



Transport
Roads & Traffic
Authority

ADDITIONAL CROSSING OF THE CLARENCE RIVER, GRAFTON. COMMUNITY ISSUES SUMMARY, DISCUSSIONS FEBRUARY TO NOVEMBER 2010

JANUARY 2011



TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Background.....	3
2. Feedback received in response to February/March 2010 consultations and subsequently till November 2010.....	4
Transparency in consultation process.....	4
Cost benefit analysis.....	5
Property acquisition.....	5
Heritage and social impacts.....	5
Traffic flow.....	5
Pedestrian safety.....	5
Route options/study area.....	6
Other engineering solutions.....	6
Indigenous issues.....	6
Flood mitigation.....	6
Noise.....	6
Uncertainty.....	6
3. Feedback in response to Community focus group sessions held in August 2010.....	7
Transparency of the consultation process.....	7
Cost benefit analysis.....	8
Route options /study area.....	8
Traffic.....	8
Safety.....	8
Indigenous sites.....	8
Flooding.....	8
Community survey.....	8
4 Alternative options raised by the community.....	8

I. Background

The Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) is currently working towards the identification of a preferred option for a new crossing of the Clarence River at Grafton. The NSW Government is funding these investigations.

In February 2010 the community was invited to provide feedback on four preliminary options. Feedback received from this consultation was summarised in the Community Consultation Report (May 2010).

In August 2010 two community focus groups discussed the draft community liaison plan. Feedback from these focus groups highlighted that the community wanted more opportunities to be involved in the process of identifying the preferred location of a second crossing of the Clarence River at Grafton. The community also requested that route options outside the existing study area be considered. At the Clarence Valley Council's September 2010 meeting it was agreed that the Mayor, on behalf of Council, write to the RTA and the Minister for Roads and the Shadow Minister to request that, as part of the current research/consultation into the position of the Grafton Bridge, the RTA survey the people of Grafton and surrounds; it was made clear at this meeting that Council fully supports the need for a new bridge.

In December 2010 the RTA announced a revised process including consulting with the community about the range of options, including options proposed by the community. This new process is described in the December 2010 community update available on the RTA website.

This document has been published to support the RTA's commitment to transparency in the process to select a preferred option for the additional crossing of the Clarence River. The RTA has examined and documented the issues raised by the community during the consultations throughout 2010, and it is important that this information is made available to the community.

As part of the new process announced in December 2010, the RTA is asking residents and stakeholders their views on suitable locations for the additional crossing and the issues that may arise from these. The December 2010 community update identified the community options that have been suggested to date and the process going forward to identify a short list of options and then a preferred option. An initial community survey formed part of the December 2010 update and a phone survey is planned in February 2011.

The report that follows summarises the issues raised by the community during the consultation activities in the period February to November 2010.

2. Feedback received in response to February/March 2010 consultations and subsequently to November 2010

In February and March 2010 the RTA conducted community consultation associated with four preliminary options for a second crossing of the Clarence River in Grafton. A number of staffed displays, community information sessions and community workshops were undertaken.

In response to this, a total of 338 written submissions were received, including:

- 78% pro-forma petitions written to the Minister or the RTA.
- 22% personalised submissions.

The project team also received individual feedback through letters, emails and calls to the toll free project information line.

Overall key topics for discussion included:

- Feedback on the preliminary options.
- Other route options suggested for consideration.
- Requests for information e.g. consultation reports, traffic studies, etc.
- Requests for the RTA website to be updated and information to be posted in a more timely manner.
- Enquiries regarding the status of the community survey proposed at the August 2010 focus groups.
- Requests for correspondence to be answered more promptly.

Several specific issues, ideas and concerns were identified from community feedback. These issues and associated comments raised by the community are summarised below.

Transparency in consultation process

- The community needs ongoing opportunities to provide feedback and be involved in the decision making process.
- Previous options have been removed without explanation.
- No suitable explanation has been forthcoming from the RTA for restricting the study area.
- RTA is not following best practice consultation processes as per its own policy.
- A solution has been developed without detailed investigation – the process lacks transparency.
- Options C and D were put forward without consultation or explanation.
- More time is needed to consider the options; information needs to be shared.
- Slow response to requests for information – reports and studies.
- RTA website needs to be kept up to date.
- Request the establishment of a community liaison group or some regular form of discussion.

Cost benefit analysis

- Demand management measures should be considered to reduce the need for a second bridge.
- Cost benefits of short term solutions should be considered as these will go a long way towards solving the current traffic problems and a new bridge will not be built for many decades.
- Impact on the lifestyle of the local residents needs to be considered.
- Need to clearly state the assumptions by which the project is to be assessed and a decision made.
- Centres such as Clarenza and Junction Hill would be better served by a second crossing away from the Grafton CBD.
- No current funding available for construction - no reason to fast track the project without detailed community discussion.

Property acquisition

- A number of family homes would be affected by Options A, B, C and D - other options must be explored.
- Route options closer to the rail corridor would have less impact on properties.
- The Nursing Home is an important and vital community facility; any disruptions to this facility will have a detrimental impact on the local community.

Heritage and social impacts

- RTA needs to take into consideration the 'essence/feel' and appeal of a quiet country town.
- Does not identify with the long term needs or aspirations of the town.
- Heritage properties will be impacted by options A, B, C and D.
- Negative social and economic impacts will be experienced by the local community; the solutions being considered are not best practice town and regional planning.
- Unacceptable increase in traffic (particularly from heavy vehicles) and noise impacts in residential areas.
- The Grafton Bridge is an iconic structure; the aesthetic value of the bridge will be compromised should a new bridge be constructed in close proximity.

Traffic flow

- New bridge should be located away from the existing bridge to improve access for emergency services.
- Diverting heavy vehicles away from the Grafton CBD would significantly reduce traffic congestion on the bridge.

Pedestrian safety

- The safety of pedestrians would be impacted with increased traffic funnelled into the Grafton CBD.

Route options/study area

- The study area is too narrow and should be expanded.
- In the early stages traffic generated by the school on Victoria Road was a major consideration to keep the crossing away from this area. This is not an issue now as the school has closed.
- Question the current route options - through the existing heritage area is unacceptable.
- Need to provide a genuine alternative that still takes people to where they want to go.
- An external crossing option would move the growing volume of heavy vehicle traffic away from the town centre.
- Why is there no planning for a crossing and extension near the railway line, within the rail corridor?
- Summerland Way is becoming a major freight route; need to consider this growth in future planning.
- There is no consideration for the Trans Regional Amalgamated Infrastructure Network (TRAIN) initiative and the impact it would have on planning for the crossing of the river at Grafton.
- Has consideration been given to the fact that the crossing at Grafton is an alternative when there is a major incident on the Pacific Highway.

Other engineering solutions

- Do we really need a second bridge? Through local engineering solutions (roundabouts, traffic lights etc) significant improvement in traffic flow can be made.

Indigenous issues

- Aboriginal heritage issues need to be considered and the local elders must be consulted.

Flood mitigation

- Options must consider flood management and flood impact and access into and out of the area during flood.

Noise

- Options A, B, C and D will bring unnecessary noise into the Grafton CBD.
- Directing heavy vehicles through quiet suburban areas makes little sense.
- Properties that have never experienced noise and dust would be impacted.

Uncertainty

- The process of investigation is causing community anxiety and uncertainty; clear timeframes for identifying the location of the bridge crossing need to be stated.

3. Feedback in response to community focus group sessions held in August 2010

Two community focus group sessions 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 focus groups was to seek feedback on the community liaison plan. Over 80 people attended the two focus group sessions.

In addition to feedback on the community liaison plan, several key issues about the crossing options were identified by the community. These issues and associated comments are summarised below.

Transparency of the consultation process

- There is a lack of transparency in the consultation process.
- RTA need more direct contact with the community to discuss issues.
- Need to engage more with the local indigenous community.
- Need to provide more information about the options to the community.
- Need to provide information in hard copy as many people are not online.
- Concentrate displays at key venues e.g. shopping centres.
- There needs to be a greater sharing of technical information by the RTA.
- Need to improve the RTA website - still difficult to find information about the project.
- Junction Hill should be included in the RTA displays.
- Need a community update explaining what has been done since the February 2010 community update.
- Add more display sites - consider for example Bunnings and Bi Lo in South Grafton.
- Use the local newspapers to provide regular updates to the community about the project.
- Use regular community updates to keep the community informed.
- Consider radio as a way of communicating with the community about the project.
- Lack of transparency in communications regarding how and why options A, B, C and D were put forward.
- 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.
- Technical data should be available to the community to consider prior to any discussions - not a summary of the facts by the RTA.
- The process is still being rushed – the community need time to consider the information.
- 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 in the process.
- Need to understand how options will be evaluated and the methodology for making a decision.

Cost benefit analysis

- Need a cost benefit analysis of the project in light of expected car usage in the future.
- Want to see the traffic studies and technical data behind the current options.
- 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.
- Community need a timeframe of when the bridge will be built.

Route options /study area

- RTA needs to explain how the RTA got from seven options down to four.
- Need to understand the reasons behind the current options being put forward.
- Want options outside the current study area considered.

Traffic

- Explain why the traffic is being funnelled into the CBD.
- Need traffic data and modelling to be available for consideration.
- Need to move the regional traffic (without a local destination) out of the CBD.
- Include the freight companies in investigations and surveys.

Safety

- Safety of pedestrians needs to be considered.

Indigenous sites

- Sacred indigenous sites will be impacted by some of the options.

Flooding

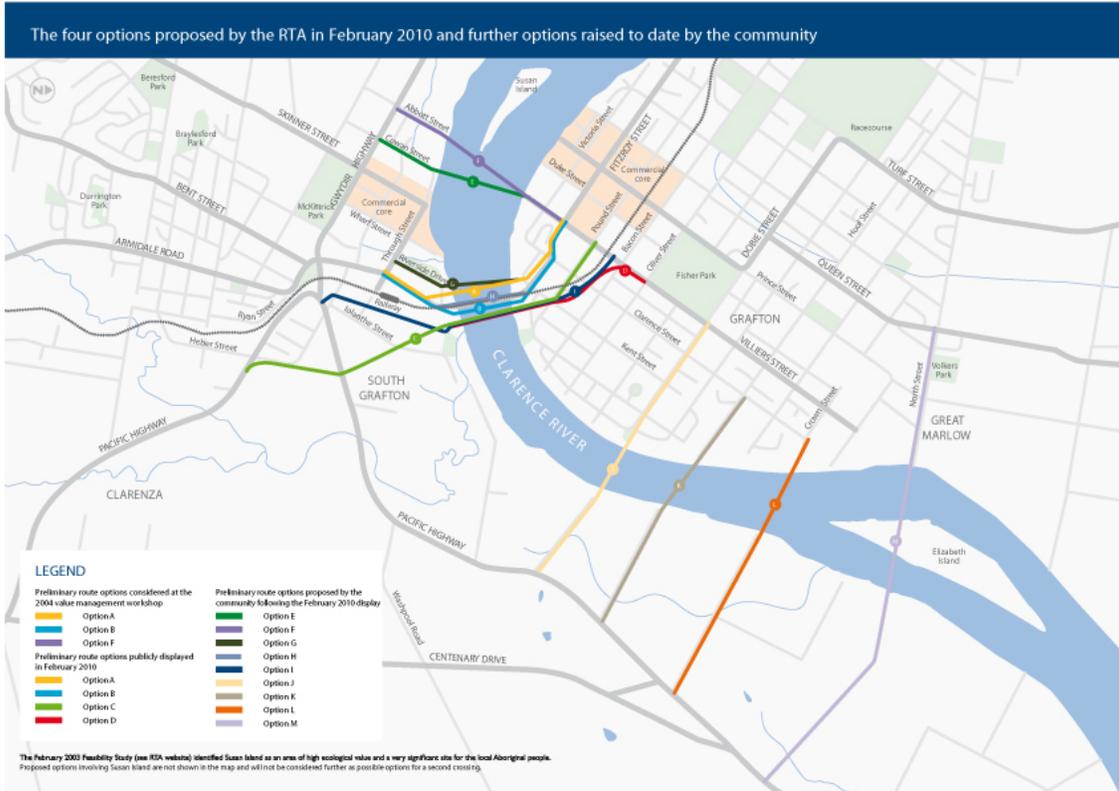
- Flooding needs to be a key issue for consideration.

Community survey

- A community survey needs to be designed with community input – to achieve a representative sample of the community, the survey must be based on market research principles.

4 Alternative options raised by the community

At discussions in March 2010, the community suggested options and ideas both for the study area in the February 2010 consultations as well as outside this study area. The map and information below shows the options proposed by the community. Consultation about these options is currently underway.



Preliminary route options considered at the 2004 value management workshop

Option A: Connects from approach roads. Bent Street South and Fitzroy Street – on upstream side of existing bridge

Option B: Connects from approach roads. Bent Street South and Fitzroy Street – on downstream side of existing bridge

Option C: Connects from Pacific Highway South Grafton, crosses the levy wall downstream side of the existing bridge and terminates at Pound Street/Villiers St

Preliminary route options publicly displayed in February 2010

Option A: Connects from approach roads. Bent Street South and Fitzroy Street – on upstream side of existing bridge

Option B: Connects from approach roads. Bent Street South and Fitzroy Street – on downstream side of existing bridge

Option C: Connects from Pacific Highway South Grafton, crosses the levy wall downstream side of the existing bridge and terminates at Pound Street/Villiers St

Option D: Connects from Pacific Highway South Grafton, crosses the levy wall downstream side of the existing bridge and terminates at Bacon Street/Villiers St

Preliminary route options proposed by the community following the February 2010 display

Option E: Cowan Street South Grafton

- Option F: Abbott Street South Grafton to Villiers Street Grafton
- Option G: Riverside Drive South Grafton to Fitzroy Street Grafton
- Option H: Existing bridge/utilise lower bridge deck
- Option I: Keep option close to the rail corridor
- Option J: Dobie Street
- Option K: Hoof Street to Pacific Highway
- Option L: Crown Street to Pacific Highway
- Option M: North Street Grafton to Pacific Highway/Centenary Drive