New England Highway safety improvements at Whittingham

Community Consultation Report

April 2020
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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Transport for NSW is planning to upgrade the New England Highway, between the Golden Highway and Newington Lane, at Whittingham.

The NSW Government is investing $3.29 million for the proposal to improve safety for road users and reduce the risk of crashes along this eight kilometre section of the highway.

The New England Highway is part of the inland route of the Sydney to Brisbane National Land Transport Network and the primary route connecting the Upper Hunter with Maitland and Newcastle.

The eight kilometre stretch of the highway at Whittingham carries around 26,000 vehicles each day and has a history of crashes.

The proposal aims to reduce the risk of crashes on the highway and improve safety for all road users.

1.2 The proposal

The proposal involves:

- resurfacing 950 metres of the highway from Range Road towards Singleton
- installing a one metre wide painted centreline along a 2.2 kilometre section of the highway between Range Road and Newington Lane
- installing audio-tactile line marking along the edge and centre lines
- installing street lighting at the Range Road and Racecourse Lane intersections
- installing median and roadside safety barriers at various locations
- signage and delineation improvements on the approaches to Mudies Creek Bridge
- tree trimming to improve sight distance
- maintenance and minor access improvements along the route.

In addition to the proposal, work has recently been completed on an intersection upgrade to provide right turn bays for motorists exiting the highway at Haggartys Lane and Cemetery Lane. The NSW Government provided $820,000 this financial year to deliver this upgrade.
2 Consultation approach

2.1 Consultation objectives

We consulted with the community and key stakeholders on the proposal to:

- inform the community and stakeholders of the proposal and possible impacts
- seek feedback on the proposal and issues of concern for consideration when finalising the design. The feedback will be incorporated into the environmental assessment known as the review of environmental factors (REF).
- build a database of interested and concerned community members with whom we can continue to engage with during the proposal’s development and delivery.

2.2 Values

Our values underpin our decisions and behaviours when working with customers, colleagues, stakeholders and partners.

- **Customer focus** - We place the customer at the centre of everything we do
- **Collaboration** - We value each other and create better outcomes by working together
- **Solutions** - We deliver sustainable and innovative solutions to NSW’s transport needs
- **Integrity** - We take responsibility and communicate openly
- **Safety** - We prioritise safety for our people and our customers.

2.3 How consultation was done

Community members were encouraged to provide their feedback, leave comments and make submissions via mail, email or phone contact with the project team. Our key consultation tools are listed below:

| Table 1 |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| Project Notification | • Delivered via mail to 450 residents and stakeholders in the Whittingham area.  
• A copy of the project notification is available at Appendix A. |
| Media release | • A media release was issued on the Monday 18 November.  
• A copy of the media release is available at Appendix B |
<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
</table>
| **Webpage** | • Project webpage updated 11 November 2019 with latest project information  
• URL: nswroads.work/whittingham |
| **Facebook post** | • Facebook advertisement inviting comment was published on the NSW Roads Facebook page on Wednesday 20 November. The post linked to the survey and encouraged readers to provide feedback.  
• A copy of the Facebook advertisement at Appendix C. |
| **Online survey** | • A online survey was published for the community to submit feedback |
| **Advertisement** | • A newspaper advertisement was published in the Singleton Argus on Wednesday 27 November. The advertisement encouraged readers to provide feedback.  
• A copy of the newspaper advertisement is available at Appendix D. |
3 Consultation summary

3.1 Overview

Comments on the proposal closed on Friday 13 December, with 23 submissions received. Some submissions included multiple comments, with 29 different issues raised 48 times.

The feedback received in formal submissions raised a number of issues including:

- Support for the proposal
- Support and objection of the proposed reduced speed limit
- Request for additional intersection improvements and merging lanes
- Concerns about reduced lane and shoulder widths
- Safety barriers causing possible obstructions
- Support and objection to proposed street lighting
- Request for additional upgrades at Mudies Creek Bridge
- Consultation about audio-tactile line marking
- Driver behavior being the cause of crashes
- Drainage, vegetation maintenance and other road work
- Feedback about major projects outside the scope of the proposal, including the Singleton Bypass and the New England Highway upgrade between Belford and the Golden Highway.

The Facebook post reached more than 20,000 people during the consultation period to raise awareness of the proposal and consultation. The post received 1,223 engagements, including reactions, comments, shares and link clicks.

The commentary was mixed with some supportive of the proposal and many providing feedback about other major projects outside the scope of the proposal, including the Singleton Bypass and the New England Highway upgrade between Belford and the Golden Highway.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue category</th>
<th>Number of submissions</th>
<th>Issue raised</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support for the proposal</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Supportive of safety improvements</td>
<td>Thank you for your support of the proposal. The safety of all road users is important which is why a number of steps are being taken to improve the highway at this location. The proposal will help to reduce the risk and severity of crashes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speed limit</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Supportive of a reduced speed limit</td>
<td>After assessing the outcomes of a recent speed zone review, the existing 100km/h speed limit will be reduced along an eight kilometre stretch of the highway. The speed limit will be reduced to 80km/h from 210 metres south of White Falls Lane to 180 metres south of Racecourse Lane, as this section of the highway has a number of residential accesses. The speed limit will be reduced to 90 km/h from 180 metres south of Racecourse Lane to 330 metres north of the Golden Highway. The injury crash rate per kilometre is significantly higher than the typical rate for this type of road which is why action is needed. The speed zone review assessed a number of factors including crash history, road geometry, road environment, traffic volumes and the number of access points.</td>
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<tr>
<td>------------</td>
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<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Objects to a reduced speed limit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intersection improvements</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Request for right-turn merging lane from Range Road</td>
<td>During development of the proposal, we investigated options to improve safety at the Range Road intersection. Due to the minimum length requirements for a merging lane on a highway and associated constraints with road geometry and funding, provision of a merging lane at this location is not possible as part of this proposal. New lighting will be installed at the intersection to improve visibility of the intersection at night. The New England Highway upgrade between Belford and the Golden Highway will provide a right turn flyover for vehicles travelling towards Newcastle. This will provide a safe, free-flowing right turn movement onto the New England Highway. Early work for this major upgrade is starting in early 2020.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Request for right-turn merging lane from Racecourse Lane</td>
<td>During development of the proposal, we investigated options to improve safety at the Range Road intersection. Due to the minimum length requirements for a merging lane on a highway and associated constraints with road geometry and funding, provision of a merging lane at this location is not possible as part of this proposal. New lighting will be installed at the intersection to improve visibility of the intersection at night.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Request for left turn lane into Racecourse Lane</td>
<td>We have made some design refinements to the proposal to improve the Racecourse Lane intersection. The final design includes shoulder widening on the highway to provide a left turn lane into Racecourse Lane. Following a review of the feedback received we will also remove the wire rope barrier near the U-turn bay opposite Racecourse Lane.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Additional merging lanes needed at intersections to improve safety</td>
<td>The proposal has considered the crash history along this stretch of the highway to identify where improvements are most needed and includes a scope of work that can be delivered within the available funding.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Preference to maintain 3.3 metre lane widths, rather than varying lane widths</td>
<td>A key objective of the proposal is to provide a wide centreline treatment. The introduction of a one metre wide centreline will improve safety by providing greater separation between vehicles travelling in opposite directions. To cater for the wide centreline some lane and shoulder width adjustments are required.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Concerns about proposed reduced shoulder widths for farming equipment</td>
<td>The proposal aims to provide safe lane and road shoulders widths</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1 | Request to keep shoulder width as wide as possible for motorists, while also continuing to allow for the safe movement of farm equipment on this section of the highway. Following consultation with local residents, some existing roadside signs will be relocated and some of the proposed barriers have been removed from the design to provide additional space adjacent to the road shoulder to ensure farming equipment doesn't move into the travel lane when travelling on the highway. Where the shoulder narrows, the new wide painted centerline also allows vehicles to move around farming equipment if required.

Street lighting | 1 | Street lighting is needed at the Racecourse Lane intersection. The project includes installing lighting at Racecourse Lane.

Street lighting | 1 | Street lighting is needed at the Range Road intersection. The project includes installing lighting at Range Road.

Street lighting | 1 | Does not support street lighting at the Range Road intersection as it will affect a driver’s ability to see oncoming vehicles in the dark and will cause visibility issues when there is fog in the area. The flag lighting to be installed at Range Road meets current road design standards and will improve the visibility of the intersection at night. This type of lighting has been found to reduce night time crashes.

Safety barriers | 2 | Request to remove wire rope barrier opposite Racecourse Lane. Following a review of the feedback received we will remove the recently installed wire rope barrier opposite Racecourse Lane.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concerns location of proposed safety barriers could cause possible obstructions</th>
<th>Following consultation with local residents, some of the proposed barriers have been removed from the design to provide additional clearance adjacent to the road shoulder to ensure farming equipment doesn't move into the travel lane when travelling on the highway. Following a review of the feedback received we will also remove the recently installed wire rope barrier opposite Racecourse Lane.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Driver behaviour</td>
<td>Driver behaviour is the cause of crashes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>This stretch of the New England Highway has a high crash history, which is why a number of steps are being taken to improve the highway at this location. The reduced speed limit, wide centreline and audio tactile line marking will provide a road environment which will help to reduce the risk and severity of crashes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Safety concerns associated with vehicles driving at different speeds when accessing the highway from Newington Lane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>After assessing the outcomes of a recent speed zone review, the existing 100km/h speed limit will be reduced along an eight kilometre stretch of the highway in February 2020. The speed limit will be reduced to 80km/h from 210 metres south of White Falls Lane to 180 metres south of Racecourse Lane, as this section of the highway has a number of residential accesses. This reduced speed limit will help minimise the difference in speed of motorists entering and exiting Singleton.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mudies Creek Bridge</td>
<td>Mudies Creek Bridge needs to be upgraded as it is a major safety hazard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>With the funding available, a significant upgrade of Mudies Creek Bridge is not possible. Improvements for the bridge under the current funding will include delineation, signage and guardrail improvements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issue</td>
<td>Affecting/Impacted Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio-tactile line marking (ATLM)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drainage</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road quality</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetation maintenance</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road work</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Outside proposal scope                 | 4                                                                                      | The Singleton Bypass is outside the scope of this proposal. The concept design and review of
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Recommends</th>
<th>Reason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Singleton Bypass should include Whittingham</td>
<td>environmental factors for the Singleton Bypass were on display for community comment in early 2020. More information about the Singleton Bypass is available at nswroads.work/singleton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Build dual carriageway through Whittingham</td>
<td>Duplication of the New England Highway through Whittingham is outside the scope of this proposal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Build flyover at the New England Highway and Golden Highway intersection</td>
<td>TfNSW is also working on a project to upgrade the New England Highway between Belford and the Golden Highway. This project involves providing a right turn flyover from the Golden Highway for motorists travelling east towards Newcastle and providing two travel lanes in each direction on the New England Highway towards Belford.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Build dual carriageway from Golden Highway towards Branxton</td>
<td>Early work on the upgrade, including utility relocations and closing the Whittingham rest area will start in early 2020. We are currently planning to invite construction tenders for the upgrade in the first half of 2020. We will keep the community updated as this next step takes place. More information about the New England Highway upgrade between Belford and the Golden Highway is available at nswroads.work/B2G.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Request to ban right turns onto the Golden Highway from the New England Highway</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.2 Recommendations

After considering all responses, along with the proposal’s aims and design requirements, we have decided to proceed with the project with some changes.

Following consultation with local residents, some of the proposed barriers have been removed from the design to provide additional clearance adjacent to the road shoulder to ensure farming equipment doesn’t move into the travel lane when travelling on the highway. Additionally the recently installed wire rope barrier opposite Racecourse Lane will be removed.
3.3 **Next steps**

We have considered all submissions and will ensure our team is aware of concerns raised by the community. We will ensure that issues highlighted by stakeholders and the community are appropriately addressed when finalising the design and throughout the delivery of the project.

We will work closely with local residents and stakeholders. We will do this by:

- informing the community and stakeholders of consultation outcomes and the next steps for the proposal via publication of this report
- ensuring community and stakeholder comments and suggestions are considered when finalising the design
- continuing to carry out communication activities as the project progresses and informing the community through the project website and project notifications.
Appendix A

Have your say

Proposed safety improvements for the New England Highway at Whittingham

November 2019

Roads and Maritime Services is seeking feedback on proposed safety improvements for the New England Highway, between the Golden Highway and Newington Lane, at Whittingham.

The NSW Government is investing $3.29 million for the proposal to improve safety for road users and reduce the risk of crashes along this eight kilometre section of the highway.

Project overview

The proposal involves:

- resurfacing 950 metres of the highway from Range Road towards Singleton
- installing a one metre wide painted centreline along a 2.2 kilometre section of the highway between Range Road and Newington Lane
- installing audio-tactile line marking along the edge and centrelines
- installing street lighting at the Range Road and Racecourse Lane intersections
- installing median and roadside safety barriers at various locations on the highway
- signage and delineation improvements on the approaches to Mudies Creek Bridge
- tree trimming to improve sight distance
- maintenance and minor access improvements along the route.

In addition to the proposal, work is already under way on an intersection upgrade to provide right turn bays for motorists exiting the highway at Haggartys Lane and Cemetery Lane. The NSW Government has provided $820,000 this financial year to deliver this upgrade.
Wide centreline
The introduction of a one metre wide centreline will improve safety by providing greater separation between vehicles traveling in opposite directions.

To cater for the wide centreline some lane and shoulder width adjustments are required.
The proposal, as shown in the diagram over the page, includes:

- **3.5 metre wide lanes with 2.5 metre wide shoulders** (reduced from three metres) from north of Range Road to north of the curve on the New England Highway (yellow section on map).

![Diagram of 3.5 metre wide lanes with 2.5 metre wide shoulders](image)

- **3.3 metre wide lanes with 2.7 metre wide shoulders** (reduced from three metres) from north of the curve to Newington Lane (green section on map).

![Diagram of 3.3 metre wide lanes with 2.7 metre wide shoulders](image)

This 2.7 metre shoulder allows for farm equipment travelling this section of the highway. Where the shoulder narrows, the new wide centerline allows vehicles to move onto the painted centerline to safely move around farming equipment.

Audio tactile line marking
The proposal at Whittingham incorporates audio tactile line marking (ATLM) on the edge lines and centrelines along sections of the highway.

We will directly contact residents living along these sections of the highway to seek feedback on the proposed locations of the ATLM.

What is ATLM?
ATLM, sometimes called ‘rumble strips’ are small raised bumps typically placed along the edges of roads and in the centre of roads.

ATLM alerts a driver or rider when they are drifting out of their lane, by generating a distinct sound and vibration when their vehicle tyre comes into contact with it.

ATLM is intended to allow drivers the opportunity to correct their path and reduce the risk of crashes due to driver inattention (such as fatigue).

This treatment targets run-off-road to left and head-on crashes. It is also particularly effective in night-time conditions or adverse weather conditions.

This type of line marking is a highly effective road safety treatment, estimated to reduce fatal and serious injury crashes by 15 to 25 per cent.
Proposed safety improvements

Curve to Newington Lane (1.25 kilometres)
- Improve signage and drainage
- Road surface repairs
- Install new safety barriers

Haggartys Lane
- Intersection upgrade (construction under way)

North of Range Road to the curve (950 metres)
- Road resurfacing
- Install one metre wide centreline
- 3.5m lanes and 2.5m shoulders
- Install new safety barriers

Range Road and Racecourse Lane
- Install lighting at both intersections

South of Range Road
- Install additional reflectors on the southbound roadside barrier

North of Mudies Creek Bridge to south of Range Road
- Install 325m of median wire rope barrier on curve

Mudies Creek Bridge
- Extend safety barriers
- Improve signage and line marking

Curve north of New Freugh Lane
- Install painted median (in addition to existing barrier)
- Install additional reflectors on roadside barrier

New Freugh Lane
- Road surface repairs
- Install hold line and give-way sign

South of New Freugh Lane
- Trim trees and remove roadside hazards to improve sight distance

KEY for audio tactile line marking (ATLM)

- South of New Freugh Lane to north of Range Road
  ATLM edge and centrelines

- North of Range Road to curve in the highway
  One metre wide centreline, 3.5 metre lanes, 2.5 metre shoulders and ATLM centrelines

- Curve in the highway to Newington Lane
  One metre wide centreline, 3.3 metre lanes, 2.7 metre shoulders and ATLM centrelines
Have your say
You are invited to provide feedback by Friday 6 December.

Complete our online survey at: rms.work/whittingham
0436 454 028
jason.walsh@rms.nsw.gov.au
Locked Bag 2030, Newcastle NSW 2300

Speed zone review

Roads and Maritime is currently completing a speed zone review for the New England Highway at Whittingham.

The speed zone review is assessing a number of factors including crash history, road geometry, road environment, traffic volumes and the number of access points.

We will notify the community of the outcomes of this speed zone review when it has been completed.

Next steps

We will carefully consider your feedback on the proposed safety improvements and continue to keep you updated as the project progresses.

Contact us
If you have any questions or would like more on the proposal please contact our project team:
0436 454 028
jason.walsh@rms.nsw.gov.au
rms.work/whittingham

If you need help understanding this information, please contact the Translating and Interpreting Service on 131 450 and ask them to call us on 0436 454 028.
Monday 18 November 2019

MOTORISTS GET REMINDER TO STAY IN THEIR LANE

The community is invited to comment on proposed safety improvements for the New England Highway at Whittingham.

Member for Upper Hunter Michael Johnsen said the proposal includes installing rumble strips and a wide painted centerline to reduce the risk and severity of crashes along the highway.

"Installing rumble strips along the edges and centre of the road is intended to alert a driver if they’ve drifted out of their lane by generating a distinct sound and vibration," Mr Johnsen said.

"When a wide centerline is installed with rumble strips, it can reduce fatalities and injuries caused by head-on crashes by up to 85 per cent.

"This means more family members getting home safe, more commuters getting to work safely, and more people safe on our roads."

The NSW Government is investing $3.29 million through the Safer Roads program to deliver rumble strips along an eight kilometre section of the highway as well as a wide centreline treatment along a 2.2 kilometre section north of Range Road.

"As part of this proposal, we’re also looking to install street lighting at Range Road and Racecourse lane intersections, as well as installing safety barriers at various locations," Mr Johnsen said.

"Signage and line marking improvements at Mudies Creek Bridge and road resurfacing and other maintenance activities will also take place."

Community members interested in having a say on the proposal are encouraged to complete our online survey, email jason.walsh@rms.nsw.gov.au or write to Jason Walsh, Transport for NSW, Locked Bag 2030, Newcastle NSW 2300 by Friday 6 December 2019.

All feedback will be carefully considered and the community kept informed as the proposal progresses.

Further information about the proposal is available to view at rms.work/whittingham.

MEDIA: 02 6543 1065
Appendix C

NSW Roads
28 November 2019

We're seeking feedback on proposed safety improvements for the New England Highway at Whittingham. Find out more below.

New England Highway
Whittingham

RMS.NSW.GOV.AU

Peter Vickery, Karen Bussey and 57 others

Like
Comment
Share
Roads and Maritime Services

Have your say – New England
Highway safety improvements at
Whittingham

Community and stakeholders are invited to comment on proposed safety improvements for the New England Highway at Whittingham.

The improvements involve installing a wide centreline along a 2.2 kilometre section of the highway, audio-tactile line marking, street lighting, safety barriers and signage.

For more information or to provide feedback please visit rms.work/whittingham to complete our online survey.

Feedback can also be provided by contacting our Project manager, Jason Walsh at jason.walsh@rms.nsw.gov.au or:

Jason Walsh
Roads and Maritime Services
Locked Bag 2030
Newcastle NSW 2300

Comments are invited until 5pm on Friday 6 December 2019 and will be considered in finalising the design.

For more information contact our Project manager, Jason Walsh on 0436 454 028 (during business hours) or email jason.walsh@rms.nsw.gov.au.