

Meeting Notes



Transport
Roads & Traffic
Authority

JUNE 2011

Additional crossing of the Clarence River at Grafton

COMMUNITY FORUM

29 June 2011

6pm to 8pm

On Wednesday 29 June 2011 a community forum was held at the Grafton Community Centre, with presentations by the Project Manager followed by questions and answers.

More than 35 people attended the forum.

The forums discussed three key areas:

- The results of the three recent community surveys:
 - Postal survey
 - Telephone survey
 - Business survey.
- Project purpose and objectives.
- Outcomes of the feasibility assessment of the 41 route suggestions.

Presentation notes are available on the project website.

Questions, comments and responses made at the forum have been captured broadly below.

With the approval of the attendees, the sessions were videoed. For the full presentation, community discussion and question and answer details please view the recordings available on the project website.

QUESTION/COMMENT	RESPONSE
Postal, business and telephone survey	
Given congestion is an important issue. Has the RTA asked people and businesses about when they use the bridge?	There wasn't a question in the survey about when they would use the bridge, but we do have significant data from traffic counts which pick up the traffic volumes each and every hour. The RTA has a good understanding of the traffic using the bridge and what the make up of that traffic is.

<p>Why did the survey not include areas outside of Grafton, for example lower Clarence, Junction Hill.</p>	<p>The postal survey was available to everyone to complete. There was no limitation to where people could respond to the survey.</p> <p>The telephone survey included five identified localities. Three were in Grafton, the fourth in South Grafton and the fifth (zone 5) for the wider area surrounding.</p> <p>The business survey was for local Grafton businesses to get an understanding of the business issues associated with the bridge.</p>
<p>Where did zone 5 extend to?</p>	<p>It extended to villages and townships adjacent to Grafton such as Ulmarra, Coutts Crossing, Brushgrove and other areas outside of Grafton. It didn't extend as far as Maclean and Yamba.</p>
<p>Please interpret "which bridge would I use". Does it mean using exclusively or a preference?</p>	<p>The telephone survey interviewer read out a list of the five corridors. The interviewee was asked to identify which bridge they would likely use for their day to day travel.</p> <p>There were three categories – whether they would use the new bridge, the existing bridge or both roughly the same.</p>
<p>Where did the distribution cover for the community update?</p>	<p>The June 2011 community update was distributed to the same areas as the December 2010 community update and postal survey.</p> <p>The June update was also distributed to property owners, including property owners living outside the distribution area.</p> <p>Any feedback on the distribution of the June 2011 community update is welcome.</p>
<p>Was the postal survey delivered to everyone? It was only available to some residents if they had internet access? Why wasn't it delivered to everywhere including downstream areas?</p>	<p>It was advertised widely in the newspaper, copies were available from RTA and council offices and it was available on the internet.</p>
<p>Project purpose and objectives and feasibility assessment</p>	
<p>During the feasibility assessment, why wasn't non-Aboriginal heritage and town amenity considered?</p>	<p>The assessment was based on feasibility only. That is, could the bridge be built? It was not an option comparison and assessment exercise.</p>
<p>Please provide some examples. (Bob Higgins)</p>	<p>For example:</p> <p>Susan Island options due to significant Aboriginal heritage and ecological impacts.</p> <p>An option that run along the river – too</p>

	<p>expensive and potential flooding impacts.</p> <p>An option using the existing lower rail deck due to insufficient head room due to bracing girders.</p> <p>Some options that had curves tighter than design standards and flood impacts due to long crossings of the river and/or floodplain.</p>
<p>Was any consideration given to the heritage buildings within Grafton, eg Bacon Street? These are of State significance. Why are you still considering options in this area?</p>	<p>Heritage is a key consideration and will be investigated in detail at the next stage.</p>
<p>Why wouldn't all the options in the heritage areas be taken off the table?</p>	<p>At this stage it was a feasibility assessment. The heritage areas will be investigated and all registers will be reviewed.</p>
<p>What is the advantage of having a bridge to North Street that will one day be a residential area? What is the purpose of the project – to reduce congestion?</p> <p>If you put a bridge at North Street no one will use it other than the Summerland Way, so then why not move it completely out where the ferry is. Bypass the whole residential area.</p>	<p>We are looking at what the function of the bridge is. We have undertaken traffic studies and survey data to identify traffic volumes and where traffic is travelling.</p> <p>Traffic studies show that the vast majority of traffic is local going to Grafton or South Grafton.</p> <p>One of the questions that poses for us is if we put a bridge further away from the existing, how much traffic will that attract and conversely how much traffic will it take off the existing bridge.</p> <p>Further modelling will be done on the 25 preliminary options to understand traffic movements, access and patronage on the new and existing bridges.</p> <p>One of the reason the RTA has undertaken the various community surveys is to understand community preference but also to understand which bridge is likely to be used if the new bridge is in the various locations.</p> <p>All this information will feed into the technical assessments to be undertaken for the project.</p>
<p>Non-Aboriginal heritage is shown in Appendix C of the Feasibility Assessment Report which indicates this will be a consideration.</p>	<p>Correct. The maps show all State significance non-Aboriginal heritage items.</p>
<p>Upstream options should not be considered because you have to go across the rail line.</p> <p>Will the existing bridge continue to be used? Why</p>	<p>Planning is based around retaining the existing bridge as a road and rail traffic bridge. The majority of options retain the bridge as it</p>

<p>not close it down and use it for cyclists and pedestrians only? Will the new bridge be 2, 3 or 4 lanes?</p>	<p>currently is.</p> <p>Some options in the immediate vicinity of the bridge present the opportunity to convert the existing two lanes into one way traffic with the new bridge carrying traffic the opposite way.</p> <p>The RTA is aware of the issue of crossing the railway line for options upstream of the existing bridge. A 5.3m clearance over the road needs to be provided. Looking at these issues is part of the work associated with what we are doing.</p> <p>The new bridge will be two or three lanes, depending on its location.</p>
<p>Alipou Creek floods in heavy rain not just in flood.</p>	<p>At this point in time, preliminary design work for all options is based on a viaduct across the floodplain to minimise flood impact as much as possible. The RTA recognises all options will have some impact on flooding. At the next stage we will consider what these flood impacts are and what mitigation measures may be required.</p>
<p>What is defined as "local traffic"?</p>	<p>Traffic travelling to or from Grafton and South Grafton and in the immediate vicinity, including Junction Hill. See the traffic study that was presented at the last forum.</p>
<p>Is the project purpose and objectives open for discussion?</p>	<p>The project purpose and key objectives have now been adopted. The supporting objectives are open for discussion.</p>
<p>On the RTA website, the 2009 traffic study states majority of traffic is local, however figures show 45% was internal to internal, 53% internal to external and 2% is eternal, through traffic. Can that be updated please?</p> <p>Also project purpose and objectives – are we being offered a discussion on these?</p>	<p>Key objectives have been adopted and we are inviting comment and feedback on the supporting objectives.</p>
<p>75% of the 104 business survey respondents wanted a bypass. Why isn't Summerland Way, bypass or heavy vehicles out of town identified in the project objectives?</p> <p>Can we please discuss?</p>	<p>The key traffic objective refers to "the State road network". This includes Gwydir highway, Summerland Way and Pacific Highway.</p>
<p>Traffic and next steps</p>	
<p>How many routes will be in the short list?</p>	<p>At least one in each of the five corridors, but</p>

	possibly two or three if deemed suitable. The short listed options will then go through the process to identify a preferred location.
Will the end decision be made on money?	Cost will be a consideration. Value for money will also be a consideration.
Is it likely that good options will be discounted due to high cost?	Value for money will be a consideration. Economic and environmental impacts, traffic and other issues will also be considered.
Has the RTA given thought into a demand management strategy between now and when the bridge is built? And whose responsibility is it?	One of the proposed supporting objectives is looking at demand management issues. It is a parallel exercise the RTA is investigating and will take forward.
How will you engage people on this issue?	Mechanisms for community input are being considered and the RTA recognises it is an important issue.
Will the new traffic counts be taken at Clarenza near school areas, Maclean, Coffs Harbour or Ulmarra?	Additional traffic counts are being undertaken to refine the existing traffic model and to help understand internal traffic movements. We currently have sufficient data for external trips, from outlining areas (ie for Clarenza, incoming from Coffs and Ulmarra).
How will community participants be selected for the evaluation workshops?	Ideally the RTA will look to the community to organise their own participation. This will depend on how many people are willing and able to participate. If too many people nominate themselves, then we will ask that these people to meet together and decide who will be the participants. As a last resort, the RTA will make the decision.
The existing traffic data is based on the existing infrastructure. But it is hard to project into the future when we don't know where infrastructure or the new bridge will be.	Correct, it is difficult to predict future development. However, the RTA is working closely with Council regarding future land use and the development of residential, industrial, commercial and future employment zones. This will be an input into the traffic modelling. The RTA is also using the population forecasts identified in the Mid North Coast Regional Strategy, and will consider future Pacific

	<p>Highway upgrades including the Grafton bypass.</p> <p>(Bob Higgins): The traffic model will be developed for potential locations. The model will be calibrated, run and the impacts of each route option will be assessed. The RTA will look at patronage, traffic movements etc. The RTA will provide a forum for the community on this topic.</p>
<p>There are only two real options worth considering - near the existing bridge, or a bypass option.</p> <p>The bypass is the most popular, but the most expensive. There is lots of support from Council and business also. But it can't be built until the Pacific Highway is upgraded. Can we just get moving and get a decision made.</p>	<p>The RTA understands the difficulty with uncertainty for the community and we are pushing on with this as fast as we can.</p> <p>The RTA needs to go through a process to ensure we understand what the implications of each of the options are, based on community input as well as solid investigations. At the end of the day the final decision has to be robust and defensible.</p>
<p>If the community option is not where the people want it, e.g Taree, would the RTA overrule the community on the final options? The RTA is the expert.</p>	<p>It's not a matter of overruling. There are three key inputs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the community, - technical investigations, and - Value Management Workshop. <p>Community input includes understanding the views of the community. It is clear from feedback the RTA has received that there is some support for all options and, while some options have more support than other options, there is not a unified support amongst the community for a bypass.</p> <p>The process is about bringing the three components together and coming up with the best overall option for everybody.</p>
<p>What is the consultation process with the people who will be directly affected by the options? My property has only just been added as an option in the last phase. Will there be discussions or just a letter?</p>	<p>It will be both. At times the RTA will need to advise residents formally by sending a letter.</p> <p>The project team is also more than willing to go out and talk to people. We have already had a number of meetings with individuals and groups upon request.</p> <p>The RTA appreciates that this is a very significant issue and will try to consult as best we can with the community.</p> <p>Sending out the June 2011 community update with the new distribution process assisted in</p>

	<p>notifying as many people as possible of the potential options. This will allow the community to have the opportunity to input into the process.</p>
<p>How were options for the existing bridge developed?</p> <p>Were any from February 2010?</p>	<p>Some options were identified from the previous studies and some were developed from traffic studies to solve the traffic problems. Most options are community suggestions.</p> <p>Yes, they were carried over.</p>
<p>Why do we have so many options near the existing bridge, when surveys in 2003/04 showed most people wanted a location with access to Clarenza, downstream of the existing bridge?</p>	<p>Most of the options presented are community suggestions. As part of the feasibility assessment we removed suggestions that were not feasible.</p> <p>The remainder will go forward for further investigation. In the next step of the short-listing process we will reduce the number of options in each corridor further.</p>
<p>The Community Liaison Plan indicates there will be 10 community representatives. How many RTA representatives will there be? Concerned it will be top heavy.</p>	<p>This is not yet defined, but there will be key RTA stakeholders involved.</p> <p>This will not be a voting exercise. It will be a workshop where participants are working through the issues and providing input into the process.</p>
<p>Will you consider banning trucks from using the old bridge?</p>	<p>Yes, the new bridge will be identified as the new heavy vehicle route. The RTA will also look at what traffic will be retained on the existing bridge.</p>
<p>Has anyone discussed this project with the Federal Government?</p> <p>Alstonville Bypass was federally funded.</p>	<p>Our brief is to identify a recommended preferred location for the new bridge and preserve the route corridor in preparation for construction. Funding arrangements for the construction are not known at this stage.</p> <p>(Bob Higgins): The State has the responsibility as the planning authority. Funding arrangements are still being considered. Our first step is to identify and preserve the route.</p>