



JUNE 2015



## New England Highway and rail bridge upgrade at Gowrie Gates

Roads and Maritime Services together with the Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) are planning an upgrade of the Singleton railway underpass. The widened underpass would improve road and rail freight access through the Hunter Valley. This community update includes information on the preferred solution and the review of environmental factors.

A review of environmental factors has been carried out to identify potential impacts of the proposal and mitigation measures to be implemented.

Stakeholders and the community are invited to comment on the review of environmental factors by **7 July 2015**. Roads and Maritime will consider feedback before finalising project planning.

### Background

The New England Highway through Singleton is part of the National Land Transport Network and is the main arterial connection between Newcastle and the Upper Hunter. The Main Northern Railway bridge over the highway

north of Singleton at Gowrie Gates restricts access for wide load heavy vehicles.

Roads and Maritime, together with ARTC, are planning to replace the rail bridge to provide increased horizontal clearance to accommodate two travel lanes with wide sealed shoulders and facilities for pedestrians and cyclists.

The proposed upgrade would provide for continued light and heavy vehicle access to Singleton. Freight access would still be required if a future bypass of the town is built.

The NSW Government allocated \$500,000 in 2014–15 to progress planning for the upgrade, which would benefit the local and wider community.

## The proposal

Key features of the proposed upgrade include:

- New rail bridge over the New England Highway providing a minimum 5.3 metre vertical clearance
- Rebuilding and widening about 260 metres of the New England Highway to provide two 3.5 metre lanes
- Providing three metre shoulders along the New England Highway through this section to bring the road up to current road safety standards
- Relaying up to 200 metres of rail track.

## Benefits

Key benefits of the proposed upgrade include:

- Improve access and travel times for over-dimension freight movements on the New England Highway
- Minimise disruptions to freight movements on the highway and the movement of bulk coal on the Main Northern Line
- Improve road safety for road users.

## Review of environmental factors

Roads and Maritime and ARTC have carried out a review of environmental factors to assess the potential environmental impacts of the proposal and identify activities to manage and mitigate these impacts.

The review of environmental factors was carried out in consultation with a range of key stakeholders and technical specialists.

The investigations found the proposal is unlikely to have a significant impact on the environment with the implementation of a range of environmental mitigation and management measures.

## Key considerations for assessment

The following key areas of potential impact have been assessed by the environmental investigations. The review of environmental factors describes these potential impacts and measures to minimise them.

### Noise and vibration

Noise and vibration from the proposed work have been assessed as low impact to nearby residents.

Safeguards and management measures would be implemented to address potential noise and vibration impacts as a result of the proposal's construction.

Most of the proposed work would be carried out in standard hours between 7am and 6pm on Monday to Friday and 8am to 1pm on Saturday. Some work would need to be performed outside of standard hours and include night work to minimise traffic and rail disruptions while ensuring the safety of workers. Most of the night work would be carried out during scheduled rail possessions of up to 96 hours in duration. Night work during these possessions is essential to build the new rail bridge.

There are no expected changes to noise and vibration during operation of the proposal.

### Biodiversity

The proposal has been designed to avoid native vegetation clearing where possible and direct impacts to native biodiversity are not expected.

The proposal would require removal of some of the planted vegetation along the New England Highway to the south-west of the railway underpass to allow the temporary side road to be built.

A detailed biodiversity impact assessment has identified the presence of the vulnerable species Grey-headed Flying Fox and migratory species Rainbow Bee-eater. Some removal of native planted vegetation is required however the proposal has been assessed as unlikely to result in a significant impact.

### Visual impacts

Visual impacts would occur during construction and operation. During construction, the visual impacts include the presence of construction equipment. During operation, the proposal would result in permanent changes to the New England Highway streetscape. The main changes would be those associated with the new bridge, new infrastructure (such as signage and rail signals) and the removal of vegetation. The proposal has been assessed to have a low to moderate visual impact.

### Traffic and transport

There is potential for travel delays during construction which may affect commuter, bus and heavy vehicle traffic. Construction is anticipated to be implemented in separate stages to minimise impacts to traffic and residents.

### Proposed construction

The proposal would be carried out in stages. During construction the bridge would have a temporary reduced vertical clearance of no less than 4.9 metres. One lane of traffic in each direction would be maintained during peak periods. A reduced speed limit would be implemented for traffic through the construction zone. Traffic may operate under alternating conditions during night work. Track work would only be carried out during scheduled rail possessions to minimise disruption to the Main Northern Railway.

### Temporary road

The proposal would require construction of a temporary road about 270 metres long to the

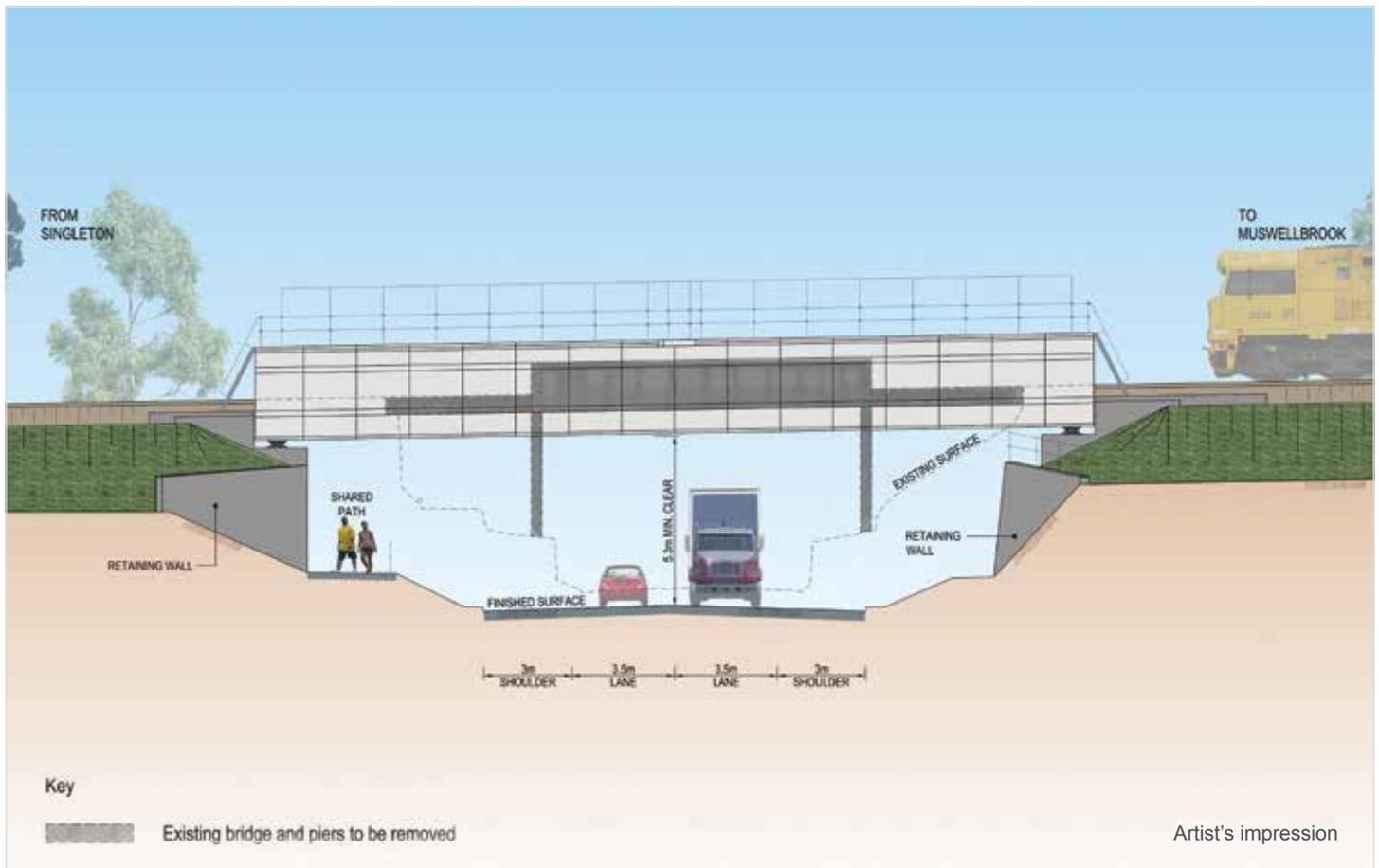
south of the highway. The temporary road would avoid a 34 kilometre detour. It would cross the existing rail track around 20 metres south of the existing rail bridge via a temporary bridge structure which would be constructed during rail possessions. The temporary road would only be used during the rail possessions.

### **Involving the community and stakeholders**

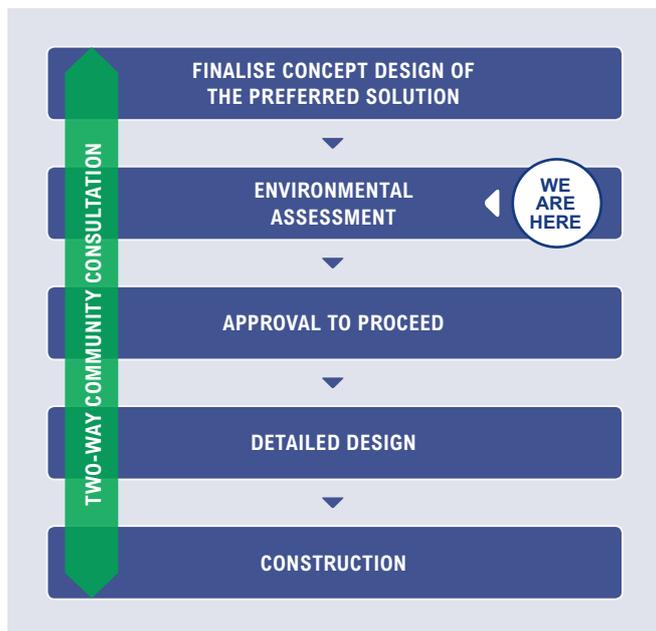
Roads and Maritime, together with ARTC, is working with the community and stakeholders during the planning process to identify issues and minimise potential impacts of the proposed upgrade and construction activities.

Stakeholders and the community are invited to comment on the review of environmental factors by **7 July 2015**.

Roads and Maritime and ARTC will consider the feedback received when finalising project planning.



## Next steps



## Please send us your feedback by:

**Phoning:** Joel Rosendahl, Project Development Manager on (02) 4924 0293 (during business hours)

**Emailing:** Joel.Rosendahl@rms.nsw.gov.au

**Writing to:** Joel Rosendahl,  
Project Development Manager  
Roads and Maritime Services  
Locked Bag 2030,  
NEWCASTLE NSW 2300

## Visit a display

Stakeholders and the community are invited to view the draft review of environmental factors and collect a community update until 7 July 2015 at the following locations, Monday to Friday from 9am to 4pm:

- Roads and Maritime Services Regional Office  
59 Darby Street, Newcastle
- Singleton Motor Registry  
158 John Street, Singleton
- Singleton Council  
Corner Queen Street and Civic Avenue, Singleton

Comments on the review of environmental factors are invited by **7 July 2015**.

Information is also available on the website at [rms.nsw.gov.au](http://rms.nsw.gov.au)

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