

## NOTE ON HUBLI-ANKOLA RAIL LINE

The proponents say:

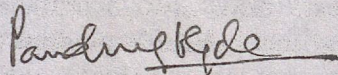
1. It will create a gateway for development of the region connecting the hinterland of Hospet Bellary mining belt to the port of Tadari on the west coast. This will also help in movement of goods from the region, especially the spices trade.
2. It will connect the Northern Karnataka to the coast, improving the mobility and transportation of goods.
3. As it passes through the best forest region on Western Ghats, it will attract the tourists, especially the foreign tourists.
4. It will strengthen the local economy of the backward Uttara Kannada district creating more employment opportunities.

The clarifications to the above points are:

1. The proposed rail line will provide the necessary link from North Karnataka to the ports in West Coast. However there are already existing links from Hubli to Madgaon which can be linked to the existing Konkan Railway line. The existing rail line from Hubli to Madgaon can be linked to the Konkan Railway line. This can be upgraded instead of sacrificing the virgin tropical forests of Western Ghats. **The mine ore is a depleting resource and once they are exhausted, the utility of the proposed rail line is questionable.** We can not export all our iron ore to earn foreign exchange and deprive this resource for future generations. The people and politicians who support this project view the entire rail line in the short term benefit and ignore the long term negative impact for the forests and people. **The most important factor is that we are trustees of this resource and we need to keep the long term perspective in making any decision before destroying the resource in the name of development.**
2. There exists excellent road connection from Hubli in the North Karnataka region to the coast in Ankola by a good road built with help of Asian Development Bank. The condition of this existing infrastructure needs to be strengthened to increase the mobility. These alternative communication routes need to be studied before taking any decision to build the new rail line.
3. In fact the foreign tourists would like to see and enjoy the existing tropical forests and biodiversity. The destruction of the forests would act as negative factor for distraction of tourists. Even the small numbers of tourists traveling on this rail line will hardly compensate the ecological and economic costs of the project.
4. The history of large projects in this district has been one of the displacement and encroachment of the forest land. The large projects have always attracted more migrant laborers who come for construction work and stay behind in the forest region. Instead of creating local employment, it will attract more migrant laborers who would eventually encroach more forest land. Thousands of migrant laborers would put additional pressure on the existing tropical forests. The building of the rail line would

need manual laborers but its maintenance would require very few permanent laborers. The claim of large scale employment generation due to this project is false and is far from the reality

5. The project proponents claim that in order to facilitate the free movement of the wildlife, they would construct bridges, sub ways and under passes. However, in practice, (Rajaji National Park) these structures has not helped the movement of wild life. If this is the reality then it is futile to claim that the movement of wild not be affected adversely by proposed rail line.
6. The region is known for wild life habitat like Elephants and Tigers. The rail line would cut across the Elephants corridor causing irreversible damage to wildlife movement
7. Looking into the history of high voltage power lines across Western Ghats that promised to clear only 3 meters of forests underneath the power line, in practice it took toll of 56 meters, almost 200 times more forests than the originally envisaged forest clearance. Similarly, in case of rail line, the project proponents have asked for 40 meters clearance including the embankment, but the disturbances will be almost five times more than the land asked for. Thus, in practice the impact of the proposed rail line will be felt not just on the 700 hectares of the forest land that is required to be de notified, but in an area of about 3500 hectares of virgin forest land. If this is going to be the reality, is it worth to sacrifice the forests for the rail line?
8. The studies in tropical forests Amazon, similar to the forests in Western Ghats have shown that the impact of fragmentation will be on the entire stretch of the Western Ghats. This loss of forests will accelerate the process of global warming leading to erratic rain fall and creating problems for the local agricultural economy.
9. Considering these factors, it is important that we need to think of the macro implication before sacrificing the forests for proposed rail line. It is essential to consider the environmental costs for the society. The green Earth and future generations will never forgive us for the destruction of the natural forests. When we can not even create one acre of the tropical forests, do we have the right to fell thousands of hectares of forests?
10. The short term political gains should not be allowed to influence policy decisions that will have long term negative implications on the hot spot of biodiversity of Western Ghats.



Parisara Samrskhan Kendra  
Basavaraj Nilaya, Chowkimath, SIRSI

30 December 2009

PARISARA SANRAKSHANA KENDRA  
HULEMALGI BUILDING  
SIRSI (Uttara Kannada)  
KARNATAKA-581 401

## NOTE ON HUBLI-ANKOLA RAIL LINE

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2. It will connect the Northern Karnataka to the coast, improving the mobility and transportation of goods.
3. As it passes through the best forest region on Western Ghats, it will attract the tourists, especially the foreign tourists.
4. It will strengthen the local economy of the backward Uttara Kannada district creating more employment opportunities.
5. It can be constructed with minimum destruction of forests, by digging tunnels and changing the alignment of rail line.
6. It is better option than widening the existing road from Hubli to Ankola. They claim is that the road will destroy more forests and will cause more destruction than rail line.

*The clarifications to the above points are:*

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3. In fact the foreign tourists would like to see and enjoy the existing tropical forests and biodiversity. The destruction of the forests would act as negative factor for distraction of tourists. Even the small numbers of tourists traveling on this rail line will hardly compensate the ecological and economic costs of the project.

4. The history of large projects in this district has been one of the displacement and encroachment of the forest land. The large projects have always attracted more migrant laborers who come for construction work and stay behind in the forest region. Instead of creating local employment, it will attract more migrant laborers who would eventually encroach more forest land. Thousands of migrant labors would put additional pressure on the existing tropical forests. The building of the rail line would need manual laborers but its maintenance would require very few permanent laborers. The claim of large scale employment generation due to this project is false and is far from the reality
5. The project proponents claim that in order to facilitate the free movement of the wildlife, they would construct tunnels, bridges, sub ways and under passes. However, in practice, (Rajaji National Park) these structures has not helped the movement of wild life. If this is the reality then it is futile to claim that the movement of wild not be affected adversely by proposed rail line.
6. The debris that is dug out from the tunnels will cause more problems adversely affecting the fragile hydrology of the area. In fact the the river catchments will be destroyed by construction of the tunnels leading to depletion of the water source.
7. The region is known for wild life habitat like Elephants and Tigers. The rail line would cut across the Elephants corridor causing irreversible damage to wildlife movement
8. Looking into the history of high voltage power lines across Western Ghats that promised to clear only 3 meters of forests underneath the power line, in practice it took toll of 56 meters, almost 200 times more forests than the originally envisaged forest clearance. Similarly, in case of rail line, the project proponents have asked for 40 meters clearance including the embankment, but the disturbances will be almost five times more than the land asked for. Thus, in practice the impact of the proposed rail line will be felt not just on the 700 hectares of the forest land that is required to be de notified, but in an area of about 3500 hectares of virgin forest land. If this is going to be the reality, is it worth to sacrifice the forests for the rail line? It is essential to look at the cumulative impact of the rail line on the entire eco system of the district and Western Ghats.
9. The studies in tropical forests Amazon, similar to the forests in Western Ghats have shown that the impact of fragmentation will be on the entire stretch of the Western Ghats. This loss of forests will accelerate the process of global warming leading to erratic rain fall and creating problems for the local agricultural economy. This will lead to changes in the fragile forest ecosystem causing irreversible damage.
10. Considering these factors, it is important that we need to think of the macro implication before sacrificing the forests for proposed rail line. It is essential to consider the environmental costs for the society. The green Earth and future

generations will never forgive us for the destruction of the natural forests. When we can not even create one acre of the tropical forests, do we have the right to fell thousands of hectares of forests?

11. Even if the project gets clearance form the Ministry of Environment and Forests, the cost escalation and the political and financial compulsions of rail ministry will delay the implementation to several decades. By that time forests would have been destroyed, and with lack of funds, the project will remain in limbo. We have several cases of such mega projects that remain uncompleted for decades and this should not be allowed in case of Hubli-Ankola rail line which will take toll of tropical forests and destroy the biodiversity of the region.
12. The short term political gains should not be allowed to influence policy decisions that will have long term negative implications on the global hot spot of biodiversity of Western Ghats.



Parisara Samraskhan Kendra  
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18 December 2013

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## BRIEF ON PROJECTS REQUIRING FORESTRY CLEARANCE

### 1. **Dallirajahara-Jagdapur new line(235 kms):-**

Dallirajahara-Jagdapur new line is to be constructed on cost-sharing basis among the Ministry of Railways, the State government of Chhattisgarh, Steel Authority of India Ltd. (SAIL) and National Mineral Development Corporation (NMDC). As per the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), the first phase of this railway line, viz., from Dallirajahara to Rowghat, is to be constructed entirely at the cost of M/s SAIL, as the line is primarily meant for transportation of iron ore to the steel plant at Bhilai. However, M/s SAIL have not yet deposited the cost of this part-project with the Railways for want of environment and forestry clearances.

Recently, MOEF has conveyed to the State Government of Chhattisgarh on 05/02/2004 about its 'in-principle' acceptance of the State Government's proposal for diversion of 259.94 hectares of forestland for the proposed Dallirajahara-Rowghat (95 Kms) new line project and asked the State and the Railway authorities to take necessary action for obtaining 'in-principle' Stage-I approval from the MOEF. The work will be taken up as soon as M/s SAIL deposit the cost with the Railways, once they receive the requisite environment and forestry clearances.

A detailed brief is enclosed as Annexure-I.

### 2. **Guna-Etawah new line (344 kms):-**

Railways have taken up the work of construction of a rail link between Guna and Etawah. The work has since been completed between Guna and Bhind (308 kms) and is in progress in the final leg between Bhind and Etawah (36 kms) which passes through the forest & Gharial wild life sanctuary in the States of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. For laying the said rail link, Railways require about 106 hectare of this land, i.e., 82.53 hectare in Uttar Pradesh and 23.51 hectare in Madhya Pradesh. Governments of both the States had recommended to the Ministry of Environment & Forests that the said lands be transferred to the Railways.

However, in view of ban on transfer of forest/wildlife Sanctuary land imposed by Hon'ble Supreme Court in IA 548 in Writ Petition (Civil) No.202/1995, Ministry of Environment & Forests (MOEF) was unable to clear the proposals. Accordingly, Railways had filed an Interlocutory Application on which Hon'ble Supreme Court on

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19/04/2004 has directed Ministry of Environment & Forests to refer the matter to the Standing Committee of Indian Board for Wild Life (IBWL) for consideration. The proposal is yet to be considered and finalized by this Committee.

**3. Hubli-Ankola new line (167 kms):-**

Railways have taken up construction of 167 Km long Hubli-Ankola new line in 1996-97. This involves acquisition of 965 ha of forest land in Canara Circle and Dharwad Circle in the State of Karnataka. Government of Karnataka had written to MOEF for according Government's approval to transfer the required forest land to the Railways. However, the same has been rejected vide MOEF's letter No. F.No.8-134/03-FC dated 11.6.2004.

With the increase in demand globally for iron ore, the speedy construction of this line has become very essential besides meeting the passengers' requirement. Hubli-Ankola line will also obviate to a great extent the severe operating constraints existing in the Hubli-Vasco line on account of the steep gradient of 1 in 37, which severely restricts the load to be carried and increases the transit time.

Secretary (MOEF) has been requested recently for expediting transfer of forest land to Railways (Copy enclosed as Annexure-II).

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### JUSTIFICATION FOR HUBLI -ANKOLA NEW LINE PROJECT

The new line connects Hubli to Ankola, situated in the western coast line, The alignment passes through the Western Ghats covered with Forest, falling from a level of 636m to 15m above MSL. This new line will become the most viable alternative route to move the extra iron ore traffic from Bellary – Hospet area to Goa area, over and above that can be carried via the existing Castlerock-Kutem route.

This line would connect the Western coast of the nation to the hinterland. With the construction of Konkan Railway line, the proposed new line will be of great use especially in view of the Tadri Port being developed in a big way near Ankola. In any case, the commercial port in Karwar will develop, inspite of the Navy, developing their own facility through Sea-Bird project. Keeping this in view, construction of the proposed line should be given priority so that the linkage between the Ports, the naval harbour and the industrial area of Karnataka are established. Hon'ble Prime Minister of India. laid foundation stone on 17<sup>th</sup> May 1999 at Hubli. This project is already a sanctioned project appearing as item No.2 in the Pink Book for the year 2003-2004 issued by Ministry of Railway.

Besides meeting the future requirement of freight traffic of the area, the project will provide better employment opportunities, benefits to economy, quick service, safety and less consumption of fuels with lesser air pollution. This project will also fulfill the aspirations of the people of the North Karnataka region.

This is one of the projects identified for funding by KRIDE (Karnataka Rail Infrastructure Development). The area of forest land required for the project is about 965 hectares this has been further reviewed and reduced to 720 hectares .

The Railway line passes through the ghat section for a length of 63 km and balance 105 km passes through plain section. The Railway line runs close to the National highway in the plain section only. In the ghat section (63 km) the railway alignment takes a detour in view of much flatter gradient (1 in 100) required to be provided for the railway line. Out of the

63 km of ghat section, about 20 km of the length runs through tunnels. Thus, the net length passing through forest in the ghat section is only about 42 km. Wherever the alignment runs parallel to the existing national highway, it would provide for an alternative route in case of accidents and emergency.

Only the area of land required for embankment and cutting need to be cleared. Necessary precautions will be taken to cause fewer disturbances to the forest ecology. The Railway stations have been planned at farther interval so as to cause minimum disturbance to the forest. Provision has been made for providing many bridges and cross ways which would provide for the movements of animals across the alignment.

Karwar port authorities have already demanded one railway siding and have started the work of adding two more berths in the present complex. As per the letter No.PIWT/48/DEV(1)/2000 dated 5.9.2000 issued by Director of Ports and inland water transport, Govt. of Karnataka, Karwar, the Karwar port will be able to handle 7 MTs traffic per year, provided a Railway siding with a connection to Hubli through Ankola is made available. In addition, Tadri port near Ankola is being developed in a big way and is almost finalized to handle 20 MTs of traffic per day by 2010 and further 28 MTs of traffic by 2020. Thus, Hubli-Ankola line is essential in the interest of the country's economy as well as to meet the anticipated growth through Port section with the economic liberalization policy of the Govt. of Karnataka.

This line would provide connectivity of the ports to the hinterland, Karnataka state has a maritime coastline of 287 km studded by 10 minor/intermediate ports between Karwar in the North and Mangalore in the South flanked by Uttar Kannada, Udupi and Dakshina Kannada districts. This line is essential for development of the backward region of North Karnataka.

must be done at all costs. There is no solution to the doubling of this sector. It is estimated that the cost of the other new proposals would be as under: -

- Hubli - Londa - 90 kms - Being in graded section with forest land involved land acquisition may take time, and the cost is likely to be 5 Crores per KM - Rs. 450 Crores.
  
- Londa - Vasco: - (Straight doubling) - It will pass through forest land, however, since there will be no change in alignment, problems may be limited. The cost, however, will be high
  - LD-CLR - 24 kms at 5 Crores per KM = Rs. 120 Crores
  - CLR-QLM - 26 kms x 10 Crores per Km = 260 Crores
  - QLM-VSG - 50 kms x 3 Crores per kms = 150 Crores
  - Total Rs. 530 Crores
  - Total for Hubli to Vasco Rs. 980 Crores.
  
- Gunji - Kulem - Will be new forest land and consequently difficult to acquire. At 1/100 the distance would be 96 kms and would cost of atleast Rs. 6 crores per kms = 550 kms. Along with QLM - VSG Rs. 150 Crores = 700 Crores. Total cost for UBL - CLR = 700 + 570 = Rs. 1270 Crores.

It will, therefore be seen that all alternatives are prohibitively costly. Further, the forest department has made it clear that, at best only one route via forest land will be approved. Consequently, we need to make a choice. The costs are as under: -

Hubli - Ankola	- Rs. 997 Crores
Hubli - Vasco (Via: Castle Rock - Kulem)	- Rs. 980 Crores
Hubli - Gunji (Via: Kulem - Vasco)	- Rs. 1270 Crores

While straight doubling of Hubli - Vasco along the existing alignment would have been the cheapest. The drawbacks are: -

- Not a sanctioned project.
- Will continue to have grade of 1/36, which will limit the number of trains that can be run and cripple operations forever.

It will, therefore, be seen that the Hubli - Ankola line is the best option, since it is a sanctioned work with K-ride committed to fund the line, and the alignment being in grade of 1/150 in plain sections and 1/100 in the ghat sections. This line would have normal potential and will not be limited by grades as other ghat sections.

It is estimated that the line can be completed in three years provided: -

- (i) Forest clearance is given.
- (ii) Funding is ensured.

However, the line can be made viable even in stages. The section from Hubli to Kiravathi (45 kms) can be completed by Sept 2005. At this stage a dump for Iron Ore can be created at Kiravathi and Iron Ore moved by rail to Kiravathi and onward by road to Karwar, Bellikere, Tadri and even Goa. The rail distance would be about 260 kms, while the road distance to Karwar would be about 120 Kms. By Sept 2006, this line can reach Yellapur (75 kms), where similar arrangements can be made. At this stage the movement will be even more viable. By Dec 2007 the line should be through to Ankola.

The proposal, however, assumes the development of Karwar, Belikeri or Tadri as important ports with necessary infrastructure for export of Iron Ore. Even if shipping starts with mid sea loading and a deep draught berth is created only by 2007, the option will be very attractive.

The logistics suggest that about 5.0 MT can be moved to Kiravathi by 2006. When the Hospet – Hubli doubling is completed 10.0 MT can be moved to Yellapur by 2007. By the time the Ankola line is completed, 15.0 MT can be handled by the line.

#### Marketability & Funding:

If 15.0 MT can be moved to Ankola by 2009-10, the line would be an eminently marketable line. Assuming that the diversion to the Ankola line will be the traffic that would otherwise go to Chennai, the results would be as under: -

Chennai	- 580 kms	Rs. 500 per ton.
Ankola	- 380 kms	Rs. 330 per ton.

Consequently, the saving that is possible by moving traffic via: Hubli – Ankola would be: -

For 15.0 Mt =  $170 \times 15 = 225$  Crores.

The saving to the trade per year would be Rs. 255 Crores at 15.0 MT. Even if only 5.0 MT is moved, the saving is Rs. 85 Cores. At 15.0 MT the cost of the line can be recouped within 5 years.