



Transport
Roads & Maritime
Services

GUNNEDAH SECOND ROAD OVER RAIL BRIDGE

Early feedback summary

DECEMBER 2012



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BACKGROUND

Current traffic constraints on the Oxley Highway through Gunnedah have made building a second road over rail bridge a local and state government priority.

The existing traffic constraints are:

- The inability of the Dr P.H. Stanley Bridge on the Abbott Street section of the Oxley Highway to carry Higher Mass Limit (HML) vehicles. It is the only remaining HML deficient bridge on the Oxley Highway
- Traffic congestion at the New Street level crossing causing queuing through the intersection with the Oxley Highway and subsequent delays. These delays are expected to increase as the length and frequency of coal trains using the rail line increases to keep pace with continued development of the coal industry.

RMS awarded KBR the contract to develop and assess concept options for a second road over rail bridge in Gunnedah.

It is anticipated that the concept options for the new bridge will be available for consideration early in the new year with a preferred Concept Option announced in mid-2013.

RMS is committed to informing and consulting project stakeholders and the community throughout the project to ensure a strategic solution is found that meets the needs of the Gunnedah community and the transport industry.

The \$16 million project is funded by the NSW Government and is scheduled for completion by 2016, weather permitting.

EARLY FEEDBACK SUMMARY

This report summarises feedback received at the first community drop-in sessions held on Monday 10 December 2012 (11 am-2pm and 5pm-8pm) at the Gunnedah Town Hall. RMS invited the community to attend these sessions via a letterbox dropped Letter to the Householder, advertisements and media releases in the week prior to the event.

Based on collected feedback, this report provides preliminary information to help guide the development of the concept options and future public participation activities. As the project progresses, further feedback from the community will be sought and considered.

The community can contact the project team to provide further feedback at any time by phone (1800 029 585) or email (secondroadoverrailbridge@kbr.com).

COMMUNITY ATTENDANCE

Approximately 50 members of the community attended the drop-in sessions including residents and businesses from both within and outside the study area. Forty of the attendees completed the sign-in sheet indicating that they wanted to be kept up to date with project progress.

PRELIMINARY FEEDBACK

Community feedback was received through formal feedback forms and discussion with the project team.

Using the formal feedback forms, respondents indicated which issues they thought were the most important for the project team to consider when planning for a second road over rail bridge in Gunnedah (Figure 1). The top four issues identified were: traffic congestion, pedestrian safety, impact on the community and impact on property.

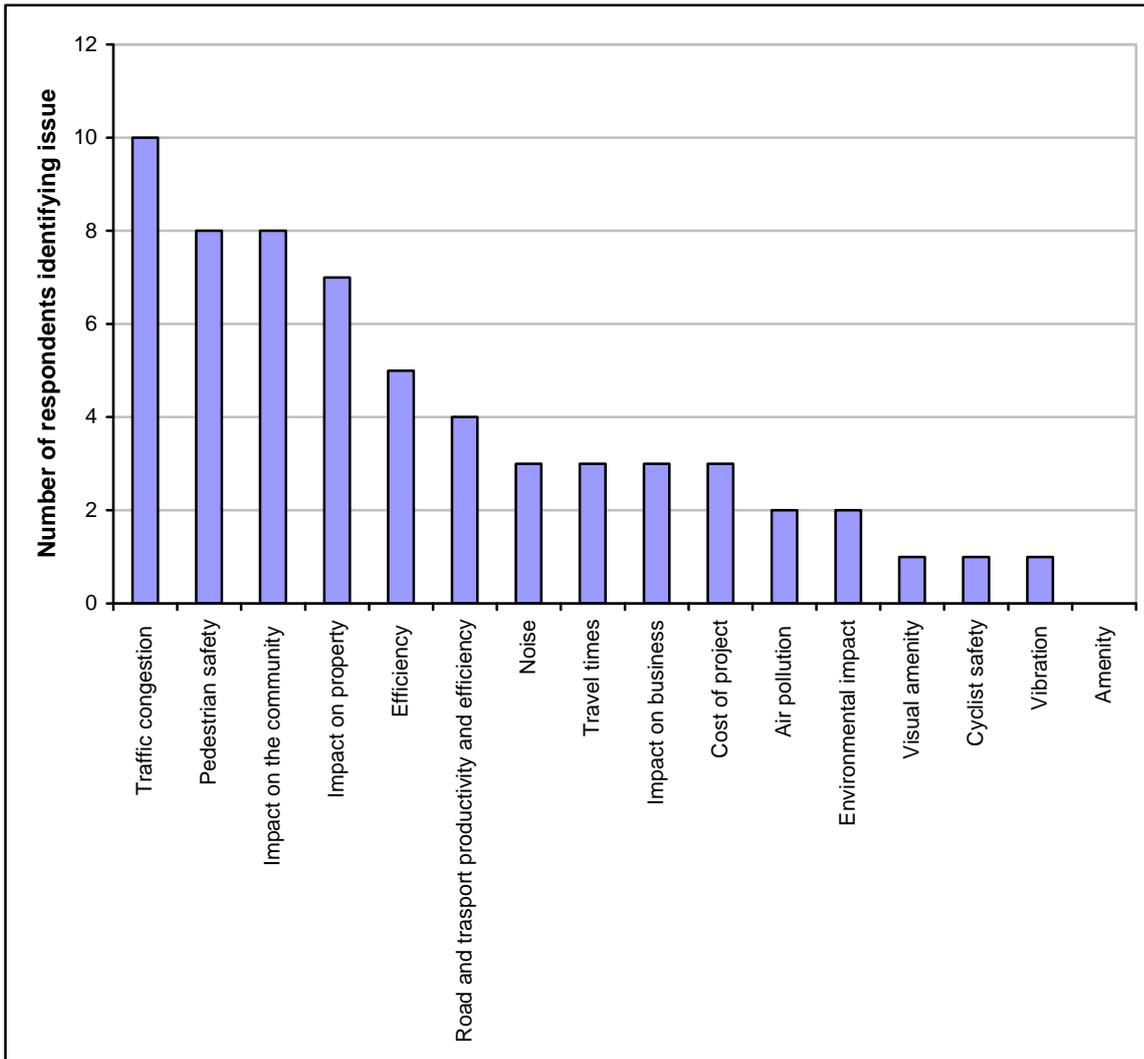


Figure 1 - ISSUES FOR PROJECT TEAM TO CONSIDER

SUMMARY OF ISSUES

During discussions with the project team at the drop-in sessions, the community identified the following issues / potential impacts for consideration when developing the concept options:

Heavy vehicles:

- Study area that has been defined rules out any consideration of a bypass for trucks around the town.
- Trucks accessing the Fuel Depot on Railway Avenue can obstruct the road.
- Potential increases in traffic noise associated with heavy vehicles near schools on Bloomfield Street.
- Safety associated with heavy vehicles near schools on Bloomfield Street.
- At the maize mill (on New Street), trucks (maximum size B-double 64.5 t) must enter from New Street and exit onto Warrabungle Street. The trucks also make use of the existing Bloomfield Street Alternate Heavy Vehicle Route.

Pedestrian access

- Safe and practical disabled access for mobility scooter users with consideration of suitable path gradients and width (e.g. allowing sufficient room for people pushing prams with infants to pass scooter users without either having to leave the path).
- Safe access for pedestrians and cyclists during bridge construction.

Environment

- Clearing of vegetation — it was suggested that tree planting could be carried out within the study area on the southern side of the Oxley Highway.
- Potential increases in exhaust fumes from traffic.
- Any realignment of Blackjack Creek may have implications for the project
- Localised flooding (particularly water flowing along Blackjack Creek) and how road will be flood-proofed.

Property impacts/access

- Property value implications due to changes.
- To access fuel depot (on Railway Avenue) most trucks (25 m B-doubles) travel south along New Street and turn left in to Railway Avenue.
- Local buses regularly cross the New Street level crossing travelling both north and south.
- Modification of roads connecting to the new bridge could alter through traffic past businesses and reduce customer patronage.

Other

- Steepness of the bridge may have noise (truck braking), visual amenity, property access (e.g. maize mill) and safety (e.g. risk of brake failure) implications.
- Retention of the existing level crossing on New Street once the bridge is constructed.
- Protection of community amenities on the southern side of the Oxley Highway.
- Surety of government funding to ensure timely delivery of the infrastructure.
- GSC Strategic Plan and Livable Communities consultation could provide relevant information.

SUMMARY OF SUGGESTIONS FOR BRIDGE LOCATION AND ASSOCIATED WORKS

Below is a preliminary summary of suggestions made at the community drop-in sessions for the location of a new bridge and modifications of associated road works:

- Put a roundabout at the intersection of the Kamilaroi Highway and Warrabungle Street.
- Direct traffic down Rosemary Street to a bridge that crosses the rail line at the southern end of the street.
- Direct trucks along the back of Pensioners Hill (outside the study area) to link in with existing agricultural facilities (e.g. saleyards and silos on Kamilaroi Highway).
- Direct traffic behind the maize mill and down Warrabungle Street (suggested by multiple parties).
- Construct a bridge that spans from the northern side of the New Street level crossing to the southern side of the Oxley Highway (Respondent described this as second preference to the directing traffic behind the flour mill and down Warrabungle Street).
- Build a second railway line that bypasses the town.

NEXT STEPS AND FURTHER INFORMATION

The feedback received during the community drop-in sessions will be taken into consideration in developing the preliminary concept options.

The project team will continue to engage with the community during the process to identify a location for a second road over rail bridge at Gunnedah. The project team has a formal process for receiving and quickly and effectively dealing with enquiries and complaints.

For more information please visit the RMS project website at www.rms.gov.au.

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