

Frequently asked questions – new Grafton bridge project

When is the new bridge expected to be finished?

The new bridge is expected to open to traffic in 2019, weather permitting.

How was this location for the new bridge chosen?

The preferred location for the new bridge was announced in April 2013, following extensive investigations and community and stakeholder feedback over several years, including:

- Between February 2010 and March 2011, Roads and Maritime Services and the Grafton community identified 41 possible locations for the new bridge. Of those 41 locations, 25 were considered feasible and were assessed through community feedback, a community and stakeholder workshop and technical investigations
- In January 2012, six options were shortlisted as potential locations for the new bridge. Throughout 2012 further assessment was conducted on each of the six options, including field investigations, cost estimates, impacts to plants and animals, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal heritage assessments, and traffic, flood and noise modelling
- In September 2012 the *Route Options Development Report* was released and community feedback was invited on the six options
- In October 2012, two options were taken forward for further consideration after a workshop with participants representing key stakeholders, the community, government agencies and the project team.

A concept design was displayed for public comment in November 2013 and an Environment Impact Statement was conducted in August 2014. The project was approved in December 2014.

Why has this particular location for the bridge been chosen?

This location for the new bridge was selected for a number of reasons, including:

- On balance, it better addresses connectivity between Grafton and South Grafton
 - It improves the distribution of traffic between the eastern and western sides of South Grafton
 - It provides better access to the Pacific Highway to the north and south and to Clarenza. It also provides good access to Armidale Road and Gwydir Highway
 - It provides a parallel road network which can be used in the event of an emergency or to conduct maintenance on the existing bridge
 - Unlike other options, it avoids channelling traffic from both crossings into the junction of Fitzroy and Villiers streets
 - By directing traffic to the intersection of Villiers and Pound streets, it provides a better opportunity for traffic to travel around the edge of the Grafton CBD
 - It has fewer impacts to businesses and fewer households are impacted by noise when compared to other options
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- It avoids impacting on the important heritage precinct around Villiers Street and Victoria Street
- It runs through a shorter length of heritage conservation area compared to other options
- It performed comparatively well to other options in terms of cost.

How much traffic will use the new bridge?

According to the traffic study completed as part of the *Environmental Impact Statement (2014)*, it is expected that about 65 per cent of road users who use the existing bridge will use the new bridge when it opens in 2019.

Weight restrictions will be implemented on the existing bridge, meaning B-Double trucks will be required to use the new bridge.

Why is the bridge only two lanes?

Given the existing bridge will remain operational, current traffic volumes and future predictions show two lanes will be sufficient to carry the amount of traffic that will use the two bridges.

The new bridge's design allows for it to be increased to four lanes when traffic volumes require it.

Why would you build four lane bridge approaches when there are only two lanes on the bridge?

Four lane approaches improve traffic efficiency and movements in areas surrounding the bridge and ensures bridge traffic is able to enter and exit the bridge smoothly. They also provide for an easier upgrade if the bridge is increased to four lanes in future.

What will happen to the existing bridge?

The current bridge will remain open and operational but with restrictions in place for B-Double trucks.

Who manages and provides maintenance for the existing bridge?

The Grafton Bridge was built in 1932 and is primarily recognised as a rail asset. The Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) currently has a rail line lease agreement in place with the NSW Government, which includes rail bridge management and maintenance functions. Roads and Maritime manages the road and footway components of the bridge, as well as the roadway approach spans.

As part of the agreed management process for the Grafton Bridge, bridge engineers will undertake detailed inspections and structural assessment work in 2017. All inspection and maintenance work on the Grafton Bridge is carried out at times to minimise any possible disruption to traffic.

The Grafton Bridge has provided nearly 85 years of safe travel for pedestrians, motor vehicles and rail. The bridge is being professionally managed by Roads and Maritime and ARTC, and inspection and maintenance programs for the Grafton Bridge are established to ensure it will continue to perform for many more years to come.

Why can't one bridge be used for traffic travelling north and the other bridge for traffic travelling south?

The bends in the current bridge make it difficult for heavy vehicles to use without affecting other traffic. If one bridge was used for travelling in only one direction, then heavy vehicles would be forced to use the current bridge. That would not improve traffic efficiency or safety, which are key objectives for the project.

Why hasn't the bridge been built to direct traffic away from the centre of Grafton?

The traffic study showed the majority of motorists using the existing bridge are travelling to and from the Grafton CBD. This number will only increase when the Pacific Highway is diverted away from Grafton. Consequently, the new bridge has to be located in an area which can best facilitate motorists travelling to and from the Grafton CBD. An out of town bypass option would not be utilised by the majority of peak time road users and would not reduce the congestion on the existing bridge.

What are the flood impacts of the new bridge?

The *Hydrological Mitigation Report (2016)* produced for the project, identified the new bridge is predicted to increase the river height by three centimetres in a one in 100 year flood event. To offset this rise, the low points in the levee system in Grafton and South Grafton will be raised to ensure the current level of flood immunity, which protects Grafton and South Grafton from about a one in 20 year flood, is maintained.

How will I access the businesses along Iolanthe Street?

Businesses along Iolanthe Street will be 'left in/left out' only, meaning you can only turn left into and out of their entrances. This will mean that some drivers will be required to do a U-turn at one of the two new roundabouts built to access businesses on Iolanthe Street.

For example, vehicles wishing to enter Bunnings from South Grafton will travel north along Iolanthe Street, do a U-turn at the new Through Street roundabout and then turn left into Bunnings from Iolanthe Street.

Drivers from Grafton looking to access the western side of Iolanthe Street (i.e. BP, Red Rooster, BCF, etc) will have two options:

- Use the new bridge, do a U-turn at the new Charles Street roundabout and then drive north on Iolanthe Street; or
- Use the current bridge and travel via Spring Street or Crisp Avenue to access Iolanthe Street.

Please see the journey videos available on the project website for more information about access www.rms.nsw.gov.au/graftonbridge.

Why has the road network in South Grafton been redesigned in the way it has?

Traffic modelling shows that most traffic will be travelling into and out of the Grafton CBD area when the Pacific Highway bypasses South Grafton as part of the Woolgoolga to Ballina upgrade project. Hence, the road network had to be designed to make those journeys as efficient and smooth as possible. Realigning the existing Pacific Highway to the other side of Bunnings will mean southbound traffic on the existing highway can access the bridge and access Grafton CBD without having to go via Iolanthe Street first.

It is important to remember these changes will not be made in isolation. The Pacific Highway will bypass Grafton by 2020, thereby reducing the number of vehicles travelling through South Grafton on a daily basis.

Why are there traffic lights at the corner of Pound and Clarence streets?

Traffic lights provide safer access for pedestrians and enable a better level of traffic efficiency during peak periods than roundabouts. The North Coast TAFE campus, businesses and new car park in the area will mean this intersection will attract a large number of pedestrians. Traffic lights will ensure pedestrians have safe crossing points and will provide better connectivity to the new shared user path.

Traffic lights are also better at regulating traffic flows when traffic reaches a certain volume, for instance during morning and afternoon peak times. The lights at this intersection will ensure traffic from all directions is able to access the new bridge without causing lengthy delays.

Why are roundabouts used instead of traffic lights in South Grafton?

Roundabouts are better suited to the intersections in South Grafton, as opposed to traffic lights, because there will be fewer pedestrians in the area. Pedestrians are not expected to want to cross the road at the Through Street intersection, nor the intersection with Iolanthe Street and the Gwydir Highway, because these intersections are not close to businesses. Instead, pedestrian traffic will be catered for by a signalised crossing about half way down Iolanthe Street.

Traffic modelling shows roundabouts will provide an effective level of service for the traffic volumes expected to use the intersections.

What are the objectives for the new Grafton bridge project?

The key objectives for the project are to:

- Enhance road safety for all road users over the length of the project
- Improve traffic efficiency between and within Grafton and South Grafton
- Support regional and local economic development
- Provide value for money
- Minimise impact on the environment.

Where can I find more information about the project?

More information on the project can be found at www.rms.nsw.gov.au/grafonbridge. Alternatively you can visit the Community Display Centre at the corner of Duke and Pound streets, Grafton; call the Community Relations Team on 1800 918 759, email grafonbridgecommunity@fultonhogan.com.au or write to PO Box 546 Grafton, NSW 2460.



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