



Rawsonville Bridge Replacement

Submissions report

Transport for NSW | March 2022

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Approval and authorisation

Title	Rawsonville Bridge Replacement Submissions Report
Accepted on behalf of Transport for NSW by:	Peter Hamilton Project / Contract Manager
Signed:	
Dated:	21/03/2022

Document status

Document status	Date	Prepared by	Reviewed by
Rev A – Draft	24 February 2022	Thomas Munro	Catherine Brady
Rev 0 – Final	9 March 2022	Thomas Munro	Neil Standen

Executive summary

The proposal

Transport for NSW (TfNSW) proposes to replace Rawsonville Bridge crossing the Macquarie River at Rawsonville Bridge Road, Rawsonville in Central West NSW (the proposal). Rawsonville Bridge Road is a sub-arterial road, providing an important local link between the Mitchell Highway and Dubbo-Burroway Road, as well as access to agricultural properties around Rawsonville.

Rawsonville Bridge (the bridge) was built in 1916 and is a 110-metre-long, heritage timber truss bridge. The bridge is narrow at 4.5 metres wide and only provides a single lane of travel. The current and future road network requirement exceeds the design capabilities of the bridge, which is beyond its expected serviceable and operational life. A full replacement of the bridge is required due to the poor condition of the existing bridge and its high maintenance costs. The bridge is also too narrow to allow access by modern agricultural machinery on this route. Around 368 vehicles use the bridge per day, with heavy vehicles accounting for about 15 percent of all vehicles.

The proposal would involve construction of a new concrete Super T girder bridge immediately upstream from the existing Rawsonville Bridge. The approaches to the bridge would be realigned and tied into the south with an upgraded intersection at Rawsonville Bridge Road. The new bridge would be wider than the existing structure, providing two lanes of traffic with one metre shoulders. The existing bridge would be demolished following the opening of the new bridge.

Key features of the proposal are described in Section 3.0 of the Rawsonville Bridge Replacement Review of Environmental Factors which is available on the project website.

Display of the Review of Environmental Factors

TfNSW prepared a Review of Environmental Factors (REF) for the Rawsonville Bridge Replacement. The REF was publicly displayed between Monday 15 November 2021 and Wednesday 22 December 2021 at Dubbo Regional Library. The REF was also published on the TfNSW project website, TfNSW and NSW Government 'Have your say' websites and made available for download.

The display locations and website link were advertised in print, radio and online as follows:

- Radio advertisement – 15 November to 28 November (Zoo FM, 2DU)
- Print advertisement – 15 November and 28 November (Dubbo Daily Liberal)
- Online advertisement – 15 November to 28 November (Dubbo Daily Liberal)
- Online advertisement – 17, 30 November and 16 December (Facebook)
- Media Release – 15 November

During this time, TfNSW invited the public to provide feedback on the proposal. TfNSW also met with residents and businesses that would be directly affected by the proposal.

In addition, drop in Q&A sessions were carried out during the public display period to give the community a chance to learn more about the project, ask questions and 'have their say'. These sessions were held at:

- Rawsonville Memorial Hall, Rawsonville on 7 December (two sessions 2-4pm and 6-8pm)
- Western Plains Cultural Centre, Dubbo on 8 December (one session 4-7pm)

Summary of issues and responses

Public display of the REF and the supporting consultation resulted in a total of 22 submissions, all of which were from the general community. No submissions were received from government agencies, businesses or associations.

Of the submissions received, 18% were in support of the proposal, 27% objected to the proposal and 32% were partially supportive of the proposal. The remaining 23% of submissions offered no position on whether they supported or objected to the proposal.

The main issues raised and responses to those issues are summarised below.

Non-Aboriginal heritage

In summary, the respondents raised the following issues:

- Removal of the bridge would contribute to the loss of heritage value of the local community and Dubbo region
- Removal of the bridge would contribute to the loss of heritage bridges in NSW.

The response to these issues can be summarised as follows:

- TfNSW acknowledges the local heritage significance of the existing bridge and has considered this during application of mitigation measures for the proposal
- A Statement of Heritage Impact (SoHI) assessed the heritage impact of removing the bridge and outlined proposed mitigation measures to address loss of heritage value, such as a heritage interpretation plan and collecting archival photographs.
- The bridge is identified in the Timber Truss Bridge Strategy as a listed bridge that would be removed following lengthy review and assessment
- A heritage interpretation area is proposed to retain aspects of the heritage value of the bridge.

Socio Economic

In summary, the respondents raised the following issue:

- Removal of the bridge would contribute to the loss of social value of the local community and Dubbo region.

The response to these issues can be summarised as follows:

- TfNSW acknowledges the social and economic significance of the existing bridge and has considered this in assessing potential impacts and during application of mitigation measures for the proposal
- The bridge was not originally designed as a pedestrian platform for activities such as photography and weddings. The bridge does not provide safe pedestrian access or other facilities such as viewing platforms or footpaths to safely conduct these activities.
- The proposal would result in positive socio-economic outcomes for local residents and businesses by improving road safety and accommodating heavy and wide vehicles, such as agriculture machinery.

Retain bridge – use as footbridge

In summary, the respondents raised the following issue:

- Retain the existing bridge for use as a footbridge.

The response to these issues can be summarised as follows:

- TfNSW acknowledges the historic, social and economic significance of the existing bridge and has considered this in assessing potential impacts and during application of mitigation measures for the proposal

- Retaining the bridge for cyclists and pedestrians would require significant and ongoing maintenance works and no footpaths or cycleways are linked to the bridge
- The proposal considered options regarding retaining the existing bridge. However, due to significant maintenance costs and difficulty in ensuring the bridge meets safety standards, this option was considered unworkable.

Retain bridge – continued use as road bridge

In summary, the respondents raised the following issue:

- Retain the existing bridge for continued use as a road bridge.

The response to these issues can be summarised as follows:

- The proposal considered options including retaining the existing bridge. However, given the significant maintenance cost and the difficulty in achieving required safety standards, the option to replace the bridge was preferred
- The future road network requirement exceeds the design capabilities of the bridge, which is beyond its expected serviceable and operational life.

Next steps

TfNSW as the determining authority will consider the information in the REF and this submissions report and make a decision whether or not to proceed with the proposal.

TfNSW will inform the community and stakeholders of this decision, and where a decision is made to proceed, TfNSW will continue to consult with the community and stakeholders prior to and during the construction phase.

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1. Introduction and background

1.1 The proposal

A detailed description of the proposal is found in Rawsonville Bridge Replacement Review of Environmental Factors (REF) prepared by TfNSW in October 2022.

1.2 REF display

TfNSW prepared a Review of Environmental Factors (REF) to assess the potential environmental impacts of the proposed works. The REF was publicly displayed for 38 days between Monday 15 November 2021 and Wednesday 22 December 2021 at Dubbo Regional Library, as detailed in Table 1-1. The REF was placed on the TfNSW project website and made available for download. The display locations and website link were advertised in The Dubbo Daily Liberal (print and online), on radio (Zoo FM, 2DU), Facebook and via media release.

In addition to the above public display, an invitation to comment and copy of the REF was sent directly to identified stakeholders including Little Big Dairy and Dubbo Regional Council. Transport have also been working with potentially affected property owners from an early stage of project development (September/October 2019).

In addition, drop in Q&A sessions were carried out during the public display period to give the community a chance to learn more about the project, ask questions and 'have their say'. Two sessions were held on 7 December at Rawsonville Memorial Hall, Rawsonville (2-4pm and 6-8pm), and a further session was held on 8 December at Western Plains Cultural Centre, Dubbo (4-7pm).

Table 1-1: Display locations

Location	Address
Dubbo Regional Library	Corner Macquarie & Talbragar streets, Dubbo NSW 2830

1.3 Purpose of the report

This submissions report relates to the REF prepared for the Rawsonville Bridge Replacement and should be read in conjunction with that document.

The REF was placed on public display and submissions relating to the proposal and the REF were received by TfNSW. This submissions report summarises the issues raised and provides responses to each issue (Chapter 2).

No proposal changes are proposed that would require the preparation of a preferred infrastructure report. No revisions have been made to the assessment or environmental management measures as described in the REF.

2. Response to issues

TfNSW received a total of 22 submissions, accepted up to 22 December 2021. Table 2-1 lists the respondents and each respondent's allocated submission number. The table also indicates where the issues from each submission have been addressed in Chapter 3 of this report.

Table 2-1: Respondents

Respondent	Submission No.	Section number where issues are addressed
Individual submission	1	2.4.3
Individual submission	2	2.3, 2.4.1
Individual submission	3	2.2
Individual submission	4	2.2, 2.4.1
Individual submission	5	2.4.2
Individual submission	6	2.5
Individual submission	7	2.4.2, 2.4.3
Individual submission	8	2.2, 2.3, 2.4.1, 2.4.3
Individual submission	9	2.2, 2.3
Individual submission	10	2.2, 2.3, 2.4.3
Individual submission	11	2.2
Individual submission	12	2.2, 2.4.1, 2.4.3
Individual submission	13	2.4.3
Individual submission	14	2.4.3
Individual submission	15	2.2, 2.4.2
Individual submission	16	2.2, 2.4.2
Individual submission	17	2.6
Individual submission	18	2.2, 2.4.3
Individual submission	19	2.4.3
Individual submission	20	2.4.2, 2.4.3
Individual submission	21	2.4.2, 2.4.3
Individual submission	22	2.4.2

2.1 Overview of issues raised

A total of 22 submissions were received in response to the display of the REF. All submissions were received from the community, with no submissions received from any government agencies, businesses or associations.

Each submission has been examined individually to understand the issues being raised. The issues raised in each submission have been extracted and collated, and a corresponding response to each issue has been provided. Where similar issues have been raised in different submissions, only one response has been provided. The issues raised and the TfNSW response to these issues forms the basis of this chapter.

Of the submissions received, 18% were in support of the proposal, 27% objected to the proposal and 32% were partially supportive of the proposal. The remaining 23% of submissions offered no position on whether they supported or objected to the proposal.

The main issues raised by the community were:

- Rawsonville Bridge is an item of local heritage significance and provides social and economic value to the community
- The existing bridge should be retained as a footbridge
- The existing bridge should be maintained and continue to service traffic.

2.2 Non-Aboriginal heritage

Submission number(s)

3, 4, 8, 10, 11, 12, 15, 16, 18

Issue description

In summary, the respondents raised the following issues:

- Removal of the bridge would contribute to the loss of heritage value of the local community and Dubbo region
- Removal of the bridge would contribute to the loss of heritage bridges in NSW.

Response

TfNSW acknowledges that the existing bridge is an important local historical item and has considered this within the proposal as highlighted in Section 6.1.2 of the REF.

As discussed in section 6.1.3 of the REF, a Statement of Heritage Impact (SoHI) was completed for the proposal in December 2020 which assessed the heritage impact of removing the bridge and outlined potential mitigation measures to address loss of heritage value due to the removal of the bridge. The SoHI is supported by Heritage NSW as detailed in a letter provided in Appendix F of the REF.

As discussed in Section 1.1 of the REF, Rawsonville Bridge is identified in the Timber Truss Bridge Strategy as a listed bridge that would be removed following review of operability, technical rarity, technical and non-technical representativeness, community sentiment and financial viability of retainment. The removal of the bridge is consistent with the Timber Truss Bridge Strategy.

A heritage interpretation area is proposed to retain aspects of the heritage value of the bridge in accordance with the TfNSW Heritage Interpretation Strategy 2020 as discussed in Section 6.1.4 of the REF.

2.3 Social and economic impacts

Submission number(s)

2, 8, 9, 10

Issue description

- Removal of the bridge would contribute to the loss of social and economic value of the local community and Dubbo region

Response

While TfNSW acknowledges that Rawsonville Bridge may be used informally by the local community for social activities, such as photography and weddings, the use of the bridge as a pedestrian platform for such activities is outside of the original design purpose for the bridge. The bridge does not provide safe pedestrian access or other facilities such as viewing platforms or footpaths to safely conduct these activities. The bridge functions as a road bridge crossing the Macquarie River, and connects the surrounding businesses and residents to the wider road network.

The bridge is not associated with any existing or proposed footpaths or cycleways and does not provide formal car parking facilities for use by the community. The socio-economic impact of the proposal was assessed in Section 6.2 of the REF. Overall the proposal was found to deliver positive outcomes for local businesses and residents.

The proposal would result in increased accessibility and safety along Rawsonville Bridge Road, particularly for heavy and wide vehicles, such as agricultural machinery, which would otherwise be subject to a 45 km detour.

2.4 Needs and options considered

2.4.1 Retain bridge as footbridge

Submission number(s)

2, 4, 8, 12

Issue description

- Suggestion of repairing and maintaining the bridge for use as a footbridge following construction of the new bridge

Response

Timber bridges designed to carry road traffic can deteriorate rapidly when they are no longer in use. Retaining the bridge for cyclists and pedestrians would require significant works to ensure the bridge meets safety standards, requiring significant capital investment and ongoing maintenance costs.

The removal of the bridge is consistent with the Timber Truss Bridge Strategy which found the bridge could not be upgraded given its poor condition and high ongoing maintenance cost (refer Section 1.1 of the REF). Furthermore the cost of undertaking these maintenance and safety upgrades in order to retain the bridge for use as a footbridge could not be justified given the bridge is not connected to any existing footpaths or cycleways.

2.4.2 Retain bridge as road bridge

Submission number(s)

5, 7, 15, 16, 20, 21, 22

Issue description

- Suggestion of repairing and maintaining the bridge for continued use as a road bridge

Response

As discussed in Section 1.1 of the REF, the bridge is identified in the Timber Truss Bridge Strategy as a listed bridge that would be removed following review of operability, technical rarity, technical and non-technical representativeness, community sentiment and financial viability of retainment. Therefore, the removal of the bridge is consistent with the Timber Truss Bridge Strategy.

During the options phase of the proposal, TfNSW investigated multiple options to upgrade the bridge to address existing structural and safety issues. This investigation was supported by inspections which identified key structural issues and several components of the bridge as being in poor condition. The current and future road network requirement also exceed the design capabilities of the existing bridge, which is beyond its expected serviceable and operational life, as detailed in Section 2.4 of the REF.

Maintenance and retention of Rawsonville Bridge is not operationally or financially feasible. Furthermore, retention of the bridge would not meet the objectives of the proposal, such as providing a bridge appropriate for the current and future road use demands of Rawsonville Bridge Road and providing a bridge meeting structural and width standards, which are further detailed in Section 2.3.1 of the REF. As a result, the option of full replacement of the bridge is the preferred option.

2.4.3 Proposal support

Submission number(s)

1, 7, 8, 10, 12, 13, 14, 18, 19, 20, 21

Issue description

- Expressing support for the proposal due to improvements in road safety and route accessibility

Response

The support for the proposal due to improvements in road safety and route accessibility is noted.

2.5 Design

Submission number(s)

6

Issue description

- Question regarding location of new bridge

Response

As outlined in Section 3.2.3 of the REF, the new bridge would be located immediately upstream (eastward) of the existing bridge.

2.6 Other

Submission number(s)

17

Issue description

- Suggestion the bridge is an important walking and cycling connection

Response

The existing bridge encompasses a single lane of travel and does not have shoulders. The existing bridge does not provide dedicated footpaths or cycleways, as detailed in Section 2.2.2 of the REF.

As outlined in section 3.2.1 of the REF, the new bridge design would include two 3.5 m lanes with 1.0 m clear shoulders which would be suitable for use by cyclists. The wider deck and improved visibility in the approach spans would provide a safer passage for cyclists. There are no dedicated footpaths proposed for the new bridge given there are no footpaths along Rawsonville Bridge Road.

3. References

Roads and Maritime Services 2012, *Timber truss bridge conservation strategy, Submissions report and revised conservation strategy*

Roads and Maritime Services 2019, *Timber truss road bridges, Bridge update list*

Transport for NSW 2021, *Rawsonville Bridge Replacement Review of Environmental Factors*, available from: <https://roads-waterways.transport.nsw.gov.au/projects/rawsonville-bridge/index.html>

