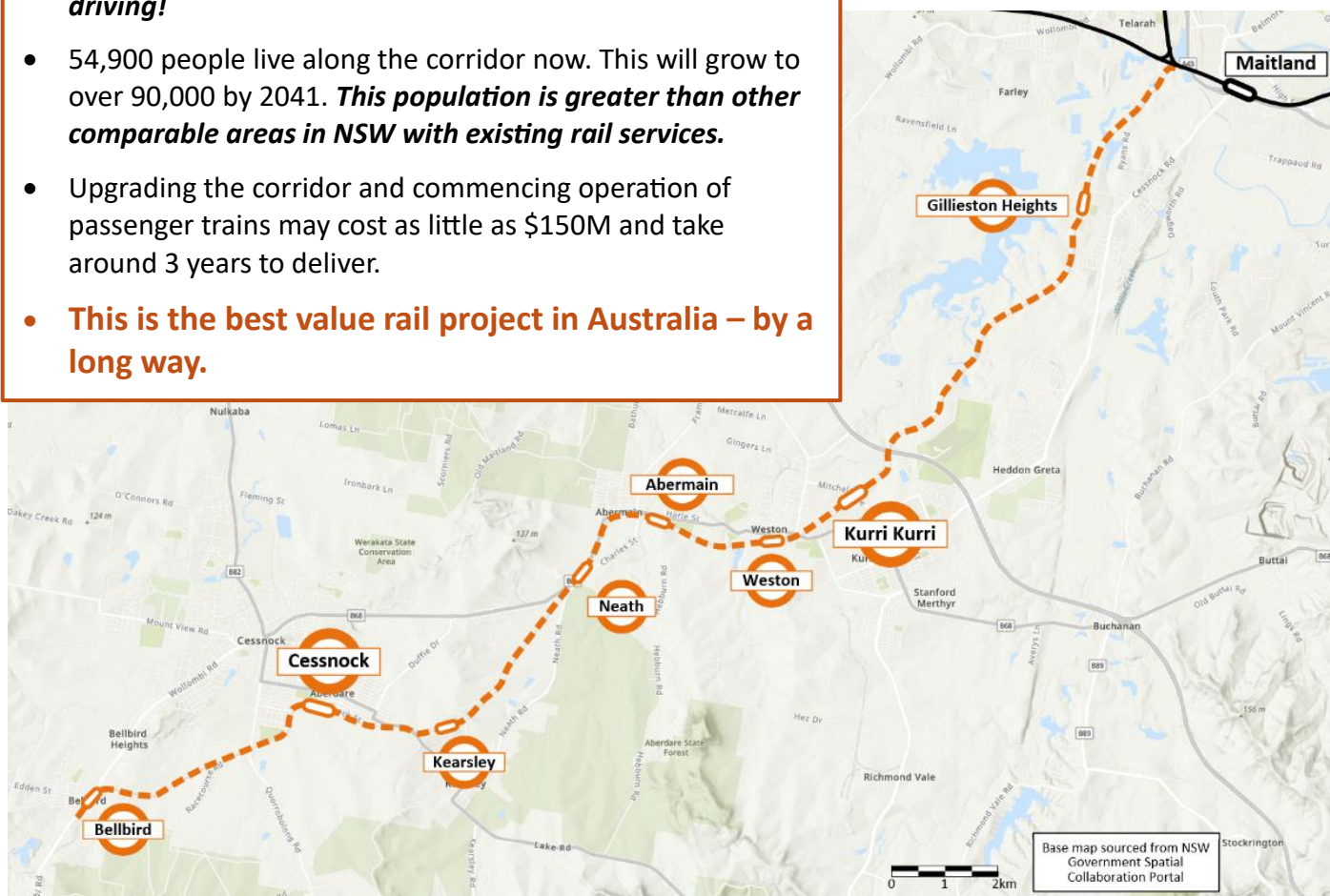
4 - Committee for the Hunter, “Going Places - Transport and Accessibility for young people in the Hunter,” July 2024

5 - 44% of the population in Cessnock LGA are classed as vulnerable users (Cessnock LGA Traffic and Transport Strategy 2023) – young, elderly, mobility impaired.

6 - Road congestion was the number 1 transport-related concern of Cessnock residents. 97% of all trips are via private vehicles. Cessnock has a 37% higher fatality rate than the NSW average (Cessnock LGA Traffic and Transport Strategy, 2023).

Quick Facts

- The Maitland to Cessnock rail corridor last carried rail traffic in March 2020. The last passenger services ran in 1972.
- Total corridor length is approximately 30km, connecting to the existing rail network near Maitland.
- The estimated journey time from Cessnock to Newcastle via train is around 50 minutes. ***You can't get there that fast by driving!***
- 54,900 people live along the corridor now. This will grow to over 90,000 by 2041. ***This population is greater than other comparable areas in NSW with existing rail services.***
- Upgrading the corridor and commencing operation of passenger trains may cost as little as \$150M and take around 3 years to deliver.
- **This is the best value rail project in Australia – by a long way.**



Maitland to Bellbird rail corridor, with potential station sites

Why now?

In addition to the urgent need to provide a viable public transport service to the growing communities in Gillieston Heights, Kurri Kurri and Cessnock, there are three critical reasons why this initiative should be progressed immediately.

1. Use of the Maitland to Cessnock corridor for transporting coal has now ceased.
2. The corridor is currently in a serviceable condition, meaning the cost to upgrade for passengers is low. If the railway line is left to deteriorate the extent of works required, and cost, will be much greater than it is now.
3. The opportunity exists to use otherwise redundant rolling stock, meaning that there would be limited costs in securing the necessary rolling stock for the service.

Right now, there is an opportunity to acquire the Maitland to Cessnock rail corridor and commence passenger operations for a very modest price. Delay will simply increase cost and defer the provision of a valuable service to needy communities.

For more information, go to www.traintocessnock.org.