

Media Release – 1 February 08

Intelligent Transport Systems technologies – a new role in railway level crossing safety

On the national holiday, another Australian – a 32 year old Victorian kindergarten teacher – died in a railway level crossing crash at the outer Melbourne suburb of Tyabb. Three days later, another Victorian woman died near Dingee, 50 kilometres north of Bendigo in a level crossing crash with the same passenger train involved in last year's Kerang disaster, which killed 11 people and injured 23 others. Across Victoria alone, there are more than 1400 level crossings, which have only warning signs.

Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) experts believe that some of their state of the art technologies can help stop crashes at railway level crossings and save lives.

Among the ITS technologies that may be applied to railway level crossings are some systems that have proven track records in road traffic management, such as signal triggering devices, on-board real-time warning systems, fatigue and attention sensors, and even enforcement devices.

To explore opportunities to improve safety at railway level crossings through the application of ITS technologies, a full day *ITS for Railway Level Crossings Workshop* will be held in Melbourne on 29 February 2008. To be hosted by ITS Australia, in conjunction with the Australasian Railway Association, the workshop will follow the two day *Rail Safety 2008 Conference*.

“Can Intelligent Transport Systems technologies help stop crashes at railway level crossings? This is a question worth asking of the expert audience that will be gathered in Melbourne to discuss rail safety,” said ITS Australia Executive Director Terry Warin. “There are many technologies that are shared by both road and rail transport systems. However, in some cases we have not yet fully researched the opportunities to maximise the value that can be added by integrating the systems.

“An average of 37 Australians die as a result of collisions with trains at railway crossings each year, including pedestrians, vehicle and train occupants. Recently, a trend has emerged of heavy vehicles colliding with and, in some cases derailing trains, causing injuries, deaths and major damage. Indeed, a level crossing collision between a large truck and a train is the most costly and deadly potential single incident road risk. Since April 2006, there have been 14 major level crossing crashes involving trucks, with the loss of 17 lives and more than \$100 million in damages.

“There are technologies currently available that can help eliminate technical and human error in the approaches to railway level crossings, and there may also be technologies that can intervene when humans try to over ride correctly operating warning devices.

“This workshop will bring together rail and road builders, operators and users, to help discover the opportunities to integrate the ITS technologies – particularly sharing real time data – that will help minimise the risk of level crossing collisions. To ensure we capture all potential technology solutions, we invite all ITS Australia and Australasian Railway Association member organisations to participate in this important workshop,” said Terry Warin.

The high priority assigned to the railway level crossing safety issue is reflected in a feature of the workshop, which will be a Business Leaders Forum encouraging “no holds barred” discussion from senior rail and road authorities and freight transport executives, such as Victorian Transport Association executive director Philip Lovell, VLine Passenger CEO Rob Barnett, and Australasian Railway Association CEO Brian Nye.

Victorian Parliamentary Secretary for Roads and Ports Martin Pakula has been invited to deliver the keynote address. Other expert speakers will include ITS Australia President Peter Bentley, who will present the Technical Overview and an overview from the Government perspective by Victorian Department of Infrastructure general manager for Safety and Asset Management Tom Sergeant.

In addition, a range of technology presentations will showcase the leading-edge ITS technologies for the rail industry.

To contribute to, or attend this workshop, ITS Australia and Australasian Railway Association members should email Membership and Events Manager Stephanie Breen (breen@its-australia.com.au), as places are limited.

TruckRailRoad.jpg Photo caption:

The application of Intelligent Transport Systems technology to improving rail level crossing safety will be discussed at the ITS for Level Crossings Workshop in Melbourne on 29 February 2008.

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