

Your Ref: Richmond Bridge Duplication Preferred Option Report (June 2021)
Our Ref: HCC Submission



17 September 2021

The Project Manager
Richmond Bridge Duplication Project
Transport for NSW

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Dear Sir/Madam

Hawkesbury City Council Submission - Richmond Bridge Duplication and Traffic Improvements – Preferred Option Report (June 2021)

I refer to the above mentioned Richmond Bridge Duplication and Traffic Improvements – Preferred Option Report (June 2021). Council has formally considered the Preferred Option Report at its Ordinary Meetings on 10 August 2021 and 14 September 2021, and resolved to provide the following comments for your consideration.

Council welcomes the announcement of a \$500 million investment by the NSW and Commonwealth Governments for new infrastructure provision. We have lobbied successive governments to provide this funding as we see this infrastructure as critically needed. The following comments are intended to get the very best out of this process for our community. This includes recommending maximum futureproofing for this significant investment.

We note that the project is to be staged, with stage 1 being the work on the upgrade of The Driftway which is common to all options. As outlined below, we are fully supportive of stage 1 and would urge Transport for NSW to begin work on this stage as soon as possible. We have a number of concerns and questions about stage 2 as outlined in this submission and believe that there is sufficient time for this conversation to continue with the community, whilst work on stage 1 progresses.

Relevant to this matter, Council has previously resolved at its Ordinary Meeting on 29 June 2021:

- That Council supports in principle the upgrade of The Driftway
- That Council requires a solution that offers the best possible flood immunity and traffic flow.

Additionally, the following key points are outlined below:

Strategic Context

Council encourages the provision of infrastructure that is future-proof, both in terms of design and capacity, and which fits within an agreed and understood bigger transport infrastructure picture. As such, greater clarity is sought in terms of how the proposal aligns in a strategic sense with the following State, Regional and Local transport plans:

- Greater Sydney Region Plan and Western City District Plan 2018
- Future Transport 2056
- 1951 Castlereagh corridor which ends at Springwood Road and how this project will connect





- Proposed Grose River Bridge
- Resilient Valley Resilient Communities – Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley Flood Risk Management Strategy.

Such an approach will ensure that funding for the project is spent in a manner focussed on long term solutions as opposed to shorter term issues. Additionally, the Preferred Option Report should consider whether projects such as the Grose River Bridge not proceeding represent a critical risk to the project, and whether or not such a scenario would affect the assessment of preferred corridors. It is Council's understanding that the traffic modelling for the project relies on the construction of the Grose River Bridge. Council and the community need to know what might happen if the Grose River Bridge is not built by the developers of Redbank. Does Transport for NSW have modelling for this scenario? Is Transport for NSW proposing to guarantee that the Grose River Bridge would be built with the contributions it would receive from the developer?

The capacity of Grose Vale Road to cater for any of the options should be assessed and outlined in the Preferred Option Report, including traffic loading on the road, and the intersection with Terrace Road.

Socio Economic Impacts

Council notes that the Preferred Option Report does not include a full assessment of the social and economic impacts of the project, particularly with respect to people living and working in North Richmond, Norfolk Place, Southee Road, and the Lowlands, including the polo community Council believe that this is an essential part of the assessment to ensure that the preferred option has been chosen on the basis of a full assessment.

As part of this, the cost of the option of a route that bypasses Richmond but not North Richmond should also be included for consideration.

Need to Improve Flood Resilience

Council is very disappointed that the preferred option only offers a 1 in 5 year flood height solution. The need to improve flood resilience within the road network in the Hawkesbury local government areas cannot be emphasised enough. Transport for NSW were appraised of this need from the commencement of the consultation process.

The recent February 2020 and March 2021 flood events in the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley only served to highlight this even more acutely. As outlined in the Resilient Valley Resilient Communities – Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley Flood Risk Management Strategy, the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley has the highest flood risk in NSW if not Australia. The March 2021 flood event in particular, whilst considered the first major flood within the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley since 1992 still only represented a 1:15 year flood event. The impacts of the March 2021 flood event were significant for individual property owners, but also the community. This is particularly the case for the community on the west side of the Hawkesbury River who were isolated from early in the flood event for seven days. This isolation was further compounded by failures of the state road network to the west (Bells Line of Road in particular).

As such, Council strongly encourages a corridor option and design solution that improves the flood resilience significantly above what is currently proposed (approximately 1:20 bridge height and 1:5 approaches). This includes potential flooding impacts on signal boxes for any traffic signals proposed along the corridor.

Council calls on Transport for NSW to consider both the traffic and flood resilience objectives of the project and evaluate options which may provide a better balance between these two considerations, especially in light of the increased budget.



Heritage Considerations

There are a number of heritage impacts that require detailed consideration on the preferred corridor in particular.

Of significant concern to Council is the state heritage listed item Mountain View (also known as Dight's Farm and Durham Bowes) on Inalls Lane. As highlighted by Council's Heritage Committee, the item being constructed in the early 1800's is of paramount importance on a state level. It's state heritage listing refers to its 'exceptionally high significance' and 'remarkably intact' condition. Whilst it is noted that no acquisition is proposed of this site, its untouched condition, and very early construction techniques using soft bricks and lime mortar, make it extremely vulnerable. Further, it's setting 'overlooking the lowlands farms', is now an extremely rare example of Governor Macquarie's town planning and placement of rural homesteads, perhaps one of the last rural colonial landscapes left in Australia. Therefore, the item is considered to be susceptible to significant impacts associated with both construction (noise and vibration) of the preferred corridor, and traffic movements following completion of the project, and loss of views, setting and context. It is understood that no condition assessments have been undertaken on this item to help inform the preferred corridor option.

Council strongly recommends further detailed assessment of the potential impacts of the preferred corridor option on this state heritage listed item, and if unable to be appropriately mitigated, selection of a corridor that avoids impacts to the item.

Funding

Given the significant increase in the project budget, a comparison of the expected costs of each route would give Council and other stakeholders better context to provide out feedback.

Additionally, in terms of the matters raised above, and in particular flood resilience, given the need for improved flood resilience is considered to be crucial, Council requests the costs of providing a much improved solution that increases the bridge and approaches heights to a 1:20, 1:50 and 1:100 year flood immunity be made available for consideration.

As outlined above in the Socio-Economic Impacts section of this submission, given the additional funding, there should be a comparison of alternative options in addition to those considered in the Preferred Option Report.

Opportunities for Town Centre Revitalisation and Active Transport Links

Council welcomes the opportunity that a bypass of both Richmond and North Richmond would present in assisting Council's efforts to revitalise these town centres. Council has undertaken a Masterplan for the Richmond town centre, in addition to Windsor and South Windsor as part of the Western Sydney City Deal Liveability Program. Council's vision for the North Richmond town centre is still being developed, and involves a number of individual property owners.

Council also welcomes the opportunity that this project offers for active transport, both within the centres of Richmond and North Richmond, but importantly between these centres. Council undertook a Community Insights Report (Placescore) for Hawkesbury Town Centres in February 2018 which highlighted the significance the Hawkesbury community and visitors placed on active transport within and between our town centres. In support of other points raised above the report also highlights the importance the community and visitors place on heritage, being the top place attribute. A copy of that Community Insights Report is included for your reference.



However, Council is concerned about the safety of active transport links given the volume of traffic which will continue to travel between Richmond and North Richmond via Bells Line of Road.

Acquisition and Engagement with Affected Property Owners

Previous corridor planning undertaken by Transport for NSW (in particular the 2018 Bells Line of Road and Outer Sydney Orbital corridors proposal) has proved to be highly problematic and stressful for the affected community.

Council encourages a process when dealing with affected property owners, particularly where acquisition is proposed that is equitable, fair, transparent, and maintains high levels of meaningful communication with those affected property owners.

With respect to the proposed noise mitigation of the corridor along Southee Road, Council recommends that the corridor option be designed to avoid the need to mitigate the proposed corridor.

Suggested Improvements/Clarification of Timing and Process

The following points are also provided as suggested improvements to the project:

- Should the preferred corridor option proceed, consideration of a flyover at Kurrajong Road in order to avoid an at grade intersection of the new road corridor with Kurrajong Road, and the potential for delays at a signalised intersection
- Consideration of a corridor route in more detail to ensure that the impacts are minimised and more appropriately balanced against traffic efficiency, including provision of a corridor that minimises the number of 90 degree bends, and provides for less interruption of traffic flow.

Additionally, it is recommended that the following points be considered as the project continues in order to ensure that the community is fully informed:

- Provision of details in terms of timing and milestones/prerequisite steps
- Announcements versus reality of timing expecting stage 1 build stage 2 shovel ready
- Clarity in terms of the type of approvals required – Environmental Impact Statement or Review of Environmental Factors, and expected timing of either.

Additionally, please note that Council received a number of community representations with respect to the Preferred Option Report at Council's Ordinary Meeting on 10 August 2021. Community representatives raised a number of points which Council has resolved to include the information from these community representatives for Transport for NSW's consideration. These representations include:

Strategic - Remove suggested improvements for the preferred route, as this is tacit endorsement of Transport for NSW's decision. Consider a return to the scope of the project, and seek to eliminate the negative social and economic impacts associated with the stated Preferred Option, all of which were minimised by the hybrid or yellow routes.

What other major pieces of infrastructure are being modelled/proposed post 2046, and has the preferred route been selected based upon future developments that aren't yet public knowledge.

Provide a detailed drawing of the yellow route which has the same quality and detail of the preferred route.

Increase in the budget (doubled), allows opportunity for further consultation and analysis between the green and yellow routes.



Socio-Economic Impacts – assessment needs to be provided, including need for further data to show the effects on businesses as a result of bypassing. The economic impact from the loss of polo fields and the impacts to the equine industry need to be considered and avoided.

Visual Amenity and Noise – impacts to 80 plus residential properties on Southee Road and Inalls Lane, and 50 plus residential properties in the Lowlands, Norfolk Place, Terrace Road and Bells Line of Road. Using the full Driftway corridor to Castlereagh Road, and a route alongside the current bridge completely eliminates this impact. Loss of visual amenity to the Lowlands in particular.

Flood Resilience - Transport for NSW note that to achieve a 1 in 100 flood resilience would require a 2.5km bridge. It is worth noting the Jim Anderson bridge cost \$135M. The project now has a \$500M budget and opportunity to provide a significant increase in flood resilience for the Hawkesbury. Moving from a 1 in 2 to a 1 in 5 flood resilience for a \$500M investment is a poor investment of taxpayer dollars. Additionally, has climate change been considered as part of assessment of options, and the level of flood resilience to be provided?

Aboriginal Heritage - A key constraint was the impact on Aboriginal Heritage sites on the purple route. Transport for NSW's recent map of the Green preferred Route shows for the first time that it also crosses 5 identified areas of Aboriginal Heritage Significance. Duplication in the existing bridge/road corridor reduces any Aboriginal Heritage Significance site impacts.

Sporting Field – Property and Land Use - The preferred route significantly impacts on Soccer, and Polo fields. The Options Report indicates that the yellow route has the lower impact on all of these. There has also been no accounting for the compulsory acquisition of Western Sydney University land and economic impacts on relocating important climate research.

Traffic modelling and road safety - a stated objective was to reduce right hand through traffic to reduce traffic accidents, however the Green Route creates a number of additional right turn traffic intersections, and other intersection problems which are not present in the yellow route. Concern with the proposed route parallel to Southee Road which will be blocked off at both ends, and the only way without backtracking through the suburban streets of Hobartville is via the new road, with the entrance concentrating traffic onto Valder Avenue.

Environmental Impact - on the Western Sydney University and the Hawkesbury – loss of the 100 year Pecan Trees from a heritage perspective, in addition to the Eucalypt Plantation which is not only part of the Climate Change Research but feed many of the animals in our Sydney Zoos. The natural spring opposite houses at 49 – 63 Southee Road will now have a road on top of it.

Engagement - due to the ongoing COVID situation, Transport for NSW should keep open the public consultation period until it is possible to conduct full community consultation meetings. Seek transparency from Transport for NSW, and seek public access to the full traffic modelling, Socio-Economic Analysis and full Benefit Cost Ratio reports. Need for greater engagement with the community, and shouldn't proceed to next step until further direct consultation has occurred. Need to re-engage with the community working group and businesses in North Richmond and Richmond who could miss out on business because of the green route.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission. Council would welcome ongoing communication and discussion with Transport for NSW in this respect.

Should you have any enquiries in relation to this matter please contact me on (02) 4560 4604.

Yours faithfully

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