HW9 NEW ENGLAND HIGHWAY - RAIL LEVEL CROSSING, SCONE: OPTIONS AND FEASIBILITY STUDY

Issues report

JULY 2013

RMS/Pub. 13.1347
Table of Contents

1. Introduction 3
   1.1 Purpose of this report 3
   1.2 Route options 4
      1.2.1 Option 1: New England Highway Bypass of Scone 4
      1.2.2 Modified Option 4: Road over rail bridge at Kelly Street level crossing 4
   1.3 Consultation objectives 5
   1.4 Data collection and analysis 5

2. Consultation 6
   2.1 Consultation activities 6
   2.2 Participation in consultation activities 7
      2.2.1 Community information session 7
   2.3 Responses and submissions received 8
   2.4 Media articles 9

3. Comments received 11
   3.1 Preference on options 11
   3.2 Comments on options 12
      3.2.1 Option 1: New England Highway Bypass of Scone 12
      3.2.2 Modified Option 4: Road over rail bridge at Kelly Street level crossing 12
   3.3 General comments 12

4. Conclusion and next steps 14

Appendix A – May 2013 Community Update
Appendix B – Letters Circulated to the Community
1. Introduction

In Scone, the Great Northern Railway intersects with the New England Highway (Kelly Street) and with Liverpool Street (a Regional road). These two level crossings are located approximately 500 – 600 metres apart. The Lower Hunter Transport Needs Study (Hyder Consulting, 2008) identified the level crossing on the New England Highway in Scone as a candidate project for infrastructure improvements within the short term (0 – 5 years) and recommended a grade separation.

In August 2011 Roads and Maritime Services (RMS), on behalf of the Australian Government, commenced an Options and Feasibility Study to consider the impact of rail operations on the New England Highway (Kelly Street) level crossing at Scone. RMS has been working with the community to determine a preferred option.

In May 2012 the Options Identification Report recommended four options for further development and consideration. The development of options identified two alternatives of one of the options, resulting in five options being brought forward.

In November 2012, these five options were displayed for community comment. Following close of comments on 30 November 2012, a Value Management Workshop was held on 11 December 2012. The purpose of this workshop was to consider the five options from a wide range of perspectives and evaluate the options against agreed and weighted criteria. The main outcome of the workshop was that two options were recommended for further consideration. The options for further consideration were:

- Option 1 (New England Highway bypass of Scone). This was considered the best performing option when assessed against road safety criteria, freight movement criteria and urban amenity criteria. Community feedback from the route options display in November 2012 indicated there was a preference shown for Option 1.
- A modified Option 4 (in town option). This option incorporates aspects of Council’s proposal (a road over rail bridge at the Kelly Street railway crossing) and was considered the best performing option when assessed for providing best access for emergency services.

These options were determined the most balanced when considering social, environmental, economic and engineering issues. The workshop participants agreed Options 2, 3 and 5 were the least preferred options because they did not perform as well as Option 1 and a modified Option 4 against the assessment criteria and project objectives.

Since the Value Management Workshop, RMS has further reviewed the two options considering:

- Wider community comments received during the display of the route options.
- Outcomes of the Value Management Workshop.
- Outcomes of technical investigations, including findings from a technical options assessment workshop held in February 2013.

It is recognised that both options would remove emergency services response constraints through the provision of a road bridge over the railway, should the remaining public level crossings be blocked.

To give the community and stakeholders an opportunity for a final say, the two options were displayed for further comment from 10 May to the 7 June 2013.

On 27 May 2013, part way through the comment period, Council proposed a combined option which included a modification to Option 1 and a local traffic road over rail bridge at Kelly Street. This proposal is referred to herein as modified Option 1.

1.1 Purpose of this report

This report describes the community consultation undertaken in conjunction with the public display of the two viable options for the Scone level crossing options and feasibility study. The options were presented to the community at a staffed display held on Thursday, 30 May 2013 from 11.30am to
2.30pm. The Project Manager was also available for appointments to talk one on one with property owners to discuss how they may be affected. Community comments received on these options will be considered before a final decision is made on the preferred option.

The purpose of this report is to assist RMS in the decision making process with respect to selecting a preferred route. This report:

- Describes activities undertaken during the submissions period.
- Identifies community and stakeholder preferences on the options.
- Summarises the comments received by RMS during the submission period.
- Outlines the next steps in selecting a preferred option.

Section 3 of this report provides an overview of the comments and preferences received for the displayed options, Option 1 and modified Option 4.

1.2 Route options

The two route options placed on display were:
- Modified Option 4: Road over rail bridge at Kelly Street level crossing.

The May 2013 Community Update provided a description of each option. A copy of the Community Update is provided in Appendix A.

A modified Option 1 and local traffic road over rail bridge at Kelly Street was discussed by Council and RMS on 27 May 2013. Some members of the community have commented on this option during the submission period.

Descriptions on the two options displayed by RMS for community comment are below.

1.2.1 Option 1: New England Highway bypass of Scone

Option 1 is a bypass of the Scone town centre. In summary, Option 1 has the following characteristics:
- Length of bypass is approximately 4.2 kilometres.
- The proposed route traverses the floodplain. It is anticipated the bypass would have a one in twenty year flood immunity.
- Design height over the existing rail line is eight metres, with an embankment width of 65 metres on the southern approach.
- The design height at St Aubins Street is two metres above ground level within the flood plain.
- Liverpool Street would intersect with the bypass, allowing local traffic access to both sides of town.

The benefits of Option 1 include:
- Option 1 performs strongly against the objectives of the project. It best aligns with the long term plans and strategies of the NSW and Australian governments.
- A road bypass of Scone would support freight and long distance travel important to the NSW and national economy as part of the Sydney-Brisbane National Land Transport Network and Gunnedah Basin to Port of Newcastle link.
- Bypassing Scone supports the NSW Long Term Transport Master Plan objective to provide essential access for regional NSW by providing town bypasses to improve travel within towns, reduce delays caused by freight traffic, increase safety, and increase the amenity of towns through reduced noise, lower emissions and less traffic.

Option 1 received community preference during the November 2012 public display.

1.2.2 Modified Option 4: Road over rail bridge at Kelly Street level crossing

This option incorporates aspects of the option endorsed by Council at its November 2012 meeting (Option 6 from November 2012 display) and the proposed alignment is similar to that chosen for Option
4. The modified Option 4 is based on minimising the impact on the local environment, improving road safety and reducing the project cost.

If an in town option is adopted Council also propose an alternative heavy vehicle route along Guernsey Street, crossing the railway at a new rail level crossing on Kingdon Street and rejoining the highway near Mount Street.

In summary, modified Option 4 has the following characteristics:

- Design height over the rail line is eight metres with approach grades of four per cent and six per cent.
- Construction is a combination of earth embankment and vertical retaining walls minimising the footprint on the landscape.
- Pavement width and configuration is for a single through lane for highway traffic with turning protection at Muffett Street, Guernsey Street and Belmore Street for improved local traffic flows.
- A roundabout at Susan Street, traffic lights at Muffett Street and turning lanes at Guernsey Street.

The benefits of modified Option 4 include:

- Modified Option 4 would incorporate aspects of Council's proposal. It is considered a less expensive, in-town solution that includes a road over rail bridge at the Kelly Street railway level crossing.
- Modified Option 4 would provide better access for emergency services and local trips.
- Adoption of modified Option 4 would provide satisfactory traffic performance in the long term.

A modified route for Option 1 was put forward by Council at a meeting with RMS held on 27 May 2013 in Scone. Modified Option 1 is intended to address community concern by providing a shorter, re-aligned bypass and unrestricted pedestrian and vehicle (emergency vehicles and local traffic) access over the railway in town. On Monday 24 June 2013 the Upper Hunter Shire Council made a resolution to adopt a comprehensive solution for the Scone Bypass which includes a modified Option 1 plus a local traffic rail overpass bridge at Kelly Street as Council's preferred option. If this option cannot be fully funded from the $90m budget, Upper Hunter Shire Council's required option out of option 1 and modified option 4 is modified option 4 in its entirety.

1.3 Consultation objectives

The overall aim of the RMS consultation process is to ensure that the development of the preferred route involves the community and stakeholders and considers their interests.

Objectives of the display included:

- Informing the community about the options selection progress and the options being considered by RMS.
- Raising community awareness of the comment period and seeking community feedback on the two viable options displayed.
- Ensuring the community input and concerns are considered in the selection of a preferred option.

1.4 Data collection and analysis

Each submission received was given a submission number. Comments were reviewed and analysed based on:

- Option preference.
- Comments made on options.

Data collection and collation was based on interpretation of submissions. Where comments or statements were not clear, collation and analysis was based on inference, interpretation and context of the submission.
2. Consultation

2.1 Consultation activities

Consultation activities undertaken during the display and submission period are described in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Consultation activities undertaken to support the submission period.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Detail</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meetings with landowners and businesses</td>
<td>One meeting with Council and the Board of Directors of the Scone Golf Club.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertisements and announcements</td>
<td>Advertisements placed in:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The Newcastle Herald (17 May 2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Scone Advocate (30 May 2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Update May 2013</td>
<td>The May 2013 Community Update outlined two viable options displayed to the community. It was distributed to 2,600 residents and businesses in Scone, Satur, Parkville and Wingen. The update is provided in Appendix A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback Forms</td>
<td>Available at the staffed community information session held on 30 May 2013.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staffed display and information session.</td>
<td>30 May 2013                                   11:30am – 2:30pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conference Room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scone Motor Inn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website</td>
<td>The comment period was from 10 May 2013 to 7 June 2013.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>There were 748 views from 548 unique visitors in that timeframe.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.2 Participation in consultation activities

A summary of participation in consultation activities is provided in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2 Summary of participation in activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Information session</td>
<td>Approximately 120 attendees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meetings with landowners and businesses</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.2.1 Community information session

A community information session was held on 30 May 2013 at the Scone Motor Inn. Approximately 120 community members attended the session, including a number of Council representatives.

At the beginning of the information session, the presentation previously given to Council on 27 May 2013 was made to the group. The presentation gave a brief background of the project, outlined the two viable options on display including the benefits of each and addressed concerns that had previously been raised about both options.
The presentation was generally well received, however there were some questions during the presentation regarding potential flood impacts of Option 1 and options that had been discounted from further assessment. At the end of the presentation, Council’s General Manager outlined Council's proposal for a 'two bridge solution' – Option 1 with a modified alignment through the Scone Golf Club and a local road bridge over the railway at Kelly Street. This has been referred to as modified Option 1.

The presentation and group discussion ran from approximately 11:45am to 1:00pm, with the remaining time available for individual questions and comments. Issues raised at the information session related to:

- Support for Council's proposal of a modified Option 1 and RMS's position on the proposal.
- Concerns regarding modified Option 4 and the heavy vehicle alternative route proposed by Council.
- Property acquisition process, timing and the potential for full or partial acquisitions.
- Potential flooding impacts of Option 1.
- Potential to move Option 1 a further 200 metres west into the floodplain to reduce impact on the residents of West Scone.
- The certainty of announced funding and the opportunity of mining companies paying for the project.

Given the Federal government’s funding announcement in conjunction with the May 2013 Budget days preceding the information session, there appeared to be a growing sense from some parts of the community that Option 1 was more likely to be selected as the preferred option. As a result, numerous questions related to the development of Option 1 were raised by the attendees, particularly by people directly affected by the option.

2.3 Responses and submissions received

A total of 81 submissions were received during the submission period, addressing the two displayed options and modified Option 1.

In some cases multiple submissions were received, or more than one method of communication was used by members of the community. This typically related to individuals adding comments to submissions already made. In such cases these were logged as one submission but method of contact was noted and is accounted for in Table 2.3.

Where more than one person signed a submission or feedback form these were logged as one submission but individual preferences and issues on each option were considered individually (see Section 3.1).

Responses and comments received during the submission period were through various forms of communication, the most popular being email. Table 2.3 provides a summary of the method of communication used by the community and stakeholders to provide feedback.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method of Communication</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Telephone calls</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback forms</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emailed submissions*</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fax</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>93^</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Includes emailed letters.

^ In some cases multiple submissions were received, or more than one method of communication was used by members of the community, but was logged as one submission. Table 2.3 notes method of contact; hence the number of contacts is greater than the 81 submissions received.
In April and May 2013 three letters were circulated to residents of the Upper Hunter Shire Council regarding the options. These letters were from:

- Bill Rose, Scone resident.
- The Honourable Joel Fitzgibbon, MP, Federal Member for Hunter.
- Michael Johnsen, Mayor, Upper Hunter Shire Council.

Although these letters were not formal submissions, they have been acknowledged by RMS. These letters are provided in Appendix B.

Council also held a public meeting on 8 May 2013. At this meeting Council presented their endorsed proposal (Option 6), including the proposed heavy vehicle alternate route via Guernsey Street, and Council’s issues with the options displayed in November 2012. The presentation from this meeting was available on Council’s website during the majority of the display period.

One petition signed by approximately 160 people was included in Council’s submission. This showed support for modified Option 6, Council’s proposal endorsed in November 2012, as presented on the 8 May 2013.

2.4 Media articles

A total of 21 media articles appeared in local newspapers, namely The Scone Advocate and Newcastle Herald, from 25 April 2013 until the end of the submission period on 7 June 2013.

Four radio interviews with the General Manager or Mayor of the Upper Hunter Shire Council were broadcasted on ABC Upper Hunter and 2NM Muswellbrook

An example of a media article is provided below.
Solutions on show for Scone rail issue

By FRANCES THOMPSON

OPTIONS proposed to solve Scone’s rail level crossing bottleneck will be on display today at an information session at Scone Motor Inn from 11.30am to 2.30pm.

Roads and Maritime Services staff will make a presentation at 12.30pm and answer questions.

The presentation will also be on their website.

The two options are an overpass to allow free movement of traffic across the rail line; and a bypass.

Upper Hunter Shire Council favours the overpass with a future bypass.

The rail line runs through the centre of Scone and with increasing coal and freight traffic, residents find there are long delays and emergency services are disrupted as trains pass.

Scone Truck ’N’ Train spokesman, businessman Peter Dulson, described the overpass as a “cheap” and “band-aid” response.

He said that Scone needed works that removed traffic disruption and took the thousands of daily heavy truck movements out of the main street.

He said an appropriate proposal was to divert the rail line away from the town and turn the rail corridor into a heavy vehicle bypass.

Public consultation on the options closes next Friday, June 7.

More information is available at rms.nsw.gov.au.

Figure 2.3 Article from the Newcastle Herald dated 30 May 2013 (p15).
3. Comments received

3.1 Preference of options

This report concerns the two options - Option 1 and modified Option 4 - presented to the community for display and comment. It also includes preferences received on modified Option 1.

The option which received the greater support from the submissions received is Option 1. A summary of route option preferences from individual submissions received is provided in Table 3.1 and Figure 3.1.

Where individual respondents provided feedback several times stating the same preference, the preference was counted only once.

The number of preferences in Table 3.1 exceeds the number of submissions as a feedback form was circulated at the community information session that numerous members of the community signed. This was counted as one submission but individual preferences where counted.

Table 3.1 Route option preferences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Number of preferences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Option 1</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modified Option 1</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modified Option 4</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Stated</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>90</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.1 Route option preferences.

It should be noted that the submission received from the Upper Hunter Shire Council included a petition signed by approximately 160 persons indicating support for Council’s proposal (Option 6). The petition attached to Council’s submission is acknowledged by RMS but is not included in the number of individual preferences received. These preferences may not be an accurate representation of
community and stakeholder views as the petition was commenced prior to the consultation period, and
it did not capture issues with the options under consideration and may be based on mis-information.

It is important to note RMS follows issues based decision making. This means that although
preferences on options are noted, RMS will examine the issues raised throughout the consultation
period using the multi criteria assessment process to assist in identifying a preferred option.

3.2 Comments on options

The comments received noted both positive and negative aspects of each option. These are
summarised below.

3.2.1 Option 1: New England Highway bypass of Scone

The main issues cited as reasons to favour this option:

- Removes heavy vehicles from the Scone town centre.
- Option is not short sighted. It takes into consideration the long term planning for Scone.
- Provides access for emergency vehicles.
- Improves town amenity.
- Has minimal impact on significant Scone heritage.
- Socio-economic benefits. Scone would be considered a nicer place for tourists to stop.

The main issues cited as reasons not to favour this option:

- The location of the bypass is in flood prone areas.
- Situated on soft soils.
- Impact on recreational facilities in the area, namely the golf course and the Bill Rose Sports
  Complex.
- Although the bypass may remove heavy vehicles from the town, local traffic and parking
  problems would still exist.
- Impact on Scone Grammar School, and student access and pedestrian safety to recreational
  facilities.
- Impact on businesses due to the loss of trade from passing traffic.

There were numerous suggestions relating to design changes that would minimise impacts related to
Option 1. The most common suggestion was moving the bypass to the west to minimise flooding
impacts. Several submissions also suggested an underpass to access recreational facilities and for
pedestrian safety.

3.2.2 Modified Option 4: Road over rail bridge at Kelly Street level crossing

The main issues cited as reasons to favour this option:

- Provides for emergency vehicle access.
- Cost is cheaper than Option 1.

The main issues cited as reasons not to favour this option:

- Does not remove heavy vehicles from the Scone town centre.
- Visual impact on residents as a result of the overbridge structure.
- Impact on residents during construction and operation.
- Increase in noise and emissions to nearby residents.
- This option was not seen as a strategic long term plan to solve traffic problems in Scone.
- Impact on businesses such as the RSL club and the industrial area.

3.3 General comments

A modified route for Option 1 was put forward by Council at a meeting with RMS held on 27 May 2013
in Scone, note the recorded preferences cannot be seen as a representation of community and
stakeholder views. Modified Option 1 is intended to address community concern by providing a shorter,
re-aligned bypass and unrestricted pedestrian and vehicle (emergency vehicles and local traffic)
access over the railway in town.
On Monday 24 June 2013 the Upper Hunter Shire Council made a resolution to adopt a comprehensive solution for the Scone Bypass which includes a modified Option 1 plus a local traffic rail overpass bridge at Kelly Street as Council’s preferred option. If this option cannot be fully funded from the $90m budget, Upper Hunter Shire Council’s required option out of Option 1 and modified Option 4 is modified Option 4 in its entirety.

On 4 June 2013, RMS issued a media release stating it will continue to liaise with Council when considering an option that combines a bypass and a local bridge over the railway in town in order to address Council concerns.

The issues raised by the community and shown in this report are similar to those discussed during the last round of community consultation in November 2012 (refer to December 2012 Issues Report). The only new point raised by the community refers to Option 1 New England Highway bypass of Scone (Section 3.2.1 above) – Option is not short sighted. It takes into consideration the long term planning for Scone.
4. Conclusion and next steps

The submissions received during the viable options consultation period indicates strong community support for Option 1.

It is important to note RMS follows issues based decision making. This means that although preferences on options are noted, RMS will examine the issues raised throughout the consultation period using the multi criteria assessment process to assist in identifying a preferred option. RMS will recommend a preferred option to the NSW and Australian governments, taking into consideration the outcomes of the route assessment process and public consultation periods.

Prior to recommending a preferred option further work will be undertaken to consider modified Option 1 as proposed by the Upper Hunter Shire Council. Key considerations will include:

- Impacts on Scone Golf Club and other properties.
- Affordability of modified Option 1 in the context of the committed funding of $90 million.
Appendix A – Community Update May 2013
Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) has identified two viable options to address the impact of rail operations on the New England Highway (Kelly Street) rail level crossing in Scone. Your feedback is invited by 7 June 2013.

This update shows the two viable options, outlines the benefits of each option and describes the next steps for the project. If you have any questions or concerns please contact us. Contact details are on the back page.

—Phil Davidson, Project Manager

Process to identify the two viable options

RMS is working with the community to identify a preferred option to address the impact of rail operations on the New England Highway (Kelly Street) rail level crossing in Scone.

In May 2012 the Options Identification Report recommended four long term options for further development and consideration. Development of options identified two alternatives of one of the options, resulting in five options being brought forward.

In November 2012, the five options were displayed for community comment. Following close of comments on 30 November 2012, a value management workshop was held on 11 December 2012.

The purpose of the workshop was to consider the five options from a wide range of perspectives and evaluate the options against agreed and weighted criteria.

The main outcome of the workshop was that two options were recommended for further consideration.

• Option 1 (the New England Highway bypass) was considered the best performing when assessed against road safety criteria, freight movement criteria and urban amenity criteria. Community feedback from the route options display indicated there was a strong preference shown for Option 1.

• A modified Option 4 (in town option) incorporating aspects of Council’s proposal (a road over rail bridge at the Kelly Street railway crossing) was considered the best performing option when assessed for providing best access for emergency services.

Both options were recommended for further consideration as they were assessed as performing similarly on benefit and cost and were the most balanced when considering social, environmental, economic and engineering issues.

The workshop participants agreed Options 2, 3 and 5 were the least preferred options because they did not perform as well as Option 1 and a modified Option 4 against the assessment criteria and project objectives.

Since the value management workshop, RMS has further reviewed the two options considering:

• Wider community comments received during the display of the route options.

• Outcomes of the value management workshop.

• Outcomes of technical investigations.

Both options would remove emergency services response constraints in the instance of a blockage of the two public level crossings.
The review undertaken concurred with the outcomes of the value management workshop with respect to Options 2, 3 and 5 and identified two viable options.

- Option 1 (New England Highway bypass of Scone) performs strongly against the objectives of the project and best aligns to the long term plans and strategies of the NSW and Australian governments.
  - A road bypass of Scone would support freight and long distance travel important to the NSW and National economy as part of the Sydney-Brisbane National Land Transport Network and Gunnedah Basin to Port of Newcastle link.
  - Bypassing Scone supports the NSW Long Term Transport Master Plan objective to provide essential access for regional NSW by providing town bypasses to improve travel within towns, reduce delays caused to freight traffic, increase safety, and increase the amenity of towns through reduced noise, lower emissions, and less traffic.

- Option 1 provides opportunity for further significant improvements to the amenity of the town as traffic and heavy vehicles using Kelly Street would be reduced.

- Option 1 would result in a greater improvement to road safety through town.

- Option 1 would result in a greater improvement to the efficiency of the New England Highway.

- Option 1 received strong community support during the November 2012 public display.

- Modified in town Option 4 is a less expensive option.

- If an in town option is adopted Council also proposes a heavy vehicle alternative route along Guernsey Street crossing the railway at a new rail level crossing at Kingdon Street and rejoining the highway near Mount Street.

- Adoption of modified Option 4 would provide satisfactory traffic performance in the long term, precluding construction of a town bypass for the foreseeable future.

Further development of either option will take into consideration the concerns and suggestions of Council and other stakeholders including intersection layouts, changes to Kelly Street, flooding and drainage implications, the impact on community facilities and signposting of heavy vehicle alternatives routes.
Netball courts at the Bill Rose Sports Complex to be relocated Left in/Left out to Kingdon Street New route for highway No access Modified access to Bill Rose Sports Complex New road to Kingdon Street 80km/h speed limit Bridge over rail line Main Northern Rail Line Main street Kelly Street Liverpool Street Kingdon Street New England Highway (existing) Modified Option 4 Note: Intersection layouts to be determined during concept design development.
Next steps to finalising a preferred option
Community comments received on the two viable options will be considered before a final decision is made.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AUG 2011</td>
<td>Initial community meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAY 2012</td>
<td>Options Identification Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOV 2012</td>
<td>Display route options</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEC 2012</td>
<td>Value management workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAY 2013</td>
<td>Identify and display two viable options for community comment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Upcoming community consultation activities
A staffed display will be held on Thursday, 30 May 2013 from 11.30am to 2.30pm at Scone Motor Inn Conference room.
The project manager will also be available for appointments to talk one on one with property owners and how they may be affected.

Please send us your feedback by:
Phoning: 02 4924 0332
Emailing: philip.davidson@rms.nsw.gov.au
Writing to: Phil Davidson, Locked Bag 30
Newcastle NSW 2300

For more information
The project website is regularly updated and contains copies of the reports undertaken on the project and community consultation.
Comments on the two viable options are invited by 7 June 2013.
Appendix B – Letters Circulated to the Community
To the residents of the Upper Hunter Shire,

NEW Heavy Vehicle Alternative Route

The community has been asked by the NSW Government to have an input into the impact of rail operations on the New England Highway through Scone. Please accept the following as a guide to your thoughts on a solution for Scone’s road – rail congestion.

Scone, in the NSW Upper Hunter Valley, is a town divided. Approximately 60 per cent of Scone’s population lines to the east of the railway and 40 per cent to the west. Two level railway crossings split the town. These railway crossings traverse a main artery in the NSW Hunter Valley coal industry transport system.

RMS Options and Feasibility Study

The Upper Hunter Shire Council made initial submissions to the government for the construction of an overpass at Kelly Street that would not only alleviate increasing waiting times at the level rail crossing but provide access for emergency services vehicles on both sides of Scone.

In August 2011 Roads and Maritime Services (RMS), on behalf of the Australian Government, commenced an Options and Feasibility Study to consider the impacts of rail operations on the New England Highway (Kelly Street) rail level crossing at Scone, and identify a preferred solution.

This $2m Study produced 5 options that have now been narrowed down to two by the NSW Transport, Roads and Maritime Services, these are:

Option One: (the New England Highway bypass) was considered the best performing when assessed against road safety criteria, freight movement criteria and urban amenity criteria.

Option Two: A modified option 4 (in town option) incorporating aspects of Council’s proposal (a road over rail bridge at the Kelly Street railway crossing) was considered the best performing option when assessed for providing best access for emergency services.

The RMS stated that the preferred option would be selected by assessing which option represents the most appropriate balance between functional, social, environmental, engineering and cost factors.

Scone vs. the weight of coal

Please consider the following.

Newcastle is the largest coal exporting port in the world. The volume of coal moved through the port is opined to more than double to 275mtpa by 2025. Coal exports currently represent 95% of the total volume of freight through the Port.

The demand for coal continues to grow. A report in last month’s The Sydney Morning Herald states that Japan plans to revert to coal-fired power plants in the wake of the Fukushima nuclear plant meltdown in 2011 whilst China, India, Germany and the United Kingdom have also increased their coal consumption in recent years.

The NSW coal industry is desperate to increase the State’s rail capacity to deal with this market demand but central to efficient coal haulage is an unimpeded transport corridor i.e. efficient road, rail and rural town interaction.

Infrastructure NSW has recommended that targeted investments be made to improve local infrastructure in coal community towns; with particular reference to Scone that according to the Hunter Valley Research Foundation will soon be “cut off” for up to 4 hours per day due to the projected increase in the number of coal trains.

With the Gunnedah Narrabri basin home to 40% of the State’s coal resource the Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) predicts that coal haulage along the Narrabri-Muswellbrook line will increase from 10 million tonnes of coal per annum in 2010 (mtpa) to 55 mtpa in 2018; an increase that will increase Scone traffic delays at the level crossings from 1 hour 45 minutes per day to 6 hours 40 minutes each day in less than 10 years.

Train Speed Increase

These extensive delays are clearly not practicable for the proper functioning of a town or its residents. Additionally, ARTC plans to reconfigure the rail line at Scone so as to increase the speed of trains traversing the town, adding to the already high risk situation for pedestrians and motorists alike.

A clear infrastructure plan must take into account Scone being dissected by a major rail/freight traffic corridor. This corridor includes dangerous rail crossings and halts emergency vehicle access East/West in both directions for considerable periods of time each day.

Solution Puzzling

The option one proposed RMS is puzzling from every angle. A bypass will cost dramatically more to build and faces considerably higher regulatory standards than a heavy vehicle alternate route.

The proposed RMS route for a bypass cuts through Scone’s well utilised Sports Complex and golf course and traverses a flood plain, unlike the NEW alternative route which skirts the sports complex (see back page).

Upper Hunter Shire Council – a Council that represents its citizens and significantly, one that was not involved by the government in their decision making process - has stated its preference for a concurrent approach: an overpass and a heavy vehicle alternate route with southern overpass.

Greatest Challenge Since Rail

The current challenges in relation to transport infrastructure in the Upper Hunter are the greatest since the construction of the Great North Road (1826 – 1832) and the arrival of the railway (1871).

I encourage the government to deliver a long term solution rather than a band aid. The town requires a concurrent approach: the development of an alternate route for heavy vehicles (a route to be about 500m further west and on higher ground than the current proposed route) plus the addition of two overpasses across the railway line given the number of predicted train movements in the next 15 years and the fact that 40% of any day will see at least one crossing closed. This is clearly not the most inexpensive option but is the one that best addresses the very real present and future transport problems confronting the Scone community.

Locally there has also been an increase in heavy vehicle traffic. To the North of Scone lies the town’s cattle sale yards that currently support 5000 truck movements per annum. Primo meat works is now 75% overseas owned and has moved to a 900 kill a day and is moving to 2 shifts; a substantial local operation that with their export license could, in the foreseeable future increase their truck movements past 7000 per annum. It is not practical or safe for that amount of heavy vehicle traffic to be funnelled through the centre of the town and in the fullness of time this industrial area will no doubt merit a separate overpass.

Alternative Route

A heavy vehicle alternate route will assist with the significant increase in heavy vehicle traffic in the past decade and the expectation that with the completion of the F3 to Branxton further increases in heavy traffic will occur on the New England Highway.

Adopting a heavy vehicle alternate route rather than a bypass will however assist Scone’s shopping precinct to develop in a similar manner to Tamworth and Parkes. An inappropriate measure will lead to the decline and ultimate demise of the Scone retail area.

A heavy vehicle alternate route on its own will certainly also not solve the problem of the two level railway crossings in the town.

An overpass will deal with the very real issue of the significant increase in coal tonnage being moved along the rail network that transects Scone. Clearly one overpass will also not accommodate future traffic densities however.

Funding

I strongly believe that funding of this project should be subject to ongoing discussions with all stakeholders including the mining companies active in the Gunnedah basin. Just as road users pay to use certain roadways - users of a train line should face a similar levy system if a number of towns’ existing transport infrastructure has to be fundamentally altered to allow the unimpeded movement of coal and other freight. For example a levy of less than 50 cents per tonne (ARTC tonnes) for coal being moved on the Narrabri - Muswellbrook line could accrue in excess of $100m (to 2018) for the government to assist with funding transport infrastructure projects.

As a tax payer I am aggrieved that the $2m outlay for this critical Transport Study appears to have been ill spent and I would question why external consultants were not involved.

Proposed Bypass on collision course with community sentiment

1. With the Gunnedah-Narrabri basin home to 40% of the State’s coal resource the Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) predicts that coal haulage along the Narrabri-Muswellbrook line will increase from 10 million tonnes of coal per annum in 2010 (mtpa) to 55 mtpa in 2018; an increase that will increase Scone traffic delays at the level crossings from 1 hour 45 minutes per day to 6 hours 40 minutes each day in less than 10 years. These extensive delays are clearly not practicable for the proper functioning of a town or its residents.

2. A clear infrastructure plan must take into account Scone being dissected by a major rail/freight traffic corridor. This corridor includes dangerous rail crossings and halts emergency vehicle access East/West in both directions for considerable periods of time each day.

3. We need a concurrent solution that incorporates a heavy vehicle alternate route and multiple overpasses.

4. A bypass will take all through traffic out of town and the responsibility for Kelly Street will then fall back on the Upper Hunter Shire Council. A bypass is not an option, but an alternative route is.

5. A heavy vehicle alternate route needs to be at least 200m further West of current indicators so as to utilise higher ground and not cut through the town’s sporting complex.

6. We need multiple overpasses (Kelly Street and South of town to support a heavy vehicle alternate route).

Immediate Action

1. The Federal government will fund 80% of the future traffic infrastructure plan with the State government funding the remaining 20%. Given a federal election has been called for 14 September the federal government must go into care taker mode. Let’s ensure an independent study is completed by September as it clear from the RMS ‘solutions’ that an alternate vehicle route is not workable on the current route that has been drawn on the map.

2. There is a need for a comprehensive study of the floodplain and this should take about 3 months at a cost of about $60,000.

On this issue of flooding we must remember we’re talking about the Kingdon Ponds, not the Masisalippi River.

3. In the meantime adopt a through lane and browsing lane in Kelly Street to ensure heavy vehicles are kept in the right hand lane and parking becomes safer for residents and visitors alike. A decision can be made on this immediately, paint laid next week, then the main street of Scone can trial what has proven successful in Shepparton.

I appreciate the opportunity to put these matters before you and would ask that you give these matters your favourable consideration.

Bill Rose - Scone
The Hon Joel Fitzgibbon MP
FEDERAL MEMBER FOR HUNTER
CHIEF GOVERNMENT WHIP

17 April 2013

Scone NSW 2337

Dear [Name],

Scone Level Railway Crossing

In July 2010 I stood at the Scone level railway crossing in Kelly Street with Lee Watts and announced the Federal Government would provide NSW Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) with almost $2 million to plan and design a solution to Scone’s level railway crossing problem.

For me, it all seemed pretty simple; “design an overpass and I will in turn, chase the money to build it.”

I am frustrated and concerned that almost three years on and round after round of community consultation, the RMS is poised to recommend the town be by-passed (their Option 1). If this is what the community wants, I’ll support it.

But I’d like to make a few points about the by-pass option:

1. It will cost at least $30 million more than an overpass, making the money harder to secure and it will take longer to build;

2. It will require a flood study which could take years;

3. We will still have a level railway crossing on Kelly Street; and

4. It will take all through traffic out of town with potential adverse impacts on local businesses.

I want a solution that works, is realistically affordable, and can be built in a timely manner. I still believe that the best solution is a Kelly Street overpass.

But I would like your views and I invite you to express them by contacting my office (see below).

Your feedback by May 3 will be appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Joel Fitzgibbon MP

Electorate Office
3 Edward Street, PO Box 526
CESSNOCK NSW 2325
Phone: 02 4991 0022
Facsimile: 02 4991 2322

Canberra Office
Suite RG 97.3 Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600
Phone: 02 6277 4083
Facsimile: 02 6277 2309

Follow me on Twitter and Facebook
23 April, 2013

TO THE HOUSEHOLDER

Scone Railway Level Crossings

Council is aware of the letters sent to householders in Scone and district from the Hon Joel Fitzgibbon, Federal Member for Hunter, seeking views on the two remaining options being investigated by the NSW Roads & Maritime Services with funding provided by the Federal Government.

Whilst your Council and the community have been kept in the dark about any preferred recommendation from the NSW Roads & Maritime Services, that the Local Member is obviously aware of, Council agrees that an overpass and heavy vehicle alternative route is the best option, for the reasons outlined below.

Council does not support a bypass option on its own, that costs $90 plus million and leaves the town still with two level crossings, clogged up by more trains and local traffic, while all highway traffic is diverted around the town, across the floodplain, through the Sports Complex and Golf Course.

No flood study has been done, which could take years to complete and then prove the bypass is not viable, meanwhile more trains and more clogging of streets and highway. The bypass will take all traffic from the highway, taking Scone off the map, just like Bulahdelah on the Pacific Highway, Scone businesses will miss out.

For nearly half the cost, Council’s proposal is to construct a Rail Overpass on the highway replacing the level crossing implementing a browsing lane concept for all of Kelly Street and approach roundabouts at Kingdon and Susan Streets and provide a Heavy Vehicle Alternative Route so the trucks can go around the CBD, not through it.

Why would anyone, including the Federal Government, spend twice the money and NOT fix the problem of the effect of coal trains on the town of Scone, for local traffic and local business.

While a bypass might seem attractive to some, to get trucks out of the CBD and provide an alternative for emergency vehicles, but at what cost to local businesses and local traffic.

With both level crossings closed by trains, no-one local will drive south out of town past the Electricity Substation to get onto the bypass and over the rail line then back to Liverpool Street; they will wait for the train to go through.

The bypass is actually over 1km longer than sticking to the Highway, so with the trucks knowing where trains are by their radios, will they actually take the long way around anyway?
The overpass option in town is the better option for emergency access with direct connection over the rail line without having to divert out of town to get over the rail line then back into town. The overpass option is the best option for local traffic to provide unimpeded access over the rail line with the predicted increased train numbers of 500% in the next three years.

The Australian Rail Track Corporation also proposes to reconfigure the rail lines through Scone so as to increase the speed of trains through Scone. With both rail level crossings remaining with the RMS bypass option, these crossings will become more dangerous for local traffic and pedestrians, with no alternative.

The overpass option has the least impact on private property and community facilities, while the bypass option cuts through the Golf Course and the Bill Rose Sports Complex (with no plans to relocate) as well as creating a new road corridor across the floodplain between Aberdeen Street and Satur.

Council would urge all residents and households that received a letter from the Hon Joel Fitzgibbon to reply to him, supporting Council’s proposal to construct an Overpass and not a Bypass.

For more details on Council’s proposal go to the website www.upperhunter.nsw.gov.au or call in to Council’s offices and look at the display or talk to a member of staff.

Michael Johnsen
MAYOR