

Great Western Highway Upgrade Program

Freight productivity and regional growth



Photo of Lithgow from South Bowenfels

Why does Government want to invest in road infrastructure in this region?

The Central West is the third largest regional contributor to the State's economy and will grow to over 300,000 people in the next 20 years.

Better connecting Central West NSW to Sydney, is critical to the economic and regional development of communities along the highway and surrounding areas. This program will support growth in key industries including agribusiness, manufacturing, mining and tourism.

Will there be more heavy vehicles along the highway once it's upgraded?

We anticipate an increase in freight vehicles on the highway, especially of the safer and more reliable High Performance Vehicles and Performance Based Standards Vehicles. Further freight and transport studies need to be done to determine this.

What size vehicles will be able to use an upgraded Great Western Highway?

The highway is being designed to carry the safest and most productive heavy vehicles, including B-doubles up to 25 metres and Performance Based Standards Vehicles up to 30 metres. This is consistent with the NSW Freight and Ports Plan and the NSW Heavy Vehicle Access Policy Framework

Why is government focusing on the Great Western Highway rather than other roads?

The Great Western Highway is an important route identified as part of the Land Transport Network (Roads), which has been developed through collaboration between Commonwealth, State, and Territory governments. It details the road and rail routes connecting economic hubs.

Out of the four major freight connections into Sydney from the regions, the Great Western Highway is the key east-west route. However, it is the only of the four routes limited to 19m B-Double and 20m Performance Based Standard (PBS) vehicles. Alternate routes around the Great Dividing Range use either the Hume Highway or the Golden Highway and are up to 100km longer.

This program looks to open up access to more productive vehicles as well as improve more general access for commuters and tourists.

What are the benefits to the freight industry from the Great Western Highway Upgrade Program?

Some of the benefits of the upgrade program include improving access, safety and efficiency. Upgrading the corridor will also reduce congestion. The proposal to bypass villages will further improve road safety by reducing the interaction between pedestrians and heavy vehicles. Reducing the steepness of the highway will also increase reliability of travel time by allowing freight vehicles to travel at a more consistent speed limit. A duplicated highway will mean High Performance Vehicles and Performance Based Standard Vehicles, that are safer and more reliable, will be able to use the road.

Why can't freight use the rail line?

Around two-thirds of freight in NSW is carried on the road network; this includes refrigerated goods, livestock, commercial and retail goods. Much of the freight currently on the road network requires direct access to freight hubs, such as retail precincts or light industrial areas or home deliveries. Freight transporting bulk goods such as export container, steel, grains, and coal will continue to rely on the rail line.

Why can't more passengers use the rail line?

The Blue Mountains line is a shared rail corridor used by passenger and freight services. Both freight and passenger services are driven by demand and timetables are developed to move both freight and passenger services across the broader rail network efficiently. The network shares the line with passenger services and freight services, while needing to consider other parts of the network further away.

Instead of upgrading the highway, why can't the rail line be upgraded to allow more freight and passengers?

The rail corridor is already constrained due to the alignment of the Great Western Highway, the Blue Mountains National Park, and the topography. The rail line is being upgraded in sections to allow for wider trains that currently use the Sydney Trains network to use tunnels within the Blue Mountains.

The rail line is already providing a reliable service for Blue Mountains commuters; however, the highway will remain a vital link for the Central West and the Blue Mountains. The NSW Government has also committed to investigate improvements to the rail corridor for commuters through the Faster Rail strategy.

What government strategies does this program align with?

The Great Western Highway Upgrade Program is aligned strategically to the following Australian and NSW Government plans, policies, and frameworks.

- NSW Future Transport 2056
- NSW Freight and Port Plan 2018-2023
- NSW Heavy Vehicle Access Policy Framework
- NSW Road Safety Plan 2021
- The Australian Infrastructure Audit 2019
- Regional NSW Services and Infrastructure Plan 2018
- NSW Tourism and Transport Plan 2018
- Central West and Orana Regional Plan 2036
- A 20 Year Economic Vision for Regional NSW.

The Great Western Highway Upgrade Program responds to government's commitment to invest in regional NSW, and recognises the strategic need to invest in and grow the Central West.



Base of Victoria Pass

Where can I find more information?

Contact the project team:



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More information is also available at:



rms.work/greatwesternhighway



If you need help understanding this information, please contact the Translating and Interpreting Service on 131 450 and ask them to call us on 1800 953 777.