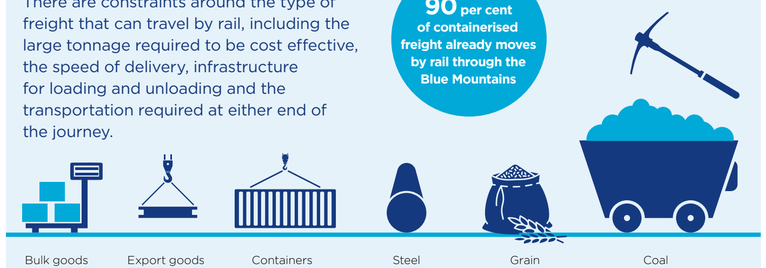
What freight moves by road?

Around half of the freight moving through the Blue Mountains is carried on the road network; this includes refrigerated goods, livestock, commercial and retail goods. Much of this freight is in smaller amounts that require quick, direct access to many different retail precincts, light industrial areas or home deliveries on the same run.

What freight moves by rail?

There are constraints around the type of freight that can travel by rail, including the large tonnage required to be cost effective, the speed of delivery, infrastructure for loading and unloading and the transportation required at either end of the journey.

90 per cent of containerised freight already moves by rail through the Blue Mountains



How do suppliers choose the right freight mode?

Like all of us, producers, manufacturers and suppliers make decisions based on cost and what helps them meet their needs – to have goods where they are needed, when they are needed. Volume, product type, delivery point, distance and cost effectiveness all influence choices on the best mode of freight. By choosing the most economical mode of freight, producers, suppliers and manufacturers keep costs low for consumers everywhere.

Great Western Highway road freight

	East to West	West to East
	'000 tonnes (2013–4)	'000 tonnes (2013–4)
Beverages And Tobacco	28	10
Cement And Concrete	99	125
Cereal Grains	0	53
Chemicals	134	5
Cork And Wood	193	577
Fertilisers, Manufactured	15	0
Food (Animal Or Human Consumption)	425	474
General Freight	593	610
Iron And Steel	179	13
Live Animals	0	31
Machinery And Transport Equipment	0	95
Miscellaneous Manufactured Articles	96	62
Other Commodity (NEI; incl container)	470	46
Other Manufactured Articles	104	168
Petroleum And Petroleum Products	255	58
Sand, Stone And Gravel	0	2,020
Grand Total	**2,589**	**4,346**

*Data drawn from the Australian Bureau of Statistics Freight Movements Survey. Analysis by Transport for NSW.

The type of freight transported by road along the Great Western Highway is diverse.

Freight moving East to West is largely made up of manufactured products, food and general freight such as furniture and fuel.

Freight moving West to East includes timber, food and agricultural products and a large quantity of sand and gravel produced from Mountain quarries.

Approximately 30 per cent of road freight within the Blue Mountains is used or produced in the Mountains – starting or ending its journey between Lithgow and Katoomba, with a further 14 per cent originating or destined for nearby locations such as Oberon.

Contact the Great Western Highway Upgrade team

Never miss an update

Please be sure to sign up to our distribution list. By signing up you'll never miss an update about the project. You can call, email or write to us to let us know your details.

nswroads.work/gwhd

gwhd@transport.nsw.gov.au

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131 450

If you need help understanding this information, please contact the Translating and Interpreting Service on 131 450 and ask them to call us on 1800 953 777.

April 2022
22.038

Australian Government
BUILDING OUR FUTURE

Transport for NSW

Great Western Highway Upgrade Program

Road Freight in the Blue Mountains

NSW GOVERNMENT

Freight is moved across NSW every day on road and rail and through our ports and airports to support our communities and drive our economy.

The Great Western Highway is the key east west road freight transport connection between Sydney and Central West NSW.

It currently carries around 9 million tonnes of road freight each year, with approximately 7 million more tonnes transported by rail.

Road freight moving through the mountains is made up of relatively small quantities, from a variety of industries, and most of it is moving relatively short distances.

The Great Western Highway is being upgraded alongside long-term rail and intermodal options. Upgrading the rail is no substitute for upgrading the Highway, as both are needed to meet future demand and address issues around safety, congestion and journey reliability.

Even with increased rail options and improved rail efficiencies, there will always be freight that suppliers will choose to move by road.

Approximately 40 per cent of road freight within the Blue Mountains is used or produced in the Mountains – starting or ending its journey between Lithgow and Katoomba on or nearby the Highway.

Modern Higher Productivity Vehicles

Why do we need modern Higher Productivity Vehicles?

B-double trucks have been operating on NSW roads since the 1980s and are the predominant mainstream freight vehicle on NSW roads. The Great Western Highway is one of four major regional freight connections into Sydney, but is the only one currently limited to General Access heavy vehicles, including 19m B-doubles and 20m Performance Based Standards (PBS) vehicles.

The amount of road freight on the Highway is projected to grow 20 per cent by 2036. With the rising freight task, there will be an increase of trucks – up to 700 more heavy vehicles each day – if we continue to limit the Highway to this type and length of truck.

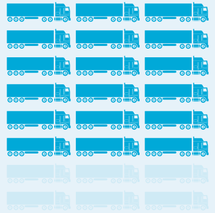
However, modern, Higher Productivity Vehicles carry more freight in one load. Allowing these vehicles on the Highway could reduce projected articulated truck trips by at least 15 per cent.

2036 freight task

Forecasts show that the predicted 2036 freight task could be managed with 2328 articulated heavy truck trips on the Great Western Highway, or reduced to 1892 Higher Productivity Vehicle trips if modern and safer larger vehicles are permitted.

2016

1800 heavy vehicles used the Great Western Highway each day



1800
heavy vehicles per day

2036 – if upgraded and PBS vehicles permitted

1,892 heavy vehicles will use the Great Western Highway each day

1892
heavy vehicles per day

2036 – if not upgraded

2,328 heavy vehicles will use the Great Western Highway each day

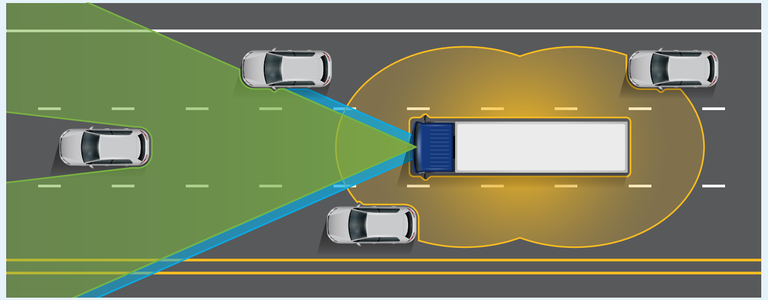
2328
heavy vehicles per day

What is a modern Higher Productivity Vehicle?

Modern Higher Productivity Vehicles are heavy vehicles that are tested against additional safety and infrastructure standards to make sure they operate productively, safely and sustainably. These Performance Based Standards (PBS) ensure the right vehicle operates on the right road.

The standards cover areas such as frontal swing, tail swing, rollover thresholds, directional stability under braking and tracking ability on a straight path. These heavy vehicles are monitored using satellite-based tracking technology to make sure they are complying with their operating conditions.

How is safety improving in heavy vehicles?



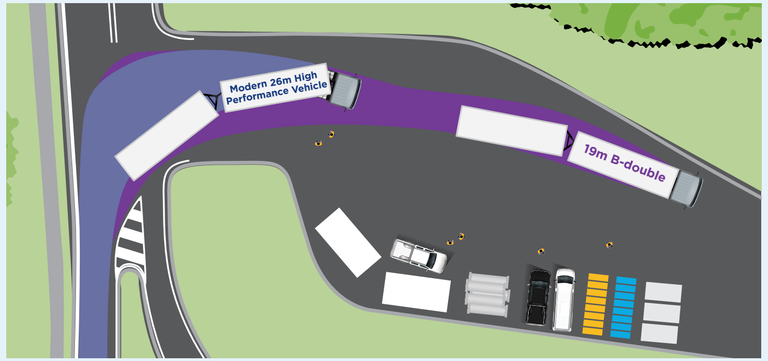
Modern technology allows drivers of PBS vehicles to be more aware of vehicles around them, and can even help them react to changes in driving conditions.

All heavy vehicles must meet Australian standards for design and safety. Depending on their design, modern Higher Productivity Vehicles can be fitted with a host of modern safety features and technologies, including:

- Adaptive cruise controls
- Blind spot elimination systems
- Lane departure warning systems
- Autonomous emergency breaking
- Steerable axles
- Electronic stability control
- Electronic brake distribution
- Satellite tracking and monitoring.

For example, the extra axles on a modern Higher Productivity Vehicle provide more braking capacity, and are often steerable, allowing vehicles to minimise the road they occupy during a turn, helping maintain their laneway.

Modern Higher Productivity Vehicles can stop and turn in the same space as the General Access heavy vehicles currently using the Great Western Highway. Like modern cars, modern heavy vehicles incorporate available innovative technology as a standard.



A modern PBS vehicle has the same or better 'swept path' – the area of a road that a truck will cover during a turn – than older heavy vehicles.

46% fewer emissions

than a 19m semi-trailer

Will the upgrade automatically open the Great Western Highway up for modern Higher Productivity Vehicles (HPV)?

Together, the Australian and NSW Governments are investing more than $4.5 billion towards upgrading the Great Western Highway between Katoomba and Lithgow. To ensure that investment is delivering good value for the people of NSW we are making sure that we future proof the highway for different types of vehicles.

Any change to the types of heavy vehicles allowed on the Great Western Highway would be a decision of Government, and would involve continued engagement with the Blue Mountains and Lithgow City Councils.

Will the upgrade lead to lots of extra trucks on the Great Western Highway?

Other roads between Sydney and the Central West are impractical and, depending on the route, are between 100–145km longer, meaning that freight is generally using the Great Western Highway already.

The amount of freight on the Highway will continue to grow regardless of the upgrade program, but allowing modern Higher Productivity Vehicles could reduce the increase in articulated truck trips on the Highway by at least 15 per cent.

NSW Freights and Ports Plan 2018–2023 is the NSW Government's critical strategic plan for freight. Please visit **www.transport.nsw.gov.au/projects/strategy/nsw-freight-and-ports-plan** for more information.

How will Mountain residents benefit from PBS vehicles?

Fewer truck movements = safer roads

Modern Higher Productivity Vehicles can complete a freight task in fewer trips than the heavy vehicles currently on the Great Western Highway because they can carry more freight in each load. This means the community will benefit from reduced congestion; safer roads and a better driver experience. Austroads also found that High Productivity Vehicles had 76 per cent less accidents compared to conventional trucks.[1]

Lower emissions = better environmental performance and cleaner air

Less trucks on the road network equates to less noise and air pollution. A large number of modern Higher Productivity Vehicle fleets use Euro 5 standard compliant engines which meet the latest emission standards.

Increased freight to local communities = savings for everyone

Transportation costs can account for 30 per cent of the final cost of the goods you buy. Improved freight efficiency means that you get products from producers and manufacturers to you quicker and cheaper.

Safer roads

Lower emissions

Improved freight efficiency

[1] Austroads 2014, Quantifying the Benefits of Australian High Productivity Vehicles, Austroads, Sydney, p 48, available via: https://austroads.com.au/publications/freight/ap-r465-14.