Hon Shane Jones

Minister for Oceans and Fisheries
Minister for Regional Development
Minister for Resources
Associate Minister of Finance
Associate Minister for Energy

12 August 2026

Expert Panel for the Southern Link Inland Port Fast-track Application
C/o Environmental Protection Authority, Fast-track Team
Wellington

Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 – Southern Link Inland Port application (FTAA-2604-1207)

Dear Expert Panel members,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this substantive application under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (FTAA 2024).

The FTAA 2024 has been established to provide a regime that makes it easier and quicker for regionally and nationally significant infrastructure projects to gain the approvals needed for development, in support of this Government's economic growth objectives.

I have considered the application and its alignment with the priorities of my Regional Development portfolio. My comments are attached as Annex One.

Yours sincerely,

Hon Shane Jones
Minister for Regional Development

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Annex One – Regional Development comments

Project overview

1. Southern Link Property Limited is seeking Fast-track consent to establish and operate the Southern Link Inland Port, a rail-enabled inland port and logistics hub at 270–292 Dukes Road North, Mosgiel, Dunedin. The project would be developed in three stages over about 10 years.

2. The 40-hectare project includes a new rail siding off the Taieri Branch Line, about 80,000 square metres of warehousing, a container depot and terminal facilities, and supporting infrastructure. It is intended to consolidate and expand freight, warehousing and container-handling activities that support Port Otago and regional supply chains.

3. The Government has previously approved a loan of up to $8.2 million through the Regional Infrastructure Fund to support the development of the rail siding.

4. An economic assessment provided by the applicant considers the project will:

    a. result in construction expenditure of about $213 million over the development period. This is expected to generate about $191.3 million in gross value added across the southern South Island, including direct, indirect and induced effects. At an average of $19.13 million per year, the estimated impact represents approximately 1 per cent of regional Gross Domestic Product (GDP), indicating a modest direct contribution to the overall regional economy.

    b. create or sustain up to 1,489 gross direct and indirect full-time equivalent roles across a range of sectors over the 10-year construction period. Construction-related wages and salaries are not quantified.

    c. support 125 full-time equivalent roles once operational, including 104 new high-value jobs. The net additional jobs represent a 4 per cent increase over 2,757 filled jobs in the Transport, Postal and Warehousing Industry in Otago in the year ending March 2025. The assessment does not quantify ongoing gross value added, wages or salaries from operational activity.

    d. strengthen freight and logistics across Otago and the lower South Island by increasing warehousing and container-handling capacity, improving rail links and reducing heavy vehicle movements on urban roads

    e. improve resilience for export supply chains in particular, through additional container storage capacity when shipping is delayed

    f. support the long-term functioning of Port Otago and the wider southern South Island export economy by enabling more freight to move by rail, increasing container storage and handling capacity, and reducing reliance on constrained road-based freight routes through urban Dunedin and State Highway 88.

Regional Development comments

5. On balance, based on the economic assessment provided by the applicant, I consider the project may be regionally significant. The quantified construction impacts, including GDP and employment effects, are modest when viewed against the scale of the Otago economy. Its stronger regional significance lies in its function as enabling infrastructure for the freight and export economy.

6. The Inland Port would provide long-term rail-enabled warehousing, container storage and terminal capacity that supports Port Otago and export-focused businesses across Otago and the

wider southern South Island. The assessment indicates that the current business-as-usual position is constrained, with limited capacity for growth and limited resilience to shipping delays, disruption on State Highway 88 and other supply chain shocks.

7. For that reason, the assessment considers the project's significance is not limited to the direct construction spend or jobs created. It may improve the efficiency, capacity and resilience of regional supply chains, support a shift of freight from road to rail, reduce heavy vehicle movements through urban Dunedin, and strengthen access to Port Chalmers for primary sector exporters and other trade-exposed businesses.

8. The economic assessment lays out ongoing, region-wide benefits that align with Regional Development portfolio priorities for productive infrastructure, regional jobs, supply chain resilience and economic growth.