Gerringong upgrade
Princes Highway
Review of Environmental Factors
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Gerringong upgrade
Review of Environmental Factors
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        Review of Environmental Factors

Approval and authorisation

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© Roads and Traffic Authority
Executive summary

The proposal

The Roads and Traffic Authority of NSW (RTA) is proposing to upgrade the Princes Highway between Mount Pleasant and Toolijooa Road - the Gerringong upgrade (the proposal). The proposal is part of the RTA's program to upgrade the Princes Highway, providing increased road safety and traffic efficiency in the south coast region.

The proposal would include the following key features:

- Widening the Princes Highway to a four lane divided carriageway between Mount Pleasant and Toolijooa Road (7.5 km in length).
- Grade-separated interchange at Rose Valley Road incorporating four-way traffic access to and from Gerringong via a bridge over the highway, a two-way service road and overbridge spanning the South Coast Railway Line at Fern Street.
- Grade-separated interchange at Belinda Street providing four-way, flood free traffic access to and from Gerringong and incorporating a two-way service road running under the highway connecting to Willowvale Road.
- Bridge structure spanning a realigned Crooked River, incorporating Bailey's Road and an existing cattle underpass.
- Northbound climbing lane between Rose Valley Road and the top of Mount Pleasant.
- Southbound climbing lane for approximately 800 m from Belinda Street on ramp.
- Property acquisition and the setting of corridor boundaries for the provision of future widening to six lanes (three in each direction).
- Extensive drainage structures maintaining cross drainage flow in the low lying area of Omega Flat.
- Future augmentation to six lanes by widening to the outside of the carriageway at Omega Flat, Rose Valley Road interchange and north of Gerringong Bends.

Statutory and planning framework

Pursuant to clause 94 of State Environmental Planning Policy (Infrastructure) 2007 (ISEPP) development for the purpose of a road or road infrastructure facilities on behalf of a public authority may be carried out on any land without consent. As the proposal is for a road and road infrastructure facilities and is to be carried out on behalf of the RTA, it can be assessed under Part 5 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (EP&A Act).

Community and stakeholder consultation

Community involvement has been an integral component of the proposal. At each stage of the proposal the consultation activities have proactively informed the community and stakeholders with the aim of increasing public understanding and participation in consultation activities. This ensures the proposal benefits from the input of local knowledge and priorities and the project team gains greater insight into issues, potential mitigation strategies and opportunities to improve proposal outcomes.
Based on the International Association for Public Participation Australasia (IAP2) Public Participation Spectrum, the consultation program has been designed to inform and engage the community and stakeholders in a constructive, transparent and fair process.

Need for the proposal

The proposal is needed because traffic growth of the magnitude forecast over the next 20 years would place significant operational demands on the existing highway between Mount Pleasant and Toolijooa Road operating at an unacceptable level of service (LoS) F.

Travel times and delays would increase as the level of congestion increases over time resulting in economic impacts, especially to freight and tourist traffic travelling either to local areas or long distance. Crash analysis shows the existing highway has a fatality rate of 2.56 per 100 million vehicle kilometres (MVKM), almost four times the NSW average, highlighting the poor safety record of the highway in this area. Existing access points to Gerringong are less than desirable, with the northern access point over the South Coast Railway Line identified as number 20 in the NSW Government’s top 300 priority list for safety treatment of level crossings.

The proposal is one of the projects identified as necessary to support population growth and demographic change on the south coast in the State Infrastructure Strategy and is consistent with the aims and objectives of the NSW State Plan, Shoalhaven – An Enterprising Alternative (An Economic Development Strategy) 2005 and the Illawarra Regional Strategy 2007.

Options considered

Duplicating the Princes Highway to a four lane divided carriageway between Mount Pleasant and Toolijooa Road, including two climbing lanes and two grade-separated interchanges has been selected as the preferred option for the proposal. The preferred route best meets the route selection study objectives.

Route options

The preferred option for the proposal was identified as part of the larger Princes Highway upgrade program between Gerringong to Bomaderry. Route options development for the Princes Highway upgrade program commenced in March 2006. The Princes Highway upgrade program consists of three sections, Mount Pleasant to Toolijooa Road, Foxground Berry bypass, and Berry to Bomaderry. The preferred route for the proposal (Mount Pleasant to Toolijooa Road) was announced in June 2009.

Access options for Gerringong

Several options for the provision of access to Gerringong were developed and displayed to the community for feedback and further assessment. The options included:

- A single access point accommodating all turning movements between Gerringong and the highway, to be located in the vicinity of Sims Road.
- Two half interchanges, one at Fern Street and one at Belinda Street.
- Combinations of half interchanges at Fern Street, Belinda Street and Sims Road.
- A full interchange at Rose Valley Road with connection to Fern Street and a full interchange at Belinda Street.
Environmental impacts

Noise

Construction activities would predominantly be undertaken between 7am to 6pm Monday to Friday and 8am to 1pm Saturday. However it is anticipated that some of the works would be undertaken outside these working hours to minimise disruptions to local businesses.

The noise modelling results indicate that the environmental criteria for road traffic noise (ECRTN) would be exceeded at 52 residences during the daytime and 97 residences during the night time in 2028 during operation of the proposal. Noise attenuation would be considered during detailed design.

Socio-economic

The proposal would improve journey times and road safety for highway users, particularly due to the introduction of the proposed rail overbridge on Fern Street, which replaces the level crossing. On the Princes Highway in this section only through head-on collisions would be eliminated, and other crashes associated with the existing highway alignment would be greatly reduced.

Residents in the vicinity of the proposal may experience minor disruption to their daily lives due to loss of amenity during the construction phase from noise, visual amenity and air quality (dust) impacts.

Short-term disruption to town access would be experienced during construction of some elements of the proposal. The main community impact is likely to be stress due to uncertainty of the construction process and this would be managed by communicating traffic updates and progress reports to local residents.

Land acquisition would be required as part of the proposal, with full acquisition of three properties and strip acquisition affecting up to 31 properties.

Heritage

Twelve Aboriginal heritage recordings occur within or near to the study area, including two sites with surface artefacts, one with reported subsurface artefacts and nine potential archaeologically sensitive areas (PASAs). In addition to these recordings, there is Aboriginal cultural value in two mature *Ficus macrophylla* (Moreton Bay fig trees) in the area.

Fourteen non-Aboriginal heritage recordings occur within or near the study area. These consist of one cultural landscape, and 13 specific sites including standing structures, remains of former structures, disused highway remnants, a surface dump of disused vehicles, an agricultural dry stone wall and a property driveway entrance.

The proposal would destroy or disturb both Aboriginal objects and items with Aboriginal cultural significance (such as mature fig trees) above and below-ground structures and relics of non-Aboriginal cultural heritage value within the construction footprint.
Other environmental issues

A number of other environmental issues have been identified and considered in this assessment including geology and earthworks; terrestrial ecology; aquatic ecology; hydrology and water quality; land use; traffic; air quality; urban design; climate change; ecologically sustainable development and greenhouse gas emissions; waste generation and cumulative impacts. None of these impacts were considered to have any major consequence for the proposal with the appropriate safeguards and management measures implemented.

Justification and conclusion

The Princes Highway between Mount Pleasant and Toolijooa Road currently performs relatively poorly with regard to road safety and traffic efficiency. There are limited overtaking opportunities, numerous junctions with rural roads and private uncontrolled accesses. Existing access points to Gerringong are less than desirable, with the northern access point over the South Coast Railway Line identified as number 20 in the NSW Government’s top 300 priority list for safety treatment of level crossings. The existing highway is also susceptible to flooding where it crosses Omega Flat at the northern extremity of Gerringong and inadequate cross-drainage contributes to localised flooding at other locations.

The existing alignment within the proposal extent has a high crash history and experiences a poor road safety record. By constructing the Gerringong upgrade it would be possible to realise the highest possible return in terms of immediate road safety benefits and improved travel efficiency for the level of available funding.

The proposed upgrade of the Princes Highway between Mount Pleasant and Toolijooa Road would:

- Improve road safety and reduce road accidents on the Princes Highway from Mount Pleasant to Toolijooa Road by improving town access points to four-way grade-separated interchanges at Rose Valley Road in the north and Belinda Street in the south.
- Improve traffic flow, reduce travel times and delays and road user costs along the Princes Highway between Mount Pleasant and Toolijooa Road.
- Improve traffic efficiency of the Princes Highway through the construction of 7.5 km of dual carriageway between Mount Pleasant and Toolijooa Road, providing continuity of the four lane carriageway from Mount Pleasant.
- Improve traffic efficiency by providing additional climbing lanes southbound for approximately 800 m from Belinda Street on ramp and northbound between Rose Valley Road and the top of Mount Pleasant.
- Reduce flood vulnerability by providing extensive drainage infrastructure maintaining cross drainage flow in the low lying area of Omega Flat and providing 1 in 100 flood free access to Gerringong via Belinda Street where feasible.
- Incorporate property acquisition to set corridor boundaries for future widening to six lanes and designing the infrastructure to allow for future widening.
- Minimise environmental impacts from the proposal.
- Maintain accessibility to Gerringong’s existing and future businesses.

An upgrade involving only minor improvements would not meet the basic proposal objectives and safety requirements. Nor would it provide a satisfactory solution from a strategic, regional, local planning or transport context.
Display of the review of environmental factors

This review of environmental factors is on display for comment between 7 June 2010 and 2 July 2010. You can access the documents in the following ways:

**Internet**

The documents will be available as PDF files on the RTA website at www.princeshighwayupgrade.com.au.

**Display**

The review documents can be viewed at the following locations:

**Gerringong location**

Gerringong RSL Hall  
corner Belinda Street and Fern Street  
Gerringong NSW 2534  
Monday 7 June to Friday 2 July, Monday to Friday 11am to 7pm  
Saturday 19 June 10am to 2pm  
Saturday 26 June 10am to 2pm

There will be concept designs showing all access arrangements as well as 3D animations of the upgrade available at these locations for viewing.

The community is encouraged to take advantage of the opportunity to interact directly with the project team and study specialists who will present an overview of the Gerringong upgrade REF, the various studies and mitigation strategies in more detail.

**How can I make a submission?**

Feedback on the Gerringong upgrade REF is encouraged and welcomed.

To make a submission on the proposal, please send your written comments to:

Gerringong upgrade  
AECOM  
PO Box Q 410, QVB Post Office  
Sydney NSW 2000  
gerringongupgrade@rta.com.au

Submissions must be received by Friday 2 July 2010.

**Privacy information**

All information included in submissions is collected for the sole purpose of assisting in the assessment of this proposal. The information may be used during the environmental impact assessment process by relevant RTA staff and its contractors.

Where the respondent indicates at the time of supply of information that their submission should be kept confidential, the RTA will attempt to keep it confidential. However there may be legislative or legal justification for the release of the information, for example under the Freedom of Information Act 1989, the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 or under subpoena or statutory instrument.
The supply of this information is voluntary. Each respondent has free access at all times to the information provided by that respondent but not to any identifying information provided by other respondents if a respondent has indicated that the representation should be kept confidential.

Any respondent may make a correction to the information that they have provided by writing to the same address the submission was sent.

**What happens next?**

Following the submissions period, the RTA will collate submissions. Acknowledgement letters will be sent to each respondent. The details of submission authors will be retained and authors will be subsequently advised when proposal information is released.

After consideration of community comments the RTA will determine whether the proposal should proceed, or whether any alterations to the proposal are necessary. The community will be kept informed regarding this RTA determination.

If the proposal is determined, the RTA proceeds with final design and tenders are called for construction of the proposal.

If you have any queries, please contact the project team on 1800 506 976 (free call).
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