

SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY
HUBLI-ANKOLA NEW BG RAILWAY LINE PROJECT
JUSTIFICATION FOR LOCATING THE PROJECT IN FOREST AREA

Railway Network plays an important role in the Economic Development of the region. Railways are considered to be the most efficient mode of transport for bulk commodities like Iron Ore, Coal, Fertilizers, Timber, Food Grains etc. Over the years, Railway Network has played a vital link between Ports/ Harbors and Hinterland and also Economic Growth of the Country.

Till recent years, on the West Coast, the Rail Links to the hinterland was through Meter Gauge (MG) route from Londa-Vasco & Hassan-Mangalore routes. Londa-Vasco route was converted into Broad Gauge (BG) during 1995-98. Konkan Railway route along the West Coast was made operational during the year 1998. Hassan-Mangalore line is also converted to BG and is in operation.

For international trades, seaports in the west coast have been expanding their handling capacities. In addition to Murmagoa Port & Mangalore Port, many other minor ports like Karwar, Belikere, Tadadi have become operational in the west coast. Feasibility study has also been conducted to develop one more all weather port near Ankola. The bulk cargo movement from the vast hinterland to the west coast and vice versa is seriously hampered due to the operational constraints for loaded trains in the Ghat section of Londa-Vasco & Sakleshpur-Subramanya Road sections where track is laid in sharp curves and steep gradients . Reduced speed of trains and need for multiple locomotives to ensure hauling/ breaking power of loaded trains, seriously reduce the capacity of the existing lines.

India has one of the largest iron ore reserves in the world. Bellary-Hospet area in Karnataka is one of the regions of the country where grade of iron ore is considered to be very high. Iron ore is an important export commodity, earning valuable foreign exchange for the country. Iron ore for export from this area is moved through three ports, viz. Chennai, Goa (Murmagoa) and Mangalore. Hospet-Vasco section has been converted into Broad Gauge and the current level of traffic is almost 8-10 Million Tonnes per Annum. However, potential traffic in the future towards the west coast is

of the order of 20–30 million Tonnes per annum. In addition to iron ore for export, iron ore of high grade is also moved to Goa region for blending with low grade iron ore and then exported through Goa. Many steel industries like JVSL, Bellary Steels, Mukund Iron, Kirloskar etc. are situated in Bellary/ Hospet area and also a Thermal Power plant is coming up near Bellary. These industries are in need of imported coke /coal which is imported and moved through Murmagoa (Vasco) Port or Mangalore Port. Food grains/fertilizers are also required to be moved to/from the hinterland to/from ports of west coast.

There is ever increasing demand for introducing more and more passenger trains through the existing routes and the line capacity of the existing route is fully saturated. The Hubli–Ankola New BG Railway Line is very much essential to make good the shortfall of line capacity in this sector. This line would connect Karwar port and will be of great use when Karwar port is developed for meeting import/export traffic and also on other ports to be developed in the future. The line also establishes one more link to Vasco and Mangalore ports through Konkan Railway route. Besides meeting the future requirement of freight traffic of the area, it will also help in improving/ development of the backward region of North Karnataka.

The biggest Naval Base of Indian Navy is implementing the ‘Sea Bird Project’ near Karwar. The Hubli–Ankola New BG Railway Line will provide vital link from east coast to west coast. The First Phase of the Sea Bird Project is also commissioned and the proposed Railway Line helps for the movement of material, equipment, men etc. The New BG Railway Line between Hubli to Ankola also provides a better alternative for mail & express trains from Northern, Eastern to Southern states.

The length of the project line from Hubli to Ankola is approximately 164.44 Kms. The chainage has been reckoned from centre line of Hubli Railway Station. In between Hubli and Yellapur a stretch of about 75 Kms consists of plain land, a stretch of about 56 Kms between Yellapur to Sunksal is a Ghat section where the alignment crosses the Western Ghats of Sahayadri Hills and the balance distance from Sunksal to Ankola is dotted with isolated hills. To connect hinterland of Hubli to Coastal Line i.e. Ankola, the line should pass through dense forest land of Western Ghats, wherever the Line is located. 80% of the area in Uttara Kannada District lies in Forest Area; hence the proposed Railway Line has to pass through the

Forest Land invariably. However every precaution has been taken to minimize the requirement of area under Forest Land. The length of Viaducts (at High Embankment Locations) and the length of Tunnels (at High Cutting Locations) are increased to reduce the requirement of areas in Forest Land. The mitigation measures suggested by the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore is also been accepted to reduce the impact on environment. The New BG Railway Line from Hubli to Ankola will be descending from MSL of 637m at Hubli to MSL of 15m at Ankola (Baleguli Junction). Ankola is an existing Railway Station on the Konkan Railway. A Y-Junction arrangement is proposed at Baleguli (before Ankola station) to facilitate movement in either direction (towards North to Karwar, Murmagoa port and towards South to Mangalore port).

Minimum land required for the construction is being acquired. No provision has been made for borrow pits. It is proposed to acquire only a stretch of about 5m on one side and 10m on other side from the toe of the bank/cutting. Total land to be acquired is about 995.64 hectares. (Forest Land of 595.64 hectares, Wet Land of 184.60 hectares, Dry Land of 190.00 hectares, Built-Up Area of 24.00 hectares and Urban Land of 1.40 hectares). Railway as a policy also intends to take up large-scale Afforestation on the Railway Land including Turfing through grass on the earthen embankment to maintain ecological balance.

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