



Newell Highway upgrade at Coonabarabran

Display of three corridor options

Frequently asked questions – May 2019

About the project

What is happening?

Planning is underway to upgrade the Newell Highway at Coonabarabran. The upgrade will improve the efficiency of freight travelling on the Newell Highway and will improve safety for pedestrians and road users.

Roads and Maritime Services have developed three strategic corridor options, one in town (current Newell Highway) and two out of town options to the East of Coonabarabran. These three options are currently on public display and the community is invited to have their say.

Where are we now and what are the steps in developing the project?

After early investigations, three corridor options have been developed. After the current display period, all feedback will be reviewed and will assist in determining a preferred option. The next steps for the project include determining the preferred option, developing a concept design and investigating the environmental impacts before developing the detail design.

Roads and Maritime will continue to engage with the community and stakeholders throughout the planning of the upgrade of the Newell Highway at Coonabarabran.

Is there funding for the project?

The NSW Government is providing \$11.5 million in funding for planning of the project. This is to develop the project up to the detailed design stage. There is no funding for construction at this time.

What are the key features of the project?

The project will include:

- Route options for construction of a bypass
- Route option for upgrading the existing Newell Highway alignment

- Widen the highway
- Upgrade the road surface
- New bridge over the Castlereagh river (for bypass options)
- Newell Highway and Oxley Highway intersection upgrade

What are the project benefits?

- Reduce travel time
- Reduce vehicle operator costs
- Reduce traffic congestion
- Reduce conflict between local traffic and heavy vehicles
- Connecting rural communities to major regional facilities
- Improve motorist and pedestrian safety

Specific to Bypass options

- Reduce noise and pollution in town
- Less trucks on local streets

Information for the community

How will the community be informed about the development of the project?

Roads and Maritime will work with the community and stakeholders during the planning of Newell Highway upgrade at Coonabarabran to understand issues and minimise potential impacts.

All community and stakeholder feedback on the project is welcome.

We will liaise directly with any potentially affected property owners of the Newell Highway bypass options, as well as engaging with the broader community and other stakeholders.

Community information sessions

Roads and Maritime is seeking community feedback and is holding drop in sessions at the Volunteer Rescue Association, Castlereagh Street, Coonabarabran as follows:

- Thursday 16 May 4pm – 6pm
- Friday 17 May 11am – 2pm
- Thursday 23 May 5pm – 7pm
- Friday 24 May 11am – 2pm.

Staff from the project team will be available to answer your questions about the project.

We are currently seeking your feedback on the three corridor options from **Wednesday 15 May to Wednesday 13 June 2019**.

If you have questions or would like further information about the project, please contact us via the project's free-call number 1800 741 636 or via email newell.upgrade@rms.nsw.gov.au

Design consideration

What are the key design considerations for the project?

The key design outcomes for the project are improved heavy vehicle access for High Productivity Vehicles (HPV) and safety improvements for motorists and pedestrians on the Newell Highway.

A bypass of Coonabarabran was considered some time ago, what is different now?

Previous feasibility studies and route option investigations of a potential bypass were completed in 1998-1999. However the studies were not taken further due to funding and other priorities at the time. The studies have been taken into account during the current planning and project development phases. Traffic volumes have increased over the past 20 years and a Newell Highway Corridor Strategy was completed in May 2015 which identified medium term priorities to:

- Reprioritise the Newell Highway at the intersection with the Oxley Highway at Coonabarabran
- Provide intersection improvements required for adequate HPV access
- Remove heavy vehicle through traffic from the main urban commercial centre at Coonabarabran which may include a bypass.

The Warrumbungle Shire Council Community Strategic Plan (2017) identified a long term outcome for an alternate route to minimise the movement of heavy vehicles through local urban areas.

What would an in town option look like? How would it differ to what is there now?

It will generally follow the existing alignment and include upgrades to the road surface, curves and intersections.

What will happen to the clock tower if the in town option proceeds?

The clock tower will remain at its current site.

Does RMS have a preferred option?

No. Roads and Maritime is seeking feedback from the community, along with continuing to complete further studies on the three proposed options in order to proceed to selecting a preferred option. All feedback will be incorporated into a report and made available for public viewing.

A preferred option is expected to recommend within the next twelve months.

Have you considered the impacts on businesses?

All feedback is considered throughout the project lifecycle and we will consult the community during many stages as the project develops. Detailed investigations will take place and this will include reviewing the economic impacts to Coonabarabran. We will also consult directly with the business community and other key stakeholders to better understand their needs and potential impacts.

A key challenge in developing this project is balancing the needs of all community members as well as the Newell Highway users.

In February 2019, a roll out of Bypassed Town signs across the state was announced. Town signs will form part of the NSW wayfinding signage and would be included as part of the directional signage strategy for future bypass projects, should a bypass option be the preferred.

<https://www.rms.nsw.gov.au/projects/bypasses/signage-initiative.html>

Newell Highway upgrade and other projects in the region

The NSW Government recognises the importance of the Newell Highway as the economic backbone for freight and livestock transporters, tourism operators, caravanners and holiday makers, emergency services, government, media and business owners. The NSW Government has invested \$500 million into upgrading the Newell Highway.

The Newell Highway Corridor Strategy was finalised in 2015, with the aim to provide freight, road users and local communities with a safer, more reliable and accessible road. One of the main objectives is making sure the Newell highway can accommodate the increasing numbers of Higher Productivity Vehicles (HPVs) with access points onto the highway and pavement quality works to ensure we can meet the growing demand.

The strategy also recognises it is important to balance these freight needs against broader community and environmental needs. For example this may mean the construction of bypasses in some areas and we will work to conserve high value vegetation along the corridor.

The Newell Highway Corridor strategy can be viewed at;

<https://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/projects/current-projects/newell-highway-corridor-strategy>

Roads and Maritime will continue to work with the community and stakeholders, including the region's producers and agricultural companies, local business, freight and transport providers, to improve efficiency and safety in the region.

Construction

When would construction of the Newell Highway upgrade at Coonabarabran start?

Roads and Maritime will continue with investigation work on the three corridor options as well as considering community and stakeholder feedback to further progress the design of the project.

We are currently developing the project with no construction funding confirmed.

What happens next?

Once a preferred option is determined, Roads and Maritime will develop a concept design for the project. Further investigation work is scheduled for 2019 which will include environmental assessments, surveying, community and stakeholder engagement and completion of geotechnical studies.

I live near one of the options, how will this affect me?

Roads and Maritime Services have identified properties potentially impacted by each option.

Whilst we will only take one option to the next stage, we often need to carry out field investigations along all options to help determine which one is preferred. Examples include survey, geotechnical work to assess ground conditions and utility location work.

We will consult directly with all potentially impacted owners if we need to enter private properties to carry out field investigations to help gather information needed in the development of road projects.

You will be contacted by Roads and Maritime if access to your property is required. A fact sheet answering some commonly asked questions about property access is available here;

<http://www.rms.nsw.gov.au/documents/projects/factsheet-access-to-private-property.pdf>

Contact us

For more information, please contact the project team on:

Phone: 1800 741 636

Email: newell.upgrade@rms.nsw.gov.au

More information is also available at rms.work/coonabarabran