Australian Government

BUILDING OUR FUTURE

Roads & Maritime

The existing alignment of the New England Highway at Bolivia Hill

Bolivia Hill upgrade

Review of environmental factors - September 2015

Roads and Maritime Services invites the community to provide feedback on the review of environmental factors for the proposed upgrade of the New England Highway at Bolivia Hill.

IN THIS COMMUNITY UPDATE

- Project status and background
- Summary of the review of environmental factors (REF)
- Upcoming consultation activities
- How you can provide feedback – have your say

Current status

The Australian and NSW governments have committed funding for planning and building the proposed Bolivia Hill upgrade. The preferred route option for the upgrade (map over page) was confirmed in February 2014 following an extensive assessment of potential options and community consultation.

Since then, Roads and Maritime Services has progressed the concept design and published an REF for the proposed upgrade. The community is now invited to provide feedback on the REF. This feedback will be considered as decisions for the project are made into the future. The REF is available on the project website and is on display in Tenterfield and Glen Innes at the locations listed later in this update.

Review of environmental factors

The REF assessed the potential environmental and social impacts of the proposal (summarised below). The assessment found the proposal would not significantly affect the environment or the community. The REF also describes measures that would be put in place to manage potential impacts. The community is invited to comment on the REF by **Monday 26 October 2015**.

Biodiversity

An assessment of the biodiversity values within the project site was carried out. It identified two important species within the project area boundaries – the Bolivia wattle and the spotted-tailed quoll.

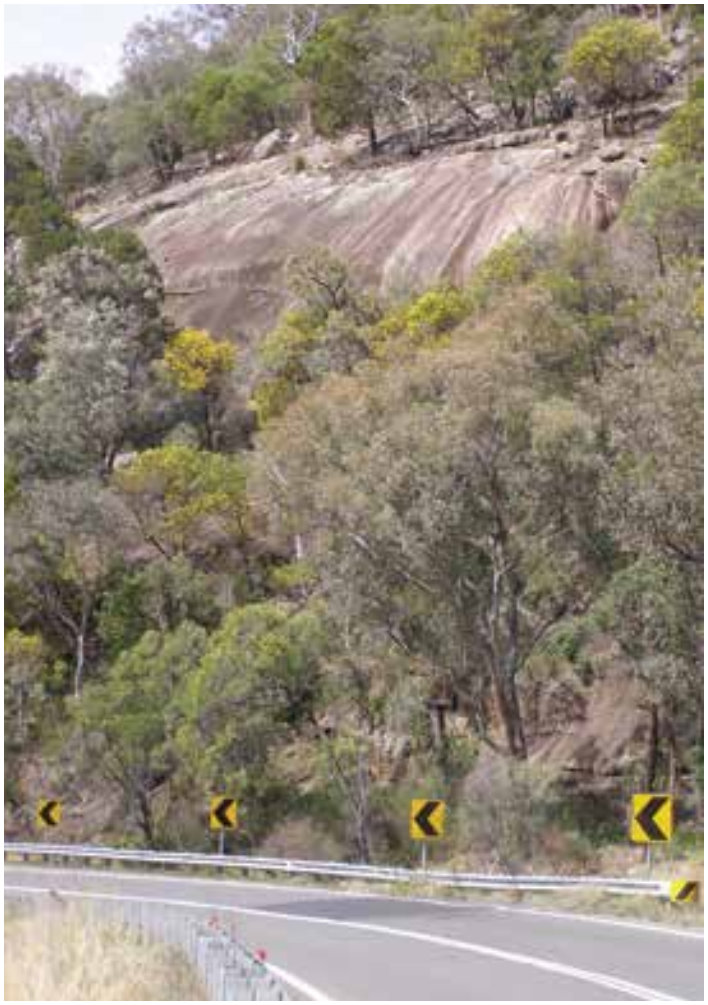
The proposed upgrade will result in a loss of up to 11.05 hectares of native vegetation, including 2.54 hectares of threatened ecological communities that are listed under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act) and/or the Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995 (TSC Act). The project has been designed to avoid impacts on the Bolivia wattle.

Impacts on threatened animals within the project area are unlikely as most of the subject species, like the spotted-tailed quoll, are highly mobile and regularly use fragmented landscapes. The scale of habitat removal associated with the proposed upgrade was assessed as minor.

Based on the biodiversity ecological studies carried out it is considered that the proposed upgrade will have no significant impacts on the species and communities identified. This is because the project's design has been refined to:

- Minimise vegetation clearing
- Minimise animal strikes on the new road through the provision of fauna fencing
- Avoid impact on the Bolivia wattle
- Avoid the Bolivia Hill Nature Reserve.

The Bolivia wattle



Bolivia wattle alongside the existing alignment

Hydrology

The contractor would minimise impacts on water quality from construction.

Potential impacts would be managed through construction management safeguards, including the development of a comprehensive erosion and sediment control strategy.

Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal heritage

A number of non-Aboriginal heritage items would be affected by the proposal. The preliminary significance assessment carried out on the heritage items found them to have only minor significance.

All of the Aboriginal heritage items identified are outside the proposed work area. There are two Aboriginal heritage item areas that are beside the work area and these would be fenced off to prevent disturbance.

Project timeline

May 2011 - The Australian Government committed funding towards planning for the upgrade of the New England Highway at Bolivia Hill and Tenterfield heavy vehicle bypass

September 2011 - Route option development started

November 2012 - Roads and Maritime held two community drop-in sessions to discuss the route options

May 2013 - Funding committed to develop and build the Bolivia Hill upgrade

September 2013 - Roads and Maritime held two community drop-in sessions to discuss the recommended preferred route

February 2014 - Preferred route announced

2015 - Carried out concept design and environmental impact assessment for the preferred route

September 2015 - Display the review of environmental factors — We are here

October 2015 - Information sessions for community feedback on the REF

November 2015
Consider community feedback

Late 2015 - REF finalised

2016 - Carry out detailed design prior to construction

Traffic

Once built, the upgrade would result in positive traffic impacts. These include:

- Improved road safety
- Increased road transport productivity, efficiency and reliability of travel.

Building the upgrade would have some temporary impacts on traffic and transport, including potential traffic delays due to the operation of a single lane alternating traffic flow arrangement at the worksite on the New England Highway. Traffic control would be in place to manage these impacts. Building the upgrade would be staged, scheduled, and managed to minimise these impacts.

Visual impacts

There would be minor visual impacts near the existing cleared road corridor due to the removal of trees and increase in the road width. Re-vegetation and landscaping would be carried out to mitigate these visual impacts.

Building the upgrade

Work to build the upgrade would start after detailed design is complete, subject to the proposal being approved. Roads and Maritime will continue to keep the community informed as the project progresses.

Background

Bolivia Hill is a section of the New England Highway located about halfway between Glen Innes and Tenterfield. The existing highway through the area has narrow traffic lanes and shoulders, with a rock face on one side and a steep, rocky valley on the other. Roads and Maritime identified the need for an upgrade of the New England Highway at Bolivia Hill.

Traffic using the existing alignment on Bolivia Hill

The objectives for the project are to:

- Improve road safety
- Improve road transport productivity, efficiency and reliability of travel
- Minimise the impact on the natural, cultural and built environment
- Provide value for money.

A range of route options were considered in the strategic concept design phase. The preferred route, Option 7b, was selected as it best met the project objectives. Option 7b consists of two lanes (one northbound, one southbound) and improves three substandard curves on the steepest section of highway as it descends through the Bolivia Range. It uses the existing alignment as much as possible.

Other features of the preferred option are:

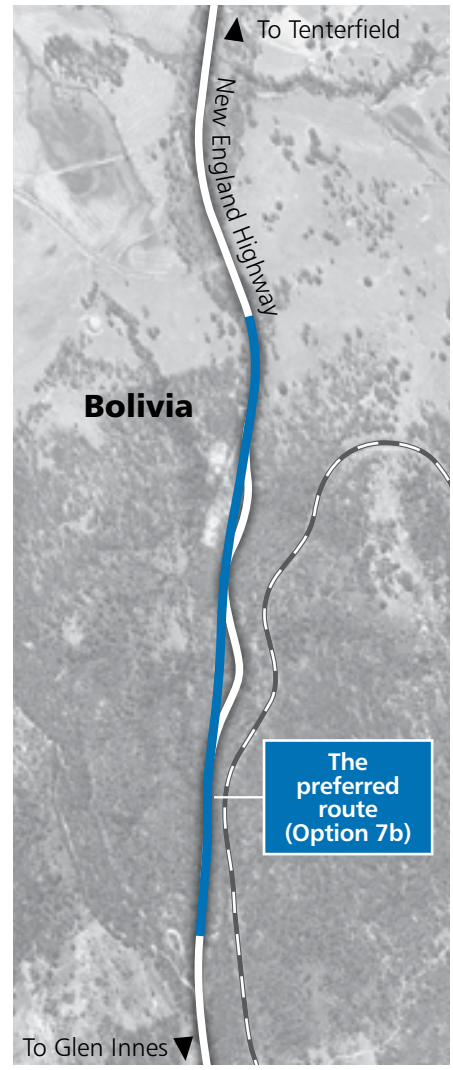
- About one kilometre of new road pavement
- A new bridge up to 360m long to ensure the road avoids the creek line
- 3.5 metre wide lanes in each direction
- Widened road shoulders to improve road safety.

The investigations carried out for the concept design have allowed us to refine the design to reduce the length of the bridge back to about 320m, which would provide better value and minimise environmental impacts and the extent of retaining walls required. The proposed bridge is a large, three-span structure, and has been designed to avoid costly construction of the piers and foundations on the steepest part of the valley and to minimise environmental impacts.

A range of technical, environmental and social investigations and concept designs were carried out to develop and assess the options for the upgrade. The local community, as well as Tenterfield Shire Council and Glen Innes Severn Council, were engaged throughout the process and provided helpful feedback.

Previous feedback and Roads and Maritime's responses to each issue raised is summarised in the Community and stakeholder engagement section of the Preferred Route Option Report (February 2014), which is available on the Roads and Maritime website.

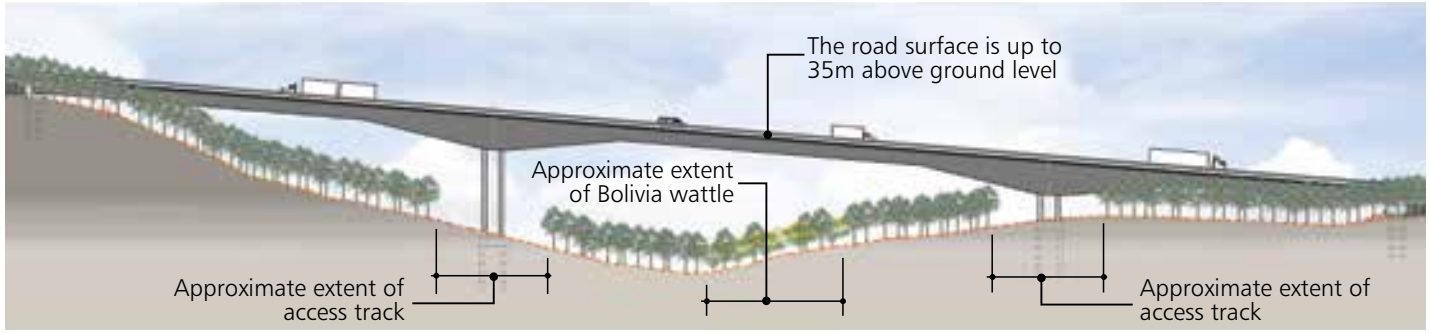
Location of the study area



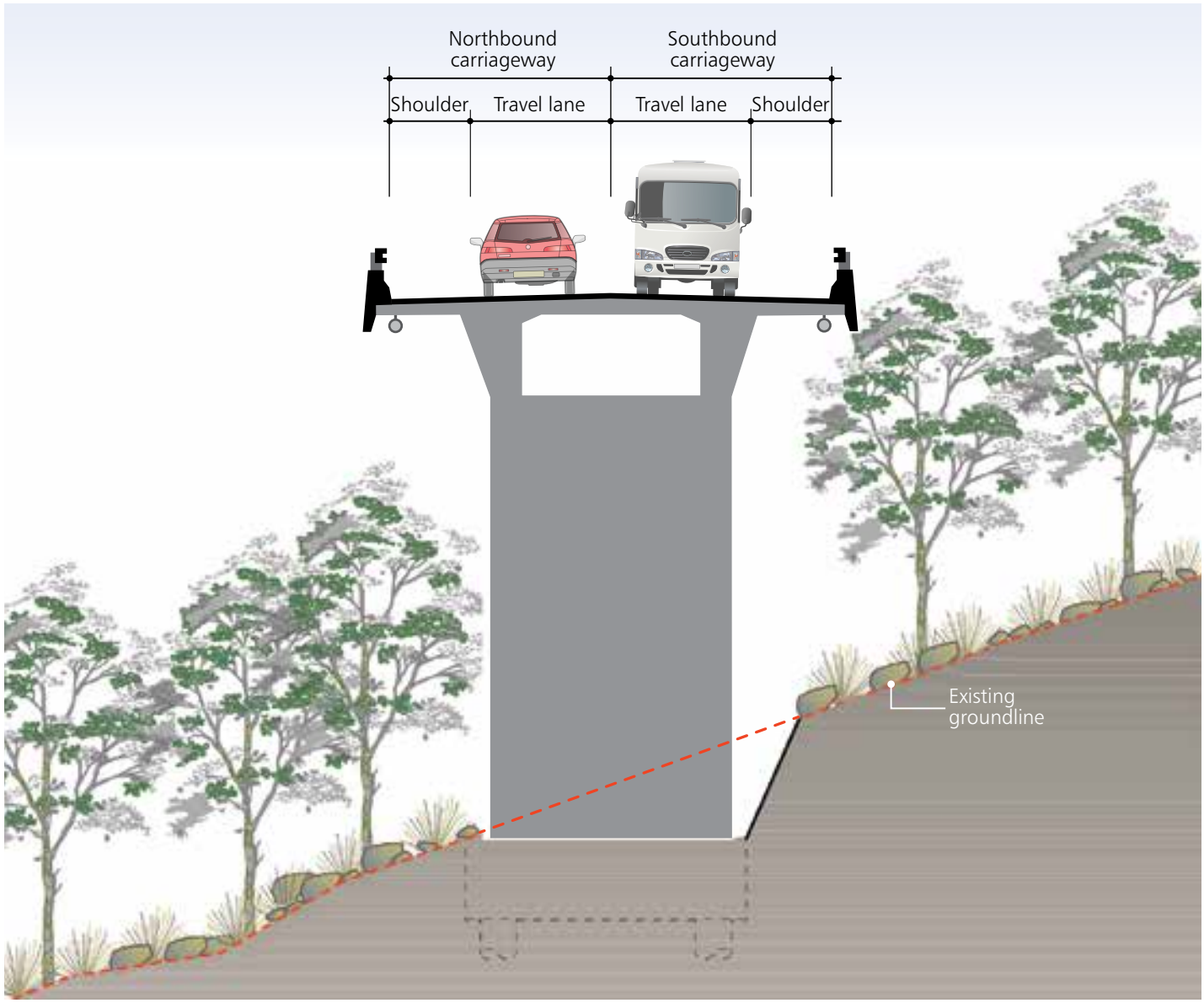
The preferred route

Proposed road bridge

The new bridge would likely be built using the balanced cantilever method, where the concrete deck is built in segments beginning at each of the two bridge piers. Special travelling formwork is used to support the steel reinforcement and wet concrete before it reaches sufficient strength to be self-supporting. It is then moved forward to build the next segment. Segment construction is continued either side of both piers, balancing the load until the cantilevers meet in mid-span where a closing segment is poured.



Diagrammatic long section of proposed road bridge



Diagrammatic cross section of proposed bridge

Community consultation

The project team will be available to answer your questions and receive your comments at two community drop-in sessions:

Tenterfield

Thursday 15 October
Sir Henry Parkes School of Arts
Corner of Rouse and Manners streets
3pm – 7pm

Glen Innes

Friday 16 October
Glen Innes Severn Library
71 Grey Street
11am – 1pm

The REF will be on display at the following locations until 26 October 2015:

Tenterfield

Tenterfield Council
247 Rouse Street

Tenterfield Visitor Centre
157 Rouse Street

Shell Service Station
69 Rouse Street

Tenterfield Motor Registry
94 Molesworth Street

Glen Innes

Glen Innes Severn Council
136 Church Street

Glen Innes Visitor Centre
152 Church Street

Glen Innes Motor Registry
Cnr of Grey and Ferguson streets

Next step

You can provide your feedback on the REF via:

Email: boliviahillupgrade@hyderconsulting.com

Post: Using the Reply Paid address below

In person: Attending the drop-in sessions at Tenterfield and Glen Innes.

Feedback on the REF will be considered and a submissions report published. Subject to approval of the project, Roads and Maritime will then complete the detailed design and prepare for construction.

Contact us

To contact the Bolivia Hill upgrade project team:

Phone: 131 782

Email: boliviahillupgrade@hyderconsulting.com

Post: RMS
Bolivia Hill upgrade
Reply Paid 546
GRAFTON NSW 2460

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Transport Roads & Maritime Services