

16 February 2012

Investigation of a route alternative to the south of Berry

Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) is preparing the environmental assessment for the proposed Foxground and Berry bypass. Part of that assessment includes the need to consider feasible alternatives for the Berry bypass. Following the December community meeting and consultations to improve the design of the proposal, the concept design is being developed, and a more accurate cost prepared. From this, we can include much more accurate costs for local road improvements, bridges, water management etc.

Residents have separately recently provided a detailed submission to RMS about a possible southern Berry alternative. Taking this on board and following discussion with the local member Gareth Ward, we are cross checking the costs of what a southern bypass alternative would be – starting at North Berry and finishing in the Croziers Road area. A map is attached below to view or download.

After this preliminary costing is complete, we need to talk in detail with the community about that research. What route was considered, what the costs were and what early issues were identified.

This section is about 15% of the Gerringong to Bomaderry project. The section around Berry, we acknowledge, is very important to the community, and is also important to myself and to RMS.

Some questions and answers follow to help explain this.

Q. Have local residents been involved?

Some residents provided a detailed submission to RMS about a possible southern Berry alternative. This triggered our interest and RMS agreed to examine those issues raised and work to refine this alternative.

Q. When will this information be published?

A report on the analysis will be published in approximately 8 weeks.

The analysis will then also be included in the environmental assessment, which will be published as well.

Q. How serious is this option?

All feasible alternatives are seriously assessed for major infrastructure projects such as this. The reasons for adopting or not adopting particular options need to be documented in the environmental assessment.

Cost impacts were the key issue in the 2007 assessment of options. We need to consider these costs carefully.

Soft and acid sulphate soils are issues found south of Berry, which have since had advances in how they are managed.

Q. Is there a new design? Why can't you show it to us now?

The analysis to date is based on a concept put forward by some community members. It has been given (what RMS refer to as) a desktop analysis but it has **not** been adequately checked and we are not ready yet to say if or how feasible it is.

Q. If it is feasible, will the northern option around Berry be abandoned?

If a route of equal distance to the south around Berry is feasible, it may. But that would only come after:

- costs have been examined, shared and value for money decided.

- impacts have been considered.

- community discussions have been held.

Q. What about this community focus group starting on the 8th?

This is difficult.

Firstly – we want to progress discussions on issues outside this particular area. This includes the truck rest area at Austral Park Road and local access arrangements.

Secondly, we need to move forward as quickly as possible. Government has committed \$500 million to these works, for spending this term of government. We really need to reach a point where construction can start.

We would like, if possible, to progress both studies. If the community are in agreement we would be seeking to:

1. Improve the design of the northern option to be the best it can be.
2. Examine the southern option and the value it may provide compared to a northern option.

These should occur at the same time.

Q. What is the methodology to examine the southern bypass suggestion?

There are several phases of investigation:

Phase 1 – now underway.

Early consideration of a design and first pass at a range of likely costs.

Identify where significant knowledge gaps are – that are important to appreciating cost.

Be transparent with the community once Phase 1 is done.

Phase 2 – early viability

Understand a design of the southern suggestion better.

Cost and project value is an important first pass factor. Costs that need to be understood include:

- designing and getting an accurate understanding of how much soil is to be excavated along the route (including from the Toolijooa Ridge) and placed along the route.
- a clear spreadsheet of land acquisition costs.
- design innovations that may be possible for structures.
- drainage measures across the new highway.
- desktop research on geotechnical issues. Limited fieldwork could occur.

Following this, a qualitative early comparison of the northern preferred alignment and the southern bypass suggestion. This would consider a broad range of criteria including noise issues, visual impact issues, social issues, environmental issues. We will report around Easter.

Phase 3 – viability

Fieldwork would commence to understand better the geotechnical (soil characteristics) issues.

Community consideration of the work to date and submissions on the issues that are raised by a southern Berry bypass.

Q. When will we know if the southern suggestion is a viable option?

We are hoping to have details around Easter, but we will keep the community posted as this work progresses.

Regards

Brad Turner

Regional Manager