M5 corridor expansion – environment

The M5 transport corridor is the main road freight, commercial and commuter route between Port Botany and Sydney Airport, and south west Sydney. In recent years traffic levels and the number of heavy vehicles on this route means the corridor is operating at or near capacity during peak periods. This impacts on Sydney’s economic productivity and competitiveness.

This fact sheet provides preliminary information on potential ecological impacts from the proposed works and the process to investigate these.

Local context

The M5 corridor study area is approximately 30 kilometres long and traverses six local government areas; Liverpool, Bankstown, Canterbury, Hurstville, Rockdale and Botany Bay. Areas of ecological value within the study area include Wolli Creek Regional Park, Bardwell Valley Parklands and Rockdale Wetlands Corridor.

Key features of the proposed M5 corridor expansion are:

• Widening the existing M5 South West Motorway from two to three lanes in each direction.
• Widening the M5 East Freeway east of King Georges Road to four lanes in each direction.
• Four new lanes in tunnel next to the existing M5 East tunnel.
• A new four lane surface arterial road from the M5 East tunnel to the airport and the industrial areas of inner southern Sydney.

Has the RTA undertaken any environmental, social and economic impact studies on the proposed expansion?

A preliminary environmental investigation has been undertaken by the RTA (details are available on the RTA’s website).

In the coming months, the RTA will develop the project’s design and environmental assessments will be undertaken.

Separate environmental assessments will be undertaken on the two sections of the M5 corridor:

• Section 1: M5 South West Motorway (Camden Valley Way, Prestons, to King Georges Road, Beverly Hills), operated by Interlink Roads.
• Section 2: M5 East Freeway (King Georges Road, Beverly Hills, to Southern Cross Drive, Mascot).

Will the preferred option pass through environmentally sensitive areas?

As the proposed expansion is largely within existing road corridors, the impact on any environmentally sensitive area is minimal. As part of the feasibility study, a preliminary environmental investigation has been undertaken to identify any environmentally sensitive areas.

During the environmental assessment investigations, including site surveys, will be carried out to confirm the potential impacts and to develop mitigation strategies.
What impact will the proposed expansion have on the surrounding wetlands (e.g. Wolli Creek, Rockdale Wetlands etc)?

Much of the study area has already been cleared of native vegetation for previous developments in the M5 East Freeway area.

The majority of threatened fauna are marine bird species primarily found in coastal and estuarine environments. A large proportion of recorded sightings of marine bird species occur within the Rockdale Wetlands Corridor and Wolli Creek Regional Park.

The extent of vegetation clearing will be confirmed and potential impacts assessed in the environmental assessments.

What measures will be taken to protect the local environment?

The RTA is committed to good design. The RTA’s 2009 Beyond the Pavement Guideline is on their website, as area examples of improved design outcomes. The focus is on managing noise impact, reducing visual impact, efficient designs, low maintenance and good connectivity.

How can I be involved?

Community consultation is essential. The RTA is committed to engaging with the community and project stakeholders.

Consultation will continue throughout the environmental assessment process. Information will be provided as the investigations continue.

Initial submissions are welcome now and all interested individuals and organisations should submit their comments. These submissions will help identify issues for the proposed M5 corridor expansion that need to be considered and impacts assessed. The initial submissions closing on 19 February 2010 will help scope the extent of the environmental assessments.

Comments can be submitted by:
- Email: m5expansion@rta.nsw.gov.au.
- Post: RTA, M5 corridor expansion, PO Box 609, Pyrmont NSW 2009.
- Website: www.m5corridorexpansion.com.au.

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More information

For more information on the project and the planning and approvals process, please contact the M5 corridor expansion free call number on 1800 633 332, email m5expansion@rta.nsw.gov.au or visit the website at www.m5corridorexpansion.com.au.