

Grain Road Transport Joint Management and Operations Framework



Department of
Transport



mainroads
WESTERN AUSTRALIA



Introduction

Grain is an important export commodity in Western Australia. Both road and rail transport are required for establishing an efficient grain supply chain throughout the State. Provision of the appropriate road infrastructure, effective management of the road access regime, road management and operational arrangements, are essential for the efficient transportation of grain.

The overarching objective for the Grain Road Transport Management Group is to facilitate strategic and operational outcomes that are in the best interests of all Western Australians. To achieve this, stakeholders must be committed to supporting appropriate integration, transparency, economic growth, safety, social and environmental requirements within the grain transport sector.

Industry and the State Government are committed to working cooperatively to facilitate the best possible grain transport outcomes with consideration to the current policy, regulatory and financial environment. This paper summarises the roles, responsibilities and processes for key government agencies and industry stakeholders in relation to the management of grain transport by road.

Key Stakeholders – Grain Road Transport

Five key stakeholders are working cooperatively to address road related transport challenges associated with grain transport:

- The Department of Transport (DoT).
- Main Roads Western Australia (MRWA).
- Western Australian Local Government Association (WALGA), in conjunction with individual Local Governments.
- Co-operative Bulk Handling (CBH).
- Bunge Agribusiness Limited.

The key stakeholders share a common understanding of the challenges associated with transporting grain by road and the need to develop consistent, appropriate and integrated responses to benefit all stakeholders. Doing so contributes to the alignment of grain transport routes with the rest of the transport network and represents best practice road management. The mutually beneficial outcomes of this approach include assisting State Government in planning, maintaining and investing in the road network as well as assisting grain handling companies in preparing pricing at grain receipt locations and managing its transport operations.

The key areas for cooperation between these stakeholders at present are:

- Responsibilities of stakeholders.
- Grain road transport routes.
- Route standards.
- Restricted Access Vehicles (RAV) route classifications.
- Administrative processes for truck operations, route planning and assessments approvals and road management.
- Infrastructure investment and funding sources.

- Specific location issues (e.g. 'last mile').
- Road infrastructure maintenance.
- Shared information for industry and the general public.

Key Stakeholder Responsibilities

1. Responsibilities of stakeholders for road management

Road management involves planning, design, construction, maintenance and operational policy.

- MRWA is responsible for the state road network, regulatory signs and road markings across the whole road network. It also controls access to local government roads that form part of the RAV network and undertakes compliance and enforcement activities.
- Local governments are responsible for local government roads within their respective boundaries.
- DoT, in cooperation with others stakeholders, is responsible for strategic transport (road, rail, port and investment) policy, as well as driver licences, vehicle registrations and vehicle standards.
- Other agencies (including WorkSafe, WA Police and the Department of Agriculture and Food) have complementary responsibilities for oversight and management of associated issues.

2. Grain road transport routes

The principles that apply to the management of road routes for grain transport are:

- Road transport is necessary where rail transport is either cost prohibitive or operationally unsuitable.
- Road transport must be flexible to meet varying demands of the grain supply chain, which change over time, resulting from dynamic changes in grain storage and handling operations, road modifications, market demands, and the efficiency and cost of rail transport.
- Grain routes accommodate a range of heavy vehicles and transport demands, (such as vehicles transporting livestock, fertiliser, lime, etc.), which utilise the same roads as grain transporters. The principles for management of roads used for grain transport are the same as those that apply to other freight routes.
- Bin-to-bin and bin-to-port transfers are the primary focus of work undertaken within this framework. Local farm-to-bin movements are outside of this scope, although the impact of changes to bin pricing and bin availability on the road transport task is recognised.
- All grain transporters must comply with the RAV access regime and other legal requirements.

A network of road routes used for grain transport is useful for infrastructure and operations management, as follows:

- Road routes preferred for grain transport have been identified by CBH in co-operation with State Government, referred to as primary grain road routes. These could potentially be published in map format, with blocks showing routes through towns to bins where appropriate.

- The identified primary grain road routes form the basis of CBH's freight rate calculations, which is important for CBH and growers' certainty and management of transport operations.
- In most seasons, grain will be transported mainly on the primary grain road routes, however, there are circumstances where grain will be required to move via secondary routes. Reasons for this include:
 - essential harvest movements;
 - bin fumigation;
 - shipping requirements and market demand;
 - operating efficiencies at rail heads;
 - availability of rail services;
 - equipment breakdowns or maintenance; and
 - road works.
- The *Rail Safety National Law (WA) Act 2015* requires the establishment of Interface Agreements to effectively manage risks to safety at road - rail interfaces, particularly railway level crossings. These agreements involve coordinating the roles of, and describing the responsibilities and authorities of, the parties involved with the relevant interface. Ensuring Interface Agreements are in place is the responsibility of Brookfield Rail.
- MRWA will manage railway level crossing safety in conjunction with Brookfield Rail and Local Governments through the Railway Level Crossing Protection Committee, particularly in relation to the ceasing of operations on railway lines.

3. Route standards and assessments

MRWA Heavy Vehicle Services (HVS) is responsible for route assessments at the request of either industry or Local Government. Assessments are based on standard RAV route assessment guidelines. The guidelines have been prepared by MRWA to assist local government, MRWA staff, operators or consultants in assessing the suitability of routes proposed for the operation of RAVs on roads within Western Australia.

A brief overview of the RAV administrative and approval processes is provided below. Please refer to the MRWA [Heavy Vehicle Services Webpage](#) for up to date information.

3.1 Administrative processes for route assessments and approvals, and truck operations.

3.1.1 Applications may be made for raising existing RAV classifications or including new routes, as follows:

- Truck operators are to apply to local government to obtain support with any associated conditions and a formal letter of approval.
- Documentary evidence is provided to MRWA HVS (the decision making authority regarding network RAV access).
- MRWA HVS considers all of the information, route assessment and consequences before making a final decision.
- MRWA HVS may approve changes with certain conditions (e.g. relating to speed, curfews etc.).
- MRWA HVS has a set timeframe in place for the process.
- Transport operators must appreciate that responses to applications for route assessments and network changes involve processes that require time to occur, and will therefore not be immediate.

- The routes are notified to the operators and other stakeholders.

3.1.2 Existing RAV classifications may be downgraded as follows:

- Initially a local government decision; subsequently referred to MRWA HVS for approval.
- Downgrading access could have undesirable consequences, including grain bin closures which could necessitate use of other routes. MRWA HVS requires a justification for downgrading/restricting access. MRWA HVS considers all of the information and consequences before making a final decision.
- The routes are notified to the operators and other stakeholders.

3.1.3 Applications for RAV permit vehicles

- Truck operators apply to MRWA HVS for approval to operate RAV compliant vehicles on RAV routes.

3.1.4 RAV network review

- MRWA is currently reviewing the RAV classification for a large number of local government roads in the Wheatbelt region.
- MRWA is prioritising assessments and is also training Local Government Authorities in the Wheatbelt to undertake assessments themselves.

4. Road investment

4.1 Road upgrades

- MRWA and local governments assess road transport demands, in conjunction with road users, to plan maintenance and upgrades as required.
- Road maintenance and upgrades are prioritised on the basis of need, value for money and other relevant criteria.
- Roads for grain transport are assessed the same as all other road needs.
- MRWA and local governments work cooperatively through the Regional Road Groups to allocate funding.
- MRWA will consider any justified applications for road improvements at any time, including to meet grain transport needs, in conjunction with all other road infrastructure needs.

4.2 Specific infrastructure and location issues

- Road related challenges may relate to local 'last mile access', which are to be specifically identified and responded to on a case by case basis.
- Users and others stakeholders are to identify safety and operational bottlenecks.
- Specific sites and new investment on routes will be assessed through MRWA and local government road management processes.

5. Shared information, including public information

The key stakeholders share information with each other and others to meet their individual and common needs, as follows:

- The key stakeholders share mutually useful information whenever possible and appropriate.
- The key stakeholders meet regularly to discuss strategic policy and operational issues and solutions.
- Further information which may be required will be considered and provided collaboratively.

- Information will be provided to the public appropriate to need, format, content and timing, once agreed to by the organisation that provided the information.
- Key stakeholders will provide information on the road routes and their use to their customers, clients and the general public.
- Bulk handling companies will provide the shires and local communities with the most accurate and timely information appropriate on actual operations.
- Bulk handling companies will distribute information relating to origin and destination bin sites, preferred routes and truck operating hours. In the 2014-15 harvest season this occurred weekly.
- MRWA HVS will ensure it continues to provide clear and accessible information to operators, bulk handling companies and others regarding approvals for use of vehicles on RAV routes, the amending route RAV classifications and its timeframes for considering applications.
- MRWA and WALGA will ensure liaison to ensure consistency with Regional Road Groups activities.
- Ideally, the preferred routes for all grain transporters should be depicted on one map, which is available to the public, but which is not currently available. Key stakeholders will work to prepare a single map to depict the preferred route network, at a high level. More specific detailed maps may be required for the key stakeholders' purposes.