Chief Minister, Clare Martin, has detailed Territory Government plans to increase freight on the Adelaide to Darwin railway, during talks with South Australian Premier Mike Rann.

Speaking from Adelaide, Ms Martin said the SA Government has agreed to support the creation of a high level steering group to co-ordinate and stimulate the efforts of Government, industry and the railway consortium in growing trade.

"While Freightlink is primarily concerned with domestic freight, now is the time to significantly upgrade Government’s efforts in other areas of minerals traffic and international freight," she said.

"These areas provide the potential to significantly develop and grow trade and value adding activities along the corridor.

"At today’s meeting the Governments agreed to work closely together and upgrade our efforts to explore all avenues to develop and grow the trade along the central corridor."

Ms Martin said that key Government and consortium representatives (including Freightlink) had been selected and agreed to join the steering committee, which would report monthly.

"I would be open to suggestions for expanded membership however it should be kept as small as possible - this group would also establish working teams to pursue specific tasks," she said.

Two specific issues for the group to address are assisting Freightlink in discussions with base load customers and developing initiatives for mini-hubs along the rail-line.

"If base load customers, such as Western Mining Corporation and Pasminco, use the railway it could improve shipping services at the new port in Darwin thereby enhancing the opportunity for greater international freight flows," the Chief Minister said.

"The development of mini-hubs along the route is designed to improve the transport of potential freight from areas such as Ord River region to Katherine, the Gulf Region to Tennant Creek and the Riverina Region to the central corridor."

Ms Martin said she was confident the group would meet and commence its work this month.

The railway is expected to be completed late 2003 and be fully operational early 2004.