The Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, Kon Vatskalis, today announced the location of the rail passenger facilities for the Alice Springs to Darwin railway.

Mr Vatskalis said the interim station for the Darwin region would be built adjacent to the recently announced Darwin Business Park, in the East Arm Development Area off Berrimah Road.

It will cost $5.5 million to construct and landscape.

Similar facilities will also be built in Tennant Creek and Katherine in the vicinity of the existing sleeper factories, at a cost of $3.5 million.

Mr Vatskalis said the interim Darwin location was the most logical and cost-efficient of available options.

"Other options would have cost Territory taxpayers as much as $30 million which the Government believes would be much better spent on improving existing services such as health and education, than on a station to cater for one train a week.

"We need to remember the real purpose of the railway is transporting freight, not passengers, and while the addition of a passenger service is welcome, there needs to be a reality check when it comes to spending taxpayers’ money.

"The Berrimah terminal will be an interim facility that will support the initial start-up phase of a rail passenger service."

Mr Vatskalis said eight other sites had been carefully considered for the Darwin rail passenger facility, but all were far more expensive to develop due to the lack of suitable land and ability to adequately accommodate the train’s size.

"This train will be up to one kilometre long and will obviously need a lot of space to unload, load and transit overnight," Mr Vatskalis said.

"The close proximity to the Business Park and East Arm Port is also of great benefit for freight movements.

"Ideally, this interim facility is also located between the cities of Palmerston and Darwin."

The other sites considered but rejected included:

- Catalina Road, Palmerston - $10 094 000
- Marlow Lagoon - $10 235 000
- Palmerston (access to Roystonea Ave) - $13,425,000
- Palmerston (access to University Ave) - $12,435,000
- Tiger Brennan Drive (realign Tiger Brennan Road) - $19,600,000
- Tiger Brennan Drive (outside rail corridor) - $16,820,000
- Charles Darwin National Park - $25,020,000
- Darwin City - $30,870,000

"While there were arguments for and against the Palmerston and Darwin sites, they were clearly far too costly," he said.

Mr Vatskalis said the Government would investigate a permanent site for the rail passenger terminal and consult with local councils and other interested parties to look at the transport needs of the Darwin and Palmerston areas as it develops a transport plan for the entire Territory next year.

These investigations will cover an integrated, mass transit system for Palmerston and Darwin, including a light rail service between the two centres.

"Great Southern Railway (GSR) indicated its needs for a temporary terminal to the Government, which we are now meeting.

"Due to the fact that planning and funding for passenger facilities had not been provided for in what is essentially a rail freight project, this Government has moved quickly to establish interim facilities.

"The Government will look at a more permanent facility as part of our transport policy development and after extensive consultation with key stakeholders."

Work on all three terminals is expected to start early next year.