Frequently Asked Questions

Newcastle Inner City Bypass – Rankin Park to Jesmond
Refined strategic design

May 2016

A refined strategic design has been developed for the Newcastle Inner City Bypass between Rankin Park and Jesmond.

This document provides information about the refined strategic design and the next steps in the development of the project.

1. **What is the project?**
   Rankin Park to Jesmond is the fifth section of the Newcastle Inner City Bypass, which connects the Pacific Highway at Bennetts Green with the Pacific Highway at Sandgate.

   The 3.4 kilometre section of the bypass would be built between Lookout Road at New Lambton Heights and Newcastle Road at Jesmond, to the west of the John Hunter Hospital.

   The NSW Government announced $280 million to complete the project in June 2014.

2. **Why is the project needed?**
   The Newcastle Inner City Bypass provides improved traffic flows across the western suburbs of Newcastle and connects key regional destinations such as Bennetts Green, Charlestown and Jesmond shopping centres, John Hunter Hospital, Newcastle University and the Pacific Highway.

   The Rankin Park to Jesmond section of the bypass would provide traffic relief to key parts of the surrounding road network, particularly the existing route of Lookout Road, Croudace Street and Newcastle Road. About 40,000 to 60,000 vehicles currently use the corridor each day.

   The surrounding road network experiences high levels of traffic congestion and delays at key intersections. These issues are likely to worsen in the future as traffic volumes increase.

   The project is expected to deliver major benefits to motorists by providing improved north-south travel conditions and avoiding 11 sets of traffic lights along the existing route.

3. **Why have you made changes to the 2007 design?**
   There have been changes made to the 2007 design to minimise or avoid environmental impacts, improve traffic performance and
functionality of the project and improve amenity for nearby residential areas.

The design changes consider previous community feedback and additional technical investigations including:
- Environmental studies
- Road and bridge design
- Geotechnical investigations
- Traffic surveys and traffic modelling.

Information about the options, investigations and studies carried out is available in the Refined Strategic Design Report which can be viewed at rms.nsw.gov.au/rp2]

4. What is a “refined strategic design”? The refined strategic design is more detailed than the 2007 strategic design, however is not the final design.

We are encouraging the community to provide feedback on the refined strategic design and its supporting report to help prepare the concept design and environmental assessment for public display later this year.

5. What are the key design changes to the bypass alignment since the 2007 display? Key changes to the bypass alignment include:
- The alignment has been moved to reduce potential noise and visual impacts on residential areas as well as avoid or reduce impacts on threatened flora and fauna within the bushland corridor
- Three structures provided along the bypass to improve connectivity in the bushland for people and animals.

6. What are the key design changes to the northern interchange (Jesmond)? Key changes to the northern interchange include:
- Existing roundabout on Newcastle Road has been replaced with traffic lights to manage future traffic flow
- Three lanes would be provided in both directions on Newcastle Road to improve traffic flow
- Pedestrian and cyclist crossings at the intersection would be controlled by traffic lights to improve safety across Newcastle Road
- Existing mid-block traffic lights for pedestrians crossing Newcastle Road would be replaced with a footbridge linking to the existing off-road pedestrian and cyclist facilities either side of Newcastle Road.

7. What are the key design changes to the hospital interchange (John Hunter Hospital)? Key changes to the hospital interchange include:
- Half interchange provided at John Hunter Hospital to provide access to/from the north
- A bridge over the bypass would include a shared path for pedestrians and cyclists, providing a connection between the hospital and residential areas to the west.

8. What are the key design changes to the southern interchange (Lookout Road)? Key changes to the southern interchange include:
- A bridge on Lookout Road for motorists traveling northbound over the bypass, connecting to the existing traffic lights at McCaffrey Drive to improve traffic flow
- Traffic lights would be provided for southbound traffic where the bypass connects to Lookout Road to safely connect traffic and allow safe access to right turns at Grandview Road and Cardiff Road
- Upgrades would be provided on McCaffrey Drive, including two right turn lanes and lengthening the left turn lane to improve traffic flow at the intersection with Lookout Road.

9. Why doesn’t the refined strategic design include ramps for McCaffrey Drive at the southern interchange? In the 2007 strategic design ramps for McCaffrey Drive were not provided. In assessing options for the southern interchange, a detailed review was carried out to investigate the need to provide a northbound on-ramp from McCaffrey Drive.
and/or southbound off-ramp to McCaffrey Drive.

The investigations found that while design and construction of the ramps is technically possible, they are not economically viable due to the forecasted low usage and high cost to build.

A number of design constraints and engineering factors including the steep grade and topography at this location make the ramps expensive to build with the cost expected to be around $25 million.

The traffic modelling showed low predicted usage of the northbound on-ramp and southbound off-ramp at McCaffrey Drive. The modelling also indicated inclusion of ramps at McCaffrey Drive would have a very small impact on the level of traffic expected to use the surrounding road network, including Grandview Road, compared to the bypass being built without ramps.

As a result, the addition of McCaffrey Drive ramps have not been included in the refined strategic design.

More information about the southern interchange design review is available in the May 2016 project update and the Refined Strategic Design Report, both available on the project website at rms.nsw.gov.au/rp2j

10. What is the half interchange at the John Hunter Hospital?
The half interchange would provide access to the hospital to and from the north. This option was assessed as having strong economic benefits, with improved traffic flow on the surrounding road network.

As a result the half interchange is shown in the refined strategic design. Further consultation with NSW Health Infrastructure is being carried out to finalise the configuration of the interchange near the hospital.

11. What are the benefits of a half interchange at the John Hunter Hospital?
The half interchange provides a southbound off-ramp to enter the hospital from the bypass and a northbound on-ramp to exit the hospital onto the bypass.

Motorists from the north would use the proposed new western connection off the bypass to get to the hospital. This substantially reduces both travel times and distance for hospital trips to/from the north with motorists travelling 1.5 kilometres instead of four kilometres and bypassing eight sets of traffic lights on the existing route.

In turn, this provides additional traffic flow improvements along the existing route of Lookout Road, Croudace Street and Newcastle Road in the northbound direction.

Full access to the hospital would also still be available to/from Lookout Road at the main entrance.

For motorists from the south, the existing hospital access off Lookout Road provides a shorter distance than the proposed western connection off the bypass with motorists travelling one kilometre instead 2.5 kilometres.

More information about the hospital interchange design review is provided in the Refined Strategic Design Report on the project website at rms.nsw.gov.au/rp2j

12. How would the half interchange connect to the John Hunter Hospital's existing road network?
Work required to integrate the western access within the John Hunter Hospital's internal road network would be assessed, designed and implemented by NSW Health Infrastructure and Hunter New England Local Area Health District.

Further consultation with NSW Health Infrastructure is being carried out to finalise the configuration of the interchange near the hospital.

13. Could southbound ramps be added to the hospital interchange at a later date?
The proposed half interchange design (north facing ramps only), does not stop south facing ramps from being added at a future stage.
In the future, should the John Hunter Hospital campus expand its facilities and/or change its internal configuration (eg relocation of facilities and/or parking) there may be additional traffic which would switch from using the existing eastern main hospital access to the new western access, which would increase the use of the south facing ramps if they were installed.

This would require further assessment by NSW Health Infrastructure and Hunter New England Local Area Health District at that time.

14. Why has it taken so long for the new design to be displayed?
Designing the proposed bypass has provided challenges due to the area’s heavily vegetated steep terrain, historic mine workings, endangered flora and fauna, proximity to local residences and high volumes of traffic where the project connects to the existing road network at the northern and southern ends of the project.

In February 2015 we asked for early feedback on the project to help understand potential issues when reviewing and refining the 2007 design. This feedback was considered when carrying out the strategic design review to develop the refined strategic design.

The review itself involved consideration of a range of environmental, engineering and community issues including:
- Local ecology and environmental impacts
- Access and connectivity across the corridor for both animals and people
- Proximity of residents including potential noise, traffic and visual impacts
- Access requirements for John Hunter Hospital
- Undulating terrain and designing a bypass to fit into the landform
- Geotechnical risks including mine subsidence
- Design features such as grades, typical cross sections and design speed
- Constructability and future maintenance requirements
- Provisions for pedestrians and cyclists

15. What investigations have been carried out so far?
A range of environmental and engineering studies have been carried out including:
- Road and bridge design
- Environmental surveys
- Traffic data collection and traffic modelling
- Utility and ground surveys
- Geotechnical investigations, including underground mine workings.

16. What information is in the Refined Strategic Design Report?
The report summarises the investigations which have been carried out to review the 2007 strategic design and develop the refined strategic design for the project.

We have carried out a comprehensive review of the 2007 strategic design to ensure the project provides the best outcome for meeting the project objectives. The review has included developing and assessing alignment and interchange options.

The review also considered issues raised by the community when feedback on the project was sought in early 2015 as well as a range of environmental, engineering and traffic issues.

Specifically, the report includes details about:
- Reviews of previous work and investigations
- Establishment of design criteria for the development of the refined strategic design and subsequent concept design
- Review of the 2007 strategic design
- Identifying constraints and opportunities in the study area
- Traffic data collection, assessment and modelling
- Field investigations including environmental and geotechnical surveys
Community and stakeholder consultation
Development of potential refinements to the alignment and interchange options
Cost estimation, economic analysis and evaluation of options
Value management workshops to assist with the selection of a preferred option
Further design and assessment to allow the recommendation of a refined strategic design for public display.

The report provides a basis for further refinement and development of the concept design during the environmental assessment through to project approval. The report can be viewed on the project website at rms.nsw.gov.au/rp2j

17. Where can I get more information about traffic modelling for the bypass?
The Refined Strategic Design Report includes extensive information about the traffic modelling and economic analysis carried out for the project, in addition to full traffic modelling reports included as appendices.

The report can be viewed on the project website at rms.nsw.gov.au/rp2j

18. How can I provide feedback on the refined strategic design?
Comments on the refined strategic design can be provided by post, phone, email, via the project website or in person at a community drop-in information session.

Feedback on the refined strategic design is invited by 9 June 2016. You can contact the project team via:

Phone: 1800 818 433 (during business hours).
Email: rp2j.community@aurecongroup.com
Web: rms.nsw.gov.au/rp2j
Mail: Matthew Mate
Project Development Manager
Roads and Maritime Services
Locked Bag 2030
Newcastle, NSW 2300

19. How will the community be notified of project progress?
We invite you to view the design plans, meet the project team, find out more about the project and provide feedback about the design. We are holding information sessions in May 2016.

The community is invited to attend drop-in information sessions on Thursday 19 May between 4pm and 8pm, Saturday 21 May between 9am and 12.30pm, Thursday 26 May between 4pm and 8pm or Saturday 28 May between 9am and 12.30pm. The information sessions will be held at Stockland Jesmond Shopping Centre on Blue Gum Road, Jesmond.

The project web page will be regularly updated at rms.nsw.gov.au/rp2j

The community will continue to be notified through a range of communication activities including letters, media activities, notifications, advertisements and project updates.

20. How will my comments be used?
Feedback on the refined strategic design is invited by 9 June 2016. After the display, the project team will consider feedback from stakeholders and the community in preparing the concept design and environmental assessment.

We will continue to refine the design using this feedback, as well as additional engineering and environmental investigations required for the concept design.

As part of the development of the concept design and environmental assessment, potential impacts to the surrounding environment will be assessed and opportunities to avoid and minimise impacts will be further investigated.

The aim is to provide a concept design which provides the best overall balance between environmental, social, engineering and economic considerations.

We expect to display the concept design and environmental assessment for community feedback later this year.
Your personal information in correspondence is collected for the sole purpose of assisting in the assessment of the proposal. All information received, including names and addresses of respondents, may be published in subsequent assessment documents unless a clear indication is given in the correspondence that such information is not to be published. Otherwise Roads and Maritime will only disclose your personal information, without your consent, if authorised by law.

21. How is Roads and Maritime engaging with stakeholders and the community during the development of the project?

We are committed to engaging with stakeholders and the community to identify any potential issues or concerns about the project.

Stakeholders and the community will be kept informed of the development of the project through regular project updates. Project updates will be made available on the project website and delivered to households in and around the study area.

Interested stakeholders and community members can also be added to a mailing list by registering their details on the project website or by contacting the project team by email or phone.

The project team is also consulting with key stakeholders including Newcastle City Council, Lake Macquarie City Council, John Hunter Hospital (NSW Health Infrastructure and Hunter New England Local Health District), Fire & Rescue NSW (bushfire management), and utility authorities.

22. Can you outline the previous community consultation and engagement activities?

Key previous engagement activities have included:

- Display of the preferred route corridor for comment (February 2007)
- Release of the submissions report about the public display of the preferred route corridor (March 2008)
- Community update announcing project funding (June 2014)
- Project update inviting early feedback to the 2007 design (February 2015)
- Drop-in information sessions at Jesmond (March 2015)
- Project update summarising early feedback (May 2015)
- Question and answers document responding to early feedback (May 2015).

We will continue to advertise public displays and drop-in information sessions to provide advance notice of upcoming dates.

23. What are the next steps for the project?

Roads and Maritime will conduct an environmental assessment for the project, following the requirements of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 and the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999.

The environmental assessment will involve further refinement of the refined strategic design into a concept design, based on detailed input from technical investigations and community consultation.

The environmental assessment will consider potential environmental impacts including:

- Biodiversity
- Traffic and road safety
- Operational and construction noise
- Visual amenity
- Air and water quality
- Hydrology and flooding
- Property acquisition and land use
- Aboriginal and European heritage.

The environmental assessment will be prepared in the form of an environmental impact statement (EIS). The EIS will include detailed information about the design features of the project and will outline the likely environmental impacts of the project and the commitments and mitigation measures in managing those impacts.

The EIS will be displayed for comment by the NSW Department of Planning and Environment. This is expected to occur in late 2016 at which point further community feedback will be encouraged.
The objective is to develop and ultimately obtain project approval from the Minister for Planning for the project’s concept design and EIS.

24. **When will construction start?**
   Construction of the project is subject to project approval by the Minister for Planning.

We will continue to keep the community informed about construction timeframes.

25. **What is the current status of property acquisitions for the project?**
   Roads and Maritime has identified the properties that need to be acquired for the project and has contacted property owners.


26. **Will you need to enter my property?**
   Roads and Maritime Services sometimes need to enter private properties to carry out field investigations to help in the development of road projects.

   You will be contacted by Roads and Maritime if access to your property is required.