Construction of the Kenwick rail freight facility will help ensure the continued efficient operation of Perth’s freight and passenger rail networks.

The new facility will enable the rail freight operator to move from the existing facility at Bellevue, freeing up this site for the development of a future PTA railcar depot. Earthworks will begin in coming weeks to prepare for construction of the facility’s permanent infrastructure throughout 2020.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

The Kenwick rail freight facility will be built and owned by the Public Transport Authority (PTA) and included as part of the existing rail freight lease.

It will be used by the operator (currently Arc Infrastructure) and will include:
- A rail welding area
- Rail stowage for grinding and track machines
- Administration buildings
- Material storage facilities
- Connections to the existing rail freight network

A key function of the facility will be to allow the grinding and welding of rail, to replace sections of track across the freight network as needed.

Recent and upcoming work

Between April and September this year, around 120,000 cubic metres of fill was delivered to the Kenwick site. Fill refers to material (soil and rock) excavated during construction activities which is then beneficially reused elsewhere.

Fill delivered to Kenwick was excavated during construction of the Forrestfield-Airport Link project, work on which is continuing. Transfer of excess fill from one site to another is routinely undertaken on land development and infrastructure projects in Perth and around Australia.

In coming weeks, earthworks will begin at Kenwick to raise the ground surface to a level consistent with the existing rail line and surrounding developments. This will involve stripping topsoil containing unwanted ground vegetation and debris before using earthmoving equipment to distribute and compact the stockpiled fill. Remaining trees will also be removed from the site; these trees were not removed during initial clearing work in 2018 due to their proximity to the rail line. Drainage infrastructure also being installed as part of this work package will see the existing Yule Brook culvert widened to allow connection of the facility to the main freight line. Removal of vegetation around the brook will take place late this year. Aboriginal monitors will be on site during this work.

All work is expected to take place within standard construction hours (Monday to Saturday, 7am – 7pm), and construction traffic will access the site via Intermodal Place. Dust will be managed in accordance with the contractor’s Construction Environmental Management Plan. Measures to mitigate impact from dust during earthworks may include the application of water or dust suppressant and road sweeping.

The drainage and earthworks phase of the project is expected to be completed in the second quarter of 2020.
Frequently asked questions

Why is the facility required?
The new Kenwick rail freight facility is required to enable the rail freight operator (currently Arc Infrastructure) to move from an existing facility at Bellevue (about a kilometre east of Midland Station). The Bellevue site is critical to the expansion of the passenger network, being ideally situated to support increased operations on the Midland Line in particular. It is also the preferred site for an assembly and commissioning facility for the 246 new C-series railcars to be delivered between 2022 and 2029.

Is the soil delivered to Kenwick from the Forrestfield-Airport Link project safe to use?
Using excess soil from the Forrestfield-Airport Link project as fill for the Kenwick site is safe and represents a sustainable approach to managing a valuable natural resource.

All work undertaken on the Forrestfield-Airport Link project is conducted in accordance with the project’s Environmental Management Plans, which involves oversight from a variety of stakeholders including the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation, and an independent environmental auditor accredited under the Western Australian Contaminated Sites Auditor Scheme.

While fill from the Forrestfield-Airport Link project has been tested for PFAS, and very low levels have been found in some samples, the highest readings measured in the project’s fill are lower than the human health and ecological guideline values for indirect exposure given in the PFAS National Environmental Management Plan.

PFAS are ubiquitous and can be found at low levels in soils, surface water and groundwater in most urban areas in WA and nationally.

Is there a risk to the watercourses in the area?
Beneficial reuse of fill from the Forrestfield-Airport Link project is not considered to pose an increased or unacceptable level of risk to the environmental values of the area.

Testing of Yule Brook, Woodlupine Brook and the Canning River, the watercourses surrounding the Kenwick site, was undertaken before delivery of fill from the Forrestfield-Airport Link project. This confirmed that similarly low levels of PFAS were already present in all testing locations.

Testing of these watercourses throughout delivery of fill to the Kenwick site showed no observable change as a result of the activity. This testing is ongoing.

Perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are manufactured compounds that have been used in certain types of firefighting foams and a range of consumer products since the 1950s.

PROJECT TIMELINE

Late 2019: Earthworks begin; facility tender released
Early 2020: Earthworks continue; facility tender awarded
Mid-2020: Earthworks complete; construction of facility begins
Late 2020: Construction complete; handover to rail freight operator