

Meeting Notes



AUGUST 2010

Additional crossing of the Clarence River at Grafton

Name of meeting: Community Focus Group – to discuss the community liaison plan

Location of meeting: Grafton Community Centre, Duke Street

Meeting facilitator: Denise Wilson

Date: 17 August 2010 **Time:** 10:30am - 11.30am and 6:30pm– 7:30pm

Staff in attendance: Khalid Javed, RTA Project Services Manager
Jodi Austin, RTA Communications Officer
Denise Wilson, Consultant
John Brown, Consultant
Kate Guyett, Consultant

Background to the focus group discussions regarding the community liaison plan

Two community focus group meetings were conducted on Tuesday 17 August 2010 from 10.30am to 11.30am, and from 6.30pm to 7.30pm at the Grafton Community Centre, Duke Street, Grafton. The purpose of the groups was to discuss and provide feedback on the community liaison plan. Over 80 people attended the two focus groups.

An outline of the community liaison plan was presented by RTA Regional Communications Officer Northern Region, Jodi Austin, and discussions were lead by facilitator Denise Wilson. The key questions discussed regarding the community liaison plan included:

- What has worked well to date?
- What could we do better?
- How can we improve the community liaison plan?

In the morning the discussions were facilitated in small groups, while in the evening, the discussions remained as a whole group discussion. The comments received during these focus groups are summarised under three areas including:

- Feedback on the community liaison plan.
- Feedback generated from the discussions at the focus groups.

These notes do not include written feedback sheets provided by community members at the meeting. Written feedback along with the verbal feedback from the focus groups will be collated into a feedback paper that will be placed on the website. All comments received will be considered by the RTA and the community liaison plan will be updated.

Information regarding the updated community liaison plan will be forwarded to those who provided feedback.

Feedback on the community liaison plan

The following is a summary of the verbal feedback received at the morning and evening sessions in response to the three key questions asked regarding the community liaison plan.

What has worked well to date?

- Happy to have been consulted on the plan.
- Good displays at Shoppingworld.
- Website is working better.
- 1800 line is now being answered by a real person.
- Extended project time line will give more time.
- Variable message signs are an effective way to get information out.

What could we do better?

- Need more direct contact with the community.
- Don't talk about bureaucratic processes; get on with the job.
- Need to engage more with the local indigenous community.
- Need to provide more information about the options.
- Use the focus groups to listen to the community not tell them about the process.
- Provide information in hard copy as many people are not online.
- Concentrate displays at key venues e.g. shopping centres.
- There is a disconnect between what went on in 2003-04 and what is going on now; need to explain how the previous feedback is being considered.
- Explain how we got from seven options down to four.
- Share technical information; don't just give us a summary.
- Provide relevant information to the group prior to a meeting so it can be considered.
- Greater transparency, more feedback, listen to the community.
- For community events you need a PA system; it's important to be able to hear what is being said in the room.
- Need to allow more time for discussion; today was too rushed.
- Mistake to provide preconceived options.
- Not enough discussion on the impact on the town.
- Improve the RTA web site; still difficult to find information.

How can we improve the community liaison plan?

- Ask the public what they want; if you can't do this, explain why.
- Community liaison plan needs to consider regional and local impacts.
- Add more display sites, consider e.g. Bunnings and Bi Lo in South Grafton.
- Use the local newspapers to provide regular updates.
- Use regular community updates to keep the community informed.
- Have a focus group on the value management study.
- Consider radio as a way of communicating with the community.
- Provide opportunity for Q&A sessions regarding the very important value management workshop.

Feedback generated from the discussions at the focus groups

Morning Session

- Explain to us why the traffic is being funnelled into the CBD.
- Process being applied is too bureaucratic; tell us about the options.
- Provide information in hard copy; many people don't use the internet.
- Shopping centres are the best place to provide displays and information.
- Ensure the surrounding communities are considered and kept informed.
- Junction Hill should be included in your display sites.
- Focus the community's attention by being consistent with your wording "Additional crossing of the Clarence River, Grafton" should be used.
- When will the bridge be built? "I may be in a box by then".
- Happy to have been consulted but unsure about how much we are being told about the project.
- Need a community update, focusing on what has been done since the February 2010 update.
- Lack of transparency in communications regarding how and why the set options were put forward.
- Need to understand the reasons behind the current options.
- Why can't there be an option either upstream or downstream of the current bridge; not directly on top of the CBD?
- Why are we discussing this when there is no funding and things will continue to change.
- Bob Carr has previously announced a preferred route; not sure why are we still discussing options.
- Distinction needs to be made between traffic who use the bridge to access Grafton and others who use it as part of a route to Casino/ Ballina.

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- Divert some of the train lines which carry heavy freight onto the new proposed bridge wherever that maybe.
- To have one bridge for people wishing to access Grafton and the other for people who are wishing to pass straight through on the way to Casino/ Ballina.
- Concerns expressed about the need for further traffic management including "human safety" measures throughout the CBD area.
- Communicate to us in ways other than advertisements and letters; one on one meetings to discuss the options are more helpful.
- Sacred indigenous sites will be impacted by some of the options.

Evening Session

- Are options outside the study area being considered?
- The comment was made that the RTA has only mentioned to date options A B C and D.
- If an option is removed, the community should have a say in that decision.
- If an option is added, the community should have a say before that decision is made.
- The process is a 'snow job'; information is being kept from us.
- Technical data should be available to the community to consider prior to any discussions; not a summary of the facts; but the raw data.
- The process is still being rushed; need time to consider the information.
- Need to be assured that the project team is considering the information and comments previously provided by the community, and particularly, the CFG of 2003-04.
- Need to move the regional traffic (without a local destination) out of the CBD.
- Don't forget the freight companies in your investigations and surveys.
- Flooding needs to be included as a key issue for consideration (3.2 in Community Consultation Plan).
- Need to understand the criteria that will be used to determine community representation in the value management process.
- Need a real time frame; project can't keep being deferred.
- RTA website is still difficult to navigate.
- Need an update on what has happened since the February call for comment.
- Regular column in the newspaper would keep the community involved and up to date.
- Need a cost benefit analysis of the project in light of car usage in the future.
- Want to see the traffic studies and technical data behind the current options.
- The bridge should be moved out of the CBD.
- Want to see the brief provided to the technical consultants on the project.

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- Confusion with regards to if community comment is part of the decision making process (examples from previous studies in 2003/2005 and Value Management Groups).
- Need to consider the possibility for options to reduce regional “transit” traffic flowing through to Ballina/ Casino going through the Grafton CBD.
- Need to consider future growth of Grafton and South Grafton – what will be needed when funding is available.
- Please include the Stakeholder Group Summerland Way Commercial Committee in the consultation process.
- Requests for further traffic management measures to be undertaken in the Grafton area especially near the Casino turn off.
- The decision has been made – tells us where the bridge is going.
- Community need a timeframe of when the bridge will be built.
- The RTA should be surveying the community to hear what they want.
- For a survey to be robust it will need to be developed and designed with community inputneeds to be a representative sample of the community based on ‘market research’ principles.
- A submissions report on community feedback should be developed and included on the RTA website.

The following is a summary of questions raised at the community focus groups.

Questions/ Comments	Response
What was the scope of the brief to the consultants regarding the project? Can we have a copy as we have requested?	KJ : The consultants were asked to identify a preferred bridge location that would best meet the project objectives. DW: the request for the project brief will be referred to the RTA for its consideration.
Why is cost being given a higher priority than safety in choosing the right option?	KJ: The cost of the project is not being given higher priority than safety. All options will be assessed on how well they address the project objectives.
What are the assumptions being used for the traffic modelling?	KJ: Traffic modelling includes the operational network and the local CBDs of Grafton and South Grafton.
Are you considering options outside the study area?	KJ: Route options are not restricted to the four preliminary options displayed earlier this year. The key issue is how well an option addresses the project objectives.

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When will the technical information be available? Before the community information sessions and in draft form?	DW : Relevant draft technical information will be made available at the community focus groups. These groups will occur before the community information sessions.
Why consult if the decision has been made?	KJ: The location of the additional crossing of the Clarence River has not been decided. The project team will continue to undertake detailed engineering and environmental studies to determine a list of refined concept options. The community will continue to be involved in the decision making process through the activities outlined in the community liaison plan.
Why consult when there is no funding for the project?	The feedback of the community is an important component in the process to identify the preferred option. Once the preferred option is identified, the RTA and the Minister will then consider the project for funding.
When will the bridge be built?	The timing of when the bridge will be constructed is still unknown. The current process aims to identify the preferred option for consideration by the RTA and the Minister.

Resolution unanimously adopted at the evening session

- That a survey be developed to better understand the views of the community regarding the options being proposed.
- That the community should have input into the questions asked in the survey.
- That the survey be undertaken by an external agency.
- That the survey be based on robust market research principles.
- That the survey take place before any more decisions are made.

DW agreed to forward the request for the survey to the RTA for consideration.



Additional crossing of the Clarence River, Grafton Community liaison plan

Khalid Javed Project Services Manager Northern Region RTA
Jodi Austin Regional Communications Officer RTA
Denise Wilson Communications Consultant

17 August 2010



Community engagement since 2003

2003/ 2004	Community focus groups
2005	Value Management Workshop recommends Option B
July 2008	RTA asked to review all studies
December 2009	Traffic study report completed
February – March 2010	Community feedback on preliminary options based on traffic information
April 2010	Minister announces RTA review of community feedback
July 2010	Extended timeline to mid 2011
August 2010	Community liaison plan released

Snapshot of planned community engagement activities



Activity	Detail	Indicative timing
Release community liaison plan	consultation with key stakeholders and community	Mid August 2010
Series of community focus groups	discuss technical issues...e.g. traffic	September – October 2010
Community Information Sessions	Opportunity to learn about the concept options	Late 2010
Call for Comment	Concept options displayed for public comment	Late 2010
Value Management Study	Study will evaluate the concept options	Late 2010/Early 2011
Preferred option announced	Community view preferred concept option	Mid 2011

Purpose of the community liaison plan

- To fulfill the Minister's commitment ...” *to look at ways we can best work with the community to assess the most appropriate location of a new bridge.*” (8 April'10).
- Outlines how the project team will engage with the community to identify the preferred location for a new crossing of the Clarence River.
- Details communication activities to implement the plan.
- Outlines how this consultation will be monitored, evaluated and reported back to the community.

How can you input into the community liaison plan?



- Suggest ways the project team can interact with the business community.
- Assist with identifying relevant business stakeholders and community groups.
- Present the views of the community.
- Provide feedback on how communication can be improved as the project progresses.

Communication activities

- Project website including updates, releases, background reports.
- 1800 information line and community email.
- Community updates & letterbox notifications for key milestones.
- Advertisements for upcoming events including information sessions, focus groups and display periods.
- Stakeholder briefings and one on one meetings.

Issue based community focus groups

- Issue based focus groups are planned for September – October 2010.
- Focus groups will be open to the community and facilitated at a local venue.
- Key issues could include traffic, social and economic impacts and benefits and environmental aspects.
- Experts will provide input to assist with the community's understanding of and input into technical issues prior to display of the concept options in late 2010.

Display of concept options

- Refined concept options will be displayed over four weeks at community venues.
- Community information sessions will be conducted over a number of days.
- There will be no formal presentations...but rather an opportunity for the community to see the concept options, ask questions and provide further feedback.
- Sessions will occur in the morning (am) and evening (pm) in Grafton and South Grafton.

Call for comment

- Refined concept options will be displayed over four weeks at community venues.
- The community will be able provide feedback through a variety of channels including...

Toll free information line – 1800 633 332

grafton_regional_office@rta.nsw.gov.au

Write to the project team

Provide written and verbal feedback at displays,
information days and one on one meetings

Value management study

The next stage in the consultation process is the value management study which will evaluate the refined concept options against specific criteria including safety, traffic and value for money.

The RTA will invite community members to nominate as representatives of their community to attend the study session. Selection will be based on criteria including a willingness to represent a range of views, community ties, geographic location and any areas of interest.

Preferred concept option display

- Following the value management study, the RTA will recommend the preferred concept option to the Minister for Roads.
- The Minister for Roads will consider the recommended concept option and if approved will announce the preferred concept option to the community.
- The preferred concept option will then be put on public display.
- This is anticipated to occur mid 2011.

Discussion Questions

- What is working well?
 - What can we do better?
 - How can we improve the community liaison plan?
-

Feedback on the community liaison plan

Provide feedback through a variety of channels including...

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Write to the project team

Feedback is encouraged by the end of August and over the coming months
