

New England Highway upgrade between Belford and the Golden Highway

Concept design and environmental assessment

June 2017

Roads and Maritime Services is planning to upgrade the New England Highway between Belford and the Golden Highway. The NSW Government has committed \$85 million under the Rebuilding NSW Plan for the upgrade to improve traffic flow, travel times and safety for road users.

An environmental assessment has been carried out to identify potential impacts of the proposal and activities to reduce them.

Comments from stakeholders and the community are invited by **Friday, 28 July 2017**. We will consider feedback in finalising the proposal.

Background

The New England Highway is the primary road connecting the Upper Hunter with Maitland and Newcastle. It is also a critical connection between Maitland and Singleton, which are future growth areas for the Hunter.

The Golden Highway connects the New England Highway at Whittingham with Dubbo.

These roads are used by heavy vehicles servicing industries in the Hunter Valley and Central West to access Newcastle.

Around 22,000 vehicles use the New England Highway between Belford and the Golden Highway each day. This section of the highway is currently two lanes westbound and one lane eastbound. It has a history of crashes, particularly near the Golden Highway intersection.

In May 2015 the NSW Government announced the preferred option for the proposed upgrade. The NSW Government has provided \$4 million in the 2016–17 financial year to continue planning.

The concept design and environmental assessment are now available for community and stakeholder feedback and can be viewed at rms.work/B2G.

The proposal

The proposed upgrade provides the best overall balance between environmental, social and technical considerations.

Key features include:

- widening the New England Highway for around 3.2 kilometres to provide a divided road with two travel lanes in each direction between Belford and the Golden Highway
- replacing the existing right turn movement from the Golden Highway to the New England Highway with a right turn flyover
- removing the Whittingham rest area near the New England Highway and Golden Highway intersection.



Improve
travel speeds

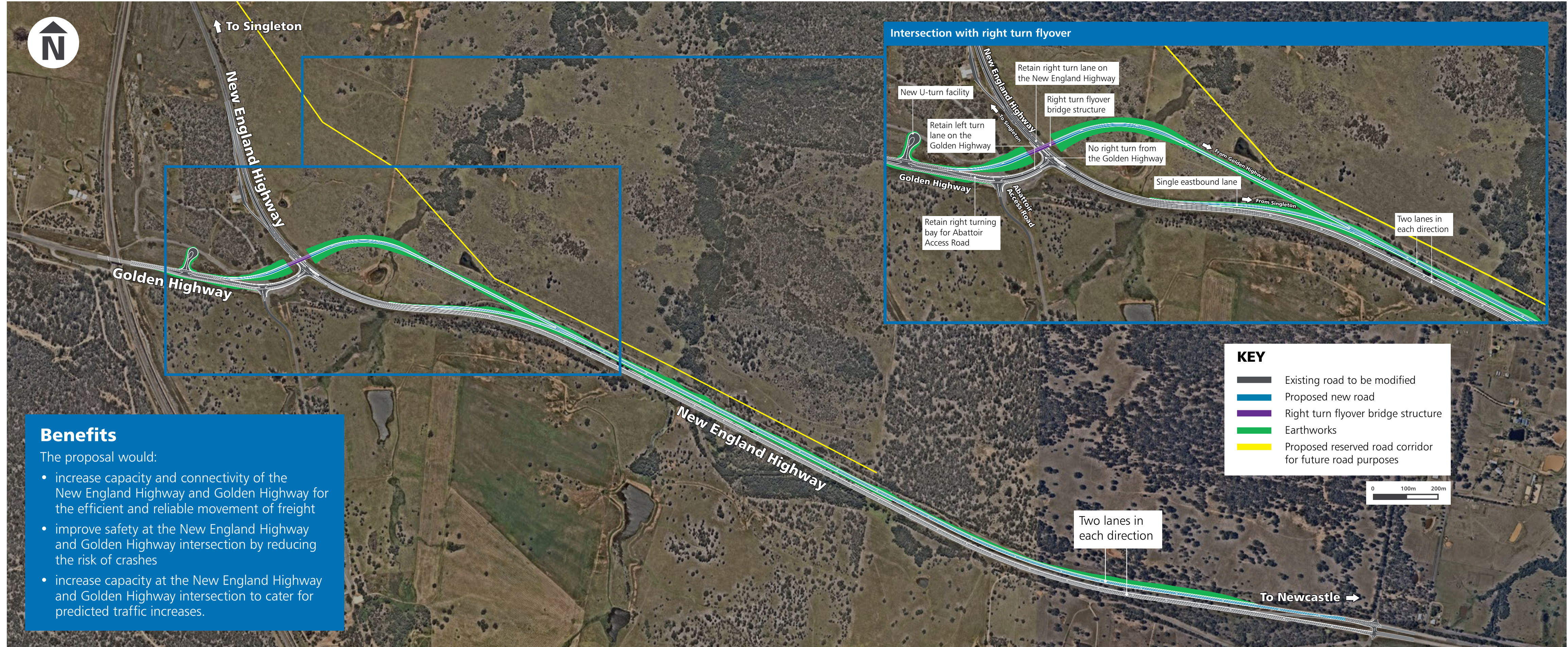


Better and more
reliable trips
for locals, long distance traffic
and freight



Reduce fatalities
and serious injury

New England Highway upgrade between Belford and the Golden Highway



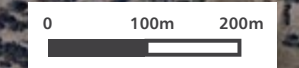
Benefits

The proposal would:

- increase capacity and connectivity of the New England Highway and Golden Highway for the efficient and reliable movement of freight
- improve safety at the New England Highway and Golden Highway intersection by reducing the risk of crashes
- increase capacity at the New England Highway and Golden Highway intersection to cater for predicted traffic increases.

KEY

- Existing road to be modified
- Proposed new road
- Right turn flyover bridge structure
- Earthworks
- Proposed reserved road corridor for future road purposes



Two lanes in each direction

To Newcastle →

Environmental assessment

We have carried out an environmental assessment to identify the proposal's potential environmental and social impacts.

The assessment was carried out in consultation with a range of key stakeholders including technical specialists. It also considered feedback received from the community.

The investigations found the proposal is unlikely to have a significant impact on the environment if a range of environmental minimisation and management measures are carried out.

Key considerations for assessment

The following areas of potential impact have been identified in the environmental investigations. The environmental assessment describes these impacts and activities to reduce them.

Property and access

The proposal would result in a loss of agricultural land and permanently change the property access arrangements of one private property.

Ongoing consultation with affected property owners, businesses and the wider community would minimise impacts.

Biodiversity

The proposal would involve removing native vegetation, resulting in less habitat for a range of birds and mammals. This would impact on threatened species and the connectivity of fauna habitat.

An aerial fauna crossing over the New England Highway would be provided to help offset this loss. A biodiversity offset strategy would be developed to reduce potential impacts.

Aboriginal heritage

Aboriginal archaeological sites of moderate significance would be impacted by the proposal.

A methodology for salvaging artefacts from these sites before construction has been developed, in consultation with the local Aboriginal community.

Noise

Noise may be experienced at some properties within 600 metres of the site during construction. Where possible, work would be carried out during standard working hours.

To minimise disruption to traffic and reduce construction timeframes, some work would take place outside of these hours. We would limit noise related work to standard construction hours and minimise noise made by machinery wherever possible.

Visual impacts

The proposal would increase the size and visibility of the highway with the addition of a flyover. A design and landscape strategy has been developed to help reduce this impact.

Proposed construction

There would be some increased travel times along sections of the New England Highway and Golden Highway during construction of the proposal.

A minimum of one lane would be maintained in each direction on the New England Highway during peak travel times.

A reduced speed limit would be implemented for traffic through the construction zone and traffic management would be in place to reduce impacts.

We would notify road users of any changes to traffic throughout the construction of the project.

The completed proposal would reduce delays during peak periods at the New England Highway and the Golden Highway intersection, especially for traffic turning right from the Golden Highway. It would also improve average peak hour travel times on the New England Highway and improve road safety between Belford and the Golden Highway.



Artist impression: Right turn flyover from the Golden Highway to the New England Highway



Artist impression: New England Highway, new divided road heading east towards Maitland

Involving the community and stakeholders


The preferred option for the upgrade was displayed for comment in May 2015.

The feedback received was considered in preparing the environmental assessment and concept design.

We are working with the community and stakeholders during planning to identify issues and minimise potential impacts of the proposed upgrade and construction activities.

Have your say

We invite your feedback on the environmental assessment by **Friday, 28 July 2017**.

 02 4908 7630

 Andrew.J.Thompson@rms.nsw.gov.au

 Andrew Thompson
Senior Project Development Officer
Roads and Maritime Services
Locked Bag 2030
Newcastle NSW 2300

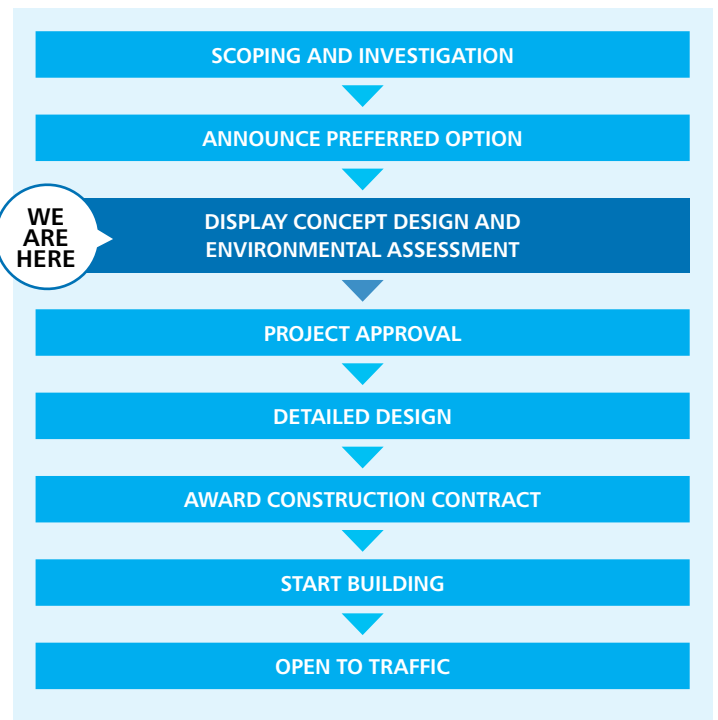
 More information is also available at rms.work/B2G

Next steps

We invite your feedback on the environmental assessment by **Friday, 28 July 2017**.

We will consider the feedback received in finalising the proposal.

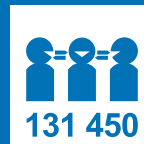
The timing of construction is not yet confirmed.



Visit a display

You can collect a project update or view the display between 9am and 4.30pm from Monday to Friday until **Friday, 28 July 2017** at the Singleton Service NSW Centre at 158 John Street, Singleton.

The environmental assessment and more information are also available at rms.work/B2G.



131 450

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