

## **Olympic Highway intersection upgrades through Wagga Wagga** **Frequently asked questions**

### **Project information**

#### **WHY ARE YOU LOOKING INTO IMPROVEMENTS AT THESE TWO INTERSECTIONS?**

Traffic growth resulting from increased land development in northern Wagga Wagga is placing increasing pressure on Olympic Highway intersections at Travers Street and Old Narrandera Road.

The NSW Government has committed \$30 million towards upgrading the two Olympic Highway intersections and widening the Sturt Highway at Marshalls Creek Bridge.

Proposed Old Narrandera Road and Travers Street intersection project objectives are to:

- Improve road safety
- Improve access between northern growth areas and services in Wagga Wagga
- Improve travel time and reduce delays for commuters and freight travelling on this section of the Olympic Highway
- Support future residential growth in the Wagga Wagga area.

#### **WHY NOT JUST DUPLICATE GOBBAGOMBALIN BRIDGE?**

Transport for NSW acknowledges short delays in peak periods on Gobbagombalin Bridge.

The project scope is to look at improving safety and performance at Old Narrandera Road and Travers Street intersections.

While Gobbagombalin Bridge is not being considered as part of this work, proposed intersection upgrades will improve safety, access and traffic efficiency for this increasingly busy area, including improved traffic flow along the bridge.

## **WHAT ARE THE CRASH STATS AT THE OLYMPIC HIGHWAY INTERSECTIONS OF OLD NARRANDERA ROAD AND TRAVERS STREET?**

Between 2013 and 2018, there were seven reported crashes at Travers Street intersection, resulting in one moderate injury and one minor injury. In the same period, there were two reported crashes at Old Narrandera Road intersection, resulting in one serious injury and one moderate injury. Transport for NSW also expects there are many unreported crashes at these intersections.

## **HOW MUCH WILL THE INTERSECTION UPGRADES COST?**

The NSW Government has committed \$30 million towards upgrading the two Olympic Highway intersections and widening Marshall's Creek on the Sturt Highway.

### **Preferred options**

## **WHAT IS THE PREFERRED OPTION FOR OLD NARRANDERA ROAD?**

Safety and congestion at the Old Narrandera Road intersection were the biggest community concerns in the call for feedback, from 3 June to 28 June 2019. Safety of vehicles turning onto the highway was the number one concern for respondents.

The preferred option features traffic lights with extra lane capacity, which would achieve all project objectives while also providing value for money.

The preferred option also includes two right turn lanes from Old Narrandera Road onto Olympic Highway, and reversing the current merge lane on Gobbagombalin Bridge approach from inside lane vehicles merging to the left to outside lane vehicles merging to the right, as is more accepted, and was highlighted as an issue during the community feedback.

Left turn slip lanes for vehicles travelling north will be retained and help to improve traffic flow.

## **WHAT IS THE PREFERRED OPTION FOR TRAVERS STREET?**

Key community concerns about Travers Street focused on congestion and traffic efficiency in peak periods.

An option which offers three-leg traffic signals south of the existing location provides the most value while delivering the project objectives.

The preferred option includes removing the current roundabout and converting the Olympic Highway and Moorong Street's northern intersection to left-in, left-out.

This will be defined further as the design progresses and impacted stakeholders are consulted.

## **WHY TRAFFIC LIGHTS?**

The preferred options for both Old Narrandera Road and Travers Street include installing traffic light T-intersections.

Due to high traffic volumes and rapid growth in northern Wagga Wagga, traffic lights were found to be the safest and most efficient option to move traffic through both intersections for the following reasons:

- Traffic lights will provide safe access for pedestrians and cyclists – our most vulnerable road users.
- Built-in turning lanes will ensure a steady traffic movement with minimal delays to through traffic.
- Traffic lights will allow extra lanes to be added as needed in years to come, and do not rule out possible future upgrades at each location.
- Traffic lights had a high degree of community support.
- Traffic lights at both intersections may be linked via an intelligent traffic management system, allowing coordination between both intersection and the greater Wagga Wagga state road network.
- Traffic lights require less maintenance than roundabouts, resulting in fewer future disruptions for the community.
- Traffic lights allow more control over traffic, allowing more green time where more traffic needs to travel through the intersection. This will also allow a more balanced flow to provide opportunities for exiting both Travers Street and Old Narrandera Road Intersections.

## **DID COMMUNITY FEEDBACK SUPPORT TRAFFIC LIGHTS?**

Transport for NSW invited feedback on Old Narrandera Road and Travers Street intersections from 3 June 2019 to 28 June 2019.

During the consultation, about 390 comments were provided by residents and road users, via email, phone, letter and via an online consultation map.

Key suggestions for improving both locations included intersection upgrades to include building a roundabout or traffic lights.

Comments demonstrated strong support for traffic lights at both intersections, enabling safe and efficient traffic flow through the area and protected turning movements onto the highway.

### **HOW DO TRAFFIC LIGHTS MEET THE PROJECT OBJECTIVES?**

Traffic lights will improve safety by taking out risky decision-making by motorists. Additional lane capacity at both intersections will improve traffic efficiency.

While travel time may not be improved on all legs due to stopping at red lights, traffic from Travers Street and Old Narrandera Road will enjoy reduced delays provided by a green light and protected highway access.

Crash frequency and severity is expected to decrease with traffic lights, as road users will not be frustrated into making risky decisions when struggling to find appropriate gaps in peak period traffic.

Traffic lights are also more 'future-proof', enabling extra lanes to be added as needed in years to come

### **WILL TRAFFIC LIGHTS CAUSE MAJOR DELAYS?**

No. While the key driver of these upgrades is to improve safety, traffic modelling suggests traffic will be able to travel through the intersection on a single green light phase.

Vehicles currently turning from Old Narrandera Road and Travers Street onto Olympic Highway are already facing delays and uncertainty during peak times, with some making unsafe decisions due to limited gaps in traffic. Traffic lights will allow these road users to turn safely onto the highway protected by a green light.

### **HOW WERE THE PREFERRED OPTIONS DECIDED?**

In September 2019, Transport for NSW brought together project team members, technical specialists and key stakeholders, including Wagga Wagga City Council representatives, to participate in a value management workshop to assess shortlisted options for Old Narrandera Road and Travers Street intersections. Workshop participants agreed to project objectives, identified broad community issues and key feedback, assessed technical information and a range of design options before recommendations were made.

The workshop recommendation was to proceed with T-intersection with traffic lights at both locations as these options met the objectives, long-term essential requirements and provided value for money.

For more information on the options that were assessed and decided upon, please refer to the preferred options report which is now available at [www.rms.nsw.gov.au/projects/olympic-highway-intersection-upgrades](http://www.rms.nsw.gov.au/projects/olympic-highway-intersection-upgrades)

## **WAS AN UNDERPASS OPTION INVESTIGATED?**

Yes. An underpass at Old Narrandera Road was one of the options investigated early. The existing underpass is not wide enough or high enough for heavy vehicles to travel through. This would require major works which would have significant, long term highway traffic disruption to build it. The underpass option was also found not wide enough to allow vehicles to turn.

The current underpass is also identified in Council's active travel plan, which includes a cycle path connecting from growing northern Wagga Wagga areas along Gardiner Street.

An overpass was included during the Value Management Workshop. This option was not progressed due to its higher cost to achieve similar benefits to traffic signals.

## **HOW WILL TRAFFIC LIGHTS AT OLD NARRANDERA ROAD IMPACT THE BOOROOMA STREET RAMP?**

The southbound ramp connecting Boorooma Street to the highway will continue past Old Narrandera Road, with a longer merge into a single lane south of the intersection just before the bridge. Traffic merging onto the highway from Estella via Boorooma Street will not have to merge until after the new traffic lights.

## **HOW WILL YOU ENSURE VEHICLES TURNING LEFT ONTO OLD NARRANDERA ROAD WON'T IMPACT THROUGH TRAFFIC?**

The current left turn lane into Old Narrandera Road will be retained. This lane will not have a traffic light, so left turning traffic will not be delayed by any red light.

Lane configurations will be decided during the detailed design process following more detailed traffic modelling. We will be in contact with the community after this stage for feedback.

## **CAN THE COMMUNITY SUBMIT FEEDBACK ON THE OPTIONS?**

The community provided Transport with NSW with considerable feedback in June 2019 when it was asked to highlight the biggest safety concerns at the two Olympic Highway intersections. This feedback was carefully considered when selecting the preferred options at these locations.

The community will be able to provide further feedback on the preferred options when the review of environmental factors (REF) is publicly displayed as part of the concept design process.

### **HOW WILL THE PREFERRED OPTIONS BENEFIT CYCLISTS AND PEDESTRIANS?**

Pedestrian phasing at the traffic lights will be investigated during the concept design phase. Cyclists will benefit from improved safety on the road network as the project will provide for Council's cycle plan infrastructure.

### **HOW WILL THE PREFERRED OPTIONS BENEFIT HEAVY AND OVER SIZE OVER MASS (OSOM) VEHICLES?**

Heavy vehicles and OSOM will benefit from increased safety at both intersections. All turning lanes will be designed with large heavy vehicles in mind, to ensure enough space for safe turning movements.

### **HOW WILL YOU ENSURE ENOUGH ROOM FOR TRAFFIC TURNING RIGHT INTO TRAVERS STREET?**

Current traffic modelling predicts the right turn lane is long enough to cope with morning peak traffic.

Lane configurations will be decided during the detailed design process following more detailed traffic modelling. We will be in contact with the community after this stage for feedback.

We understand a large percentage of traffic at this intersection travels northbound over the bridge and will keep this in mind during the design process.

### **WHY IS THE TRAVERS STREET INTERSECTION BEING MOVED SOUTH?**

The current Travers Street intersection is located close to Gobbagombalin Bridge's southern abutment. Investigations show there is not enough length for road users to react safely before approaching the intersection. Southbound traffic also slows down on the bridge causing delays to through traffic.

A relocated intersection, providing a left-turn lane for vehicles turning onto Travers Street from Olympic Highway, will improve intersection capacity, traffic efficiency and safety.

### **WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE HORSE TUNNEL UNDER TRAVERS STREET?**

We will talk to the Murrumbidgee Turf Club during concept design and consider options for allowing horses to safely cross the highway.

### **WHAT ARE THE IMPACTS TO MOORONG STREET?**

The preferred option includes access changes to the northern intersection of Moorong Street and the Olympic Highway, to left-in, left-out.

This will remove conflicts of traffic turning across the highway at this location.

These changes will be discussed with impacted Moorong Street businesses before the design progresses.

We will ensure business and community members are aware of left-in, left-out movements through an education campaign and signage, if the proposed changes progress.

We understand heavy vehicles will need ample room to turn if left-in, left-out progresses and will keep this in mind during the detailed design process.

### **WILL THE PREFERRED INTERSECTION OPTIONS REQUIRE PROPERTY ACQUISITION?**

Depending on the proposed alignment, some acquisition may be required. This may impact locally on cycle pathways. Potential property impacts will be assessed during concept design if required.

### **HOW WAS THE COMMUNITY FEEDBACK USED IN DECIDING ON THE PREFERRED OPTIONS?**

About 390 comments were received via an online consultation tool, emails, phone calls and in person during the call for feedback from 3 to 28 June 2019.

This feedback was used to develop a community consultation report, detailing the community's suggestions. The community consultation report can be viewed or downloaded at: [www.rms.nsw.gov.au/projects/olympic-highway-intersection-upgrades](http://www.rms.nsw.gov.au/projects/olympic-highway-intersection-upgrades).

Community feedback played a key role in the preferred option decision-making process, ensuring the project team had an understanding of community concerns, suggestions and experiences.

### **WHAT ROLE HAS WAGGA WAGGA CITY COUNCIL PLAYED IN THIS PROJECT?**

Wagga Wagga City Council is a key stakeholder in the Olympic Highway intersection upgrades project. Council staff participated in the Value Management Workshop, serving as stakeholders, knowledge experts and community representatives.

Transport for NSW will continue to discuss the proposed project with council to ensure any changes align with council's Integrated Transport Strategy and Wagga Wagga's wider transport landscape.

All other businesses and residents near the intersections will continue to be contacted throughout the various stages of the project.

## **IS THERE CONSTRUCTION FUNDING FOR THE UPGRADES PROJECT?**

The NSW Government has committed a total of \$30 million to improving both intersections as well as widening Marshall's Creek Bridge. The government commitment is to build all three projects, with funding allocated in the NSW Budget.

## **WHEN WILL THE INTERSECTIONS BE BUILT?**

There are a number of design, environment and constructability stages to go through before the project is finalised and ready for construction. As designs are further developed, Transport for NSW will be able to provide greater clarity on expected construction timeframes.

## **WHAT IMPACT WILL CONSTRUCTION HAVE ON ROAD USERS AND RESIDENTS?**

It is not yet known how this project will impact road users and residents. However, the relocated intersection on Travers Street will have the benefit of limiting impacts while major work is carried out outside the current road. The traffic lights option on Old Narrandera Road will also have far less impacts than, for example, a multi-lane roundabout.

Transport for NSW will keep the community updated as the project progresses and will consider impacts during every stage.

## **Urban Highway study and bypass**

### **HOW DOES THIS FIT IN WITH THE WAGGA WAGGA URBAN HIGHWAY STUDY?**

Olympic Highway traffic movement to the north of Wagga Wagga was investigated as part of Transport for NSW's Wagga Wagga Urban Highway Study. The study found traffic delays on Gobbagombalin Bridge resulted from intersections at either end, especially the Travers Street roundabout. The study has not yet been publicly released.

### **WHAT IS THE WAGGA WAGGA URBAN HIGHWAY STUDY?**

Transport for NSW has investigated Sturt and Olympic Highway performance through Wagga Wagga in the Wagga Wagga Urban Highway Study. The study looked into road safety improvements, traffic delays at key locations, opportunities to improve traffic flow across state highways especially during peak times, considered a possible alternative freight route bypassing central Wagga Wagga and assessed options for improved heavy vehicle servicing, uncoupling and rest area facilities. The study has not yet been publicly released.

## **WHY HAS IT TAKEN SO LONG TO RELEASE THE WAGGA WAGGA URBAN HIGHWAY STUDY?**

Since the study's completion in 2017, the NSW Government released Future Transport 2056, its 40-year vision to guide the delivery of transport services and infrastructure. Future Transport 2056 focuses on connecting our regional cities and centres to ensure regional communities play their role in the larger NSW, Australian and global context.

The Future Transport Regional NSW Services and Infrastructure Plan included an initiative to develop Place Plans or integrated transport and land use plans for key regional cities. Wagga Wagga was chosen to pilot the new approach. At this time, the decision was made to incorporate the findings and recommendations from the Wagga Wagga Urban Highway Study into the Wagga Wagga Place Plan, together with inputs from a range of stakeholders from across the Transport cluster, other state agencies and the broader community.

Unfortunately, it has taken longer than expected to finalise the Wagga Wagga Place Plan. It is anticipated the place plan will be released before the end of 2020.

## **HOW DOES THIS FIT IN WITH COUNCIL'S DESIRE FOR A WAGGA WAGGA BYPASS AND ITS INTEGRATED TRANSPORT STUDY?**

Wagga Wagga City Council's recent Integrated Transport Strategy pinpointed a need for a heavy vehicle alternate route around the outskirts of Wagga Wagga. While these findings differ to those in the Wagga Wagga Urban Highway Study, Transport for NSW will continue to work with Council to plan for an alternative heavy vehicle route so that if or when the volumes increase and impact the level of service of the State road network, appropriate measures can be carried out.

It is Transport for NSW's intention to continue working with Council to strategically plan for the future and engage with our community and key stakeholders to ensure the State road network meets the city's needs as it continues to grow.

### **Community consultation report**

## **WHAT IS A COMMUNITY CONSULTATION REPORT?**

A community consultation report provides an overview of the community's comments following a call for feedback and Transport for NSW's responses to the main issues.

The report is an essential tool illustrating the views of a range of stakeholders and community members and ensures all community consultation is transparent.

## **HOW DO I ACCESS THE REPORT?**

The Olympic Highway intersection upgrades community consultation report can be downloaded from the project webpage: [www.rms.nsw.gov.au/projects/south-western/olympic-highway-intersection-upgrades/index.html](http://www.rms.nsw.gov.au/projects/south-western/olympic-highway-intersection-upgrades/index.html)

## **HOW WILL YOU COMMUNICATE THE NEXT STEPS TO THE PUBLIC?**

The community will be kept informed of the proposed project throughout the process. Notification letters, social media and targeted feedback will inform the community of the latest news. The project website will also be kept up-to-date with the latest information.