New rail technology may solve access crisis

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An innovative new technology could represent the future of rail transportation and haulage networks.

In development for 32 years, the String Transport System is a fully automated, elevated track structure that protects and preserves the natural environment.

It emits minimal noise, has low levels of vibration and, being elevated from the ground, protects local fauna.

Transport company String Transport Systems, which is in the process of commercialising the technology, says a String Transport System can be built for approximately half existing railway construction costs.

"It is a sustainable transport network with lower emissions, lower energy use, minimal land disturbance and lower consumption of construction materials," says Director & Company Secretary Michael McBride.

"Recent natural disasters in Australia have rendered many transport systems ineffective, however the String Transport technology is all weather operational, which would mean no down time during floods," McBride says.

McBride says String Transport Systems intends to become the primary provider of Transport Solutions for emerging mining and resource companies.

"Our company seeks to assist those miners who have been denied access to third party railway lines and offer them access to an open network capable of delivering their products to a port for exporting," he says.

"One of the biggest problems facing Australian miners is the prohibitively high transportation costs from available transport solutions.

"Significant cost reductions in the capital and operating costs of String Transport infrastructure would be a catalyst to generating revenues for those mining companies.

"New transport infrastructure is required to meet an increase of 365 Million tons per year of iron ore exports by 2020," McBride adds.

"An operational String Transport System will benefit many of the emerging miners with a dedicated, open access freight network in the iron ore and coal provinces of Australia."

Developed with financial assistance from the United Nations UNHABITAT program, a String Transport System also reduces steel wheel/steel rail friction, aero-dynamic resistance and is scalable.

"A String Transport System is lighter, stronger, cheaper and faster to build than other currently available transport systems," McBride says.

"These key advantages deliver significant reductions in the amount of capital investment required to build the system and lower operating and haulage costs.

"Reductions in both fuel consumption and carbon emissions, combined with the lowest environmental footprint of any transport mode ensure that a String Transport System is a truly sustainable haulage option."

With $10 million funding recently granted from the Integral Capital Group and a construction agreement already in place with ProMet Engineers, McBride says the company plans to build a demonstration bulk haulage system.

"We are currently developing a project-design blueprint for the transportation of bulk commodities with various capacities of up to 100 million tons per annum," McBride says.

"From the middle of 2011, String Transport Systems plans to commence construction work for the demonstration line and facility."

In July, String Transport Systems will also present, 'The optimisation of Transport Infrastructure' at Iron Ore 2011 in Perth, Western Australia, jointly organised by the Minerals Council, AUSIMM and CSIRO.

 "String Transport Systems is very pleased to have successfully raised the operating capital to further the commercialisation of our technology," McBride says.

"We are proud to have fully developed solutions ready for design documentation and commercial implementation.

"Technical analysis of the system under Australian conditions has been received and concept design work is nearing completion for the parameters of the demonstration facility."

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