The RTA is working on a proposal to widen the M5 South West Motorway from King Georges Road, Beverly Hills to Camden Valley Way, Prestons. The M5 South West Motorway is owned and operated by Interlink Roads.

This section of the M5 corridor is a critical link in the National Land Transport Network.

Reason for widening the motorway
Keeping transport moving in this critical corridor is essential for the community and the economy. This upgrade is an important project in the NSW Government’s Metropolitan Transport Plan, February 2010 and supports the National Land Transport Network. The proposal will ease congestion and improve travel times for motorists and cater for projected future growth in travel and freight demand.

It includes widening the motorway from two lanes to three lanes in each direction. A new motorway management and control centre would be built at the Hammondville toll plaza to improve traffic monitoring and provide drivers with up-to-date traffic information.

As construction would take place entirely within the existing road corridor, no properties will need to be acquired.

Snapshot of community feedback
An overview report seeking comment on an expansion of the entire M5 corridor including the M5 South West Motorway was placed on public display from November 2009 to March 2010.

Over 800 submissions were received from a wide cross section of the community, including residents, stakeholder groups, councils and businesses.

The overview report generated a range of responses from the community and stakeholders. Over 200 submissions contained comments specifically about the proposal to widen the M5 South West Motorway.

This newsletter is to give you some feedback on this process.
Many people recognised a need for additional transport capacity in the corridor, with many saying the upgrade is urgently required as existing congestion adversely affects their business and quality of life.

However, not all who supported improving transport capacity in the corridor supported upgrading the motorway, with many submissions saying that upgrading rail freight and public transport was more important.

Some submissions commented on the particular importance of this project to the community of the South West while also recognising that there were specific issues that would need to be managed to minimise impacts on this area.

The main issues raised in submissions about the proposed widening between King Georges Road and Camden Valley Way were:

· Concern about traffic noise.
· The need for more lanes.
· Requests for cashless tolling.
· Concern about increased traffic.
· Request for additional ramps at the Hume Highway.
· Desire for better traffic management.

Some submissions commented that vehicles changing lanes to get to cash toll booths caused a hazard and contributed to congestion. A number of submissions expressed frustration that the M5 South West Motorway was tolled, but the M5 East was not.

Others felt the proposed widening did not go far enough and that the motorway needed to be expanded to either four or six lanes in each direction between Camden Valley Way and King Georges Road. Others were concerned that residential properties may need to be acquired to widen the motorway.

Other suggestions included provision of dedicated truck lanes on the motorway and more signage to divert traffic to exit lanes. Impact of traffic on surrounding streets, bicycle use, pedestrian impacts and the importance of reducing reliance on fossil fuels were also raised.

Way forward

All comments received have been very valuable. They assisted the RTA to progress the development of the proposal and have also helped to scope the environmental assessment to include the key issues that are important to the community. Further studies have been undertaken including traffic and transport, flora and fauna, noise and vibration and urban design and landscaping.

Discussions have also continued with the operator of the M5 South West Motorway to investigate the cost and feasibility of the proposed upgrade, and to find ways to facilitate construction while minimising impacts on the day to day operations of the motorway and the community.

An environmental assessment

An environmental assessment that considers the potential environmental, economic and social benefits and impacts associated with the proposed widening and identifies measures to minimise impacts will be placed on public display in the coming months.

The community will be invited to participate in the community consultation activities and encouraged to have their say about the proposed widening by making a submission to the NSW Department of Planning.

Your assistance to date in considering this proposal and contributing to its development is appreciated. You can stay up to date with project developments on the project website at www.m5corridorexpansion.com.au.

Dates and details of the exhibition of the environmental assessment - including how to make a submission - will be advertised in local newspapers before the end of the year.