Installation of a permanent electronic message sign on Willoughby Road, Willoughby

Community Consultation Report

March 2017
Executive summary

This report provides a summary of Roads and Maritime Services consultation with the community and stakeholders on a proposal to install a permanent electronic message sign on Willoughby Road, approaching the intersection of Artarmon Road/Small Street.

The NSW Government is funding this proposal as part of its Pinch Point and Clearways Program, which aims to reduce traffic delays, manage congestion and improve travel times on Sydney’s major roads, particularly during weekday peak periods.

The proposal includes:

- investigating ground conditions and locating underground utilities
- excavating and installing foundations
- installing the electronic sign
- trenching and installing power and telecommunications cables
- testing the sign.

Roads and Maritime invited feedback on this proposal in December 2016. We distributed about 2750 letters to local residents and businesses inviting feedback on the proposal, from which we received comments from 28 people, with eight people supporting the proposal and 20 not supporting it.

Key points raised included support for the proposal, alternative locations, the signs usefulness, visual impact and the sign will cause a rat run through residential streets.

We thank everyone who took the time to consider the proposal and provide their feedback.

The decision

After reviewing the feedback we have decided to proceed with the proposal without change. Roads and Maritime will start work on the permanent electronic message sign in March 2017. Work will be carried out over the next four months, weather permitting.

We will continue to keep the community and stakeholders informed as the project progresses.
Contents

Executive summary ........................................................................................................................................... 1
Contents .......................................................................................................................................................... 2
   Figures and tables ....................................................................................................................................... 2
1. Introduction ............................................................................................................................................... 3
   1.1. Background .......................................................................................................................................... 3
   1.2. The proposal ......................................................................................................................................... 3
2. Consultation approach ............................................................................................................................... 6
   2.1. Consultation objectives ....................................................................................................................... 6
   2.2. How consultation was done ................................................................................................................ 6
3. Consultation summary ................................................................................................................................ 6
   3.1. Overview ............................................................................................................................................ 6
   3.2. Feedback summary and Roads and Maritime’s responses ................................................................. 6
4. Decision .................................................................................................................................................... 14
5. Next steps .................................................................................................................................................. 14
6. Appendices ................................................................................................................................................ 15
   6.1. Appendix A - Have your say letter ..................................................................................................... 15

Figures and tables
Figure 1 – Proposed map location and artist impression of electronic message sign ......................... 3
Table 1 - Feedback summary and Roads and Maritime’s responses .................................................... 7
1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Roads and Maritime has identified Willoughby Road as an arterial road that links the Pacific Highway at Falcon Street, Crows Nest, with Mowbray Road and Penshurst Street. This road experiences heavy traffic and delays, which increases when unplanned incidents occur along this corridor and surrounding corridors. As a result, a location northbound sign on the Willoughby Road corridor approaching the intersection of Mowbray Road was identified as a critical decision making location that required a permanent electronic message sign.

This section of Willoughby Road is two lanes in each direction. The proposed location for the sign is in the suburb of Willoughby in the North Shore. The area is mainly residential with a high number of trees and foliage along the proposed site location. There are residential properties and a petrol station nearby on the western side, a vacant block opposite the sign and Bicentennial Reserve Oval adjacent to the sign on the eastern side.

As this is an area with large amounts of trees and shrubs, it is proposed that the sign would be placed between trees to provide some coverage of the post which would minimise visual impact.

1.2. The proposal

Roads and Maritime is proposing the installation of a permanent electronic message sign on Willoughby Road, about 100 metres south of Artarmon Road/Small Street. It would service northbound traffic and would be placed on the eastern side of the road to minimise impact to residential properties.

The proposed installation of a permanent electronic message sign would improve the ability of the Transport Management Centre (TMC) to manage daily traffic conditions and flows, especially during planned and unplanned incidents that occur along the route and across the network of roads in this area.

The sign would allow real time information to be relayed to motorists and enable them to make better and more informed decisions in response to any unplanned incidents that may occur. Providing this information to northbound motorists using Willoughby Road allows them to make a decision on their route as they approach the Mowbray Road intersection and further north.

The new permanent electronic message sign would enhance the ability of the Transport Management Centre (TMC) to:

- allow the display of important information to help northbound drivers avoid delays caused by planned or unplanned incidents such as road works or crashes in the vicinity
- monitor, direct and control day-to-day traffic
- disseminate real-time traffic information to road users
- provide northbound motorists with information about planned and unplanned incidents on, Mowbray Road, Penshurst Street, Boundary Street, Victoria Avenue, Warringah Road, Eastern Valley Way and Archbold Road.

Roads and Maritime identify a preferred location for each sign by considering environmental impacts, constructability, function, community issues and land impacts, road geometry, existing utilities and safety considerations.

This location on Willoughby Road was identified for an electronic message sign as it:
• would have the least impact on residential properties (visual and physical)
• is within road reserve next to a public park
• has enough space to safely construct the sign and maintain it
• is within an existing vegetated area which is expected to 'camouflage' the electronic message sign support structure (among the trees)
• minimises the removal of mature trees
• provides a sign location away from existing intersections and decision making points
• avoids overhead utilities.

The NSW Government is funding this proposal as part of its Pinch Point and Clearways Program, which aims to reduce traffic delays, manage congestion and improve travel times on Sydney’s major roads, particularly during weekday peak periods.

The proposal includes:

• investigating ground conditions and locating underground utilities
• excavating and installing foundations
• installing the electronic sign
• trenching and installing power and telecommunications cables
• testing the sign.
Map of the proposed permanent electronic message sign on Willoughby Road, Willoughby

Looking northbound on Willoughby Road, Willoughby

Figure 1 – Artist’s impression of proposed permanent electronic message sign on Willoughby Road, Willoughby.
2. **Consultation approach**

2.1. **Consultation objectives**

We consulted with the community and stakeholders on the proposal to:

- seek comment, feedback, ideas and suggestions for Roads and Maritime to consider when developing the proposal
- build a database of interested community members who Roads and Maritime could continue to engage during the development of the proposal.

2.2. **How consultation was done**

The community and stakeholders were encouraged to provide feedback via mail, email or phone.

We distributed about 2750 letters to local residents and businesses inviting feedback on the proposal (Appendix A). Copies were also provided to the NSW Member of Parliament for Willoughby, Mayor of Willoughby, Willoughby Council, State Transit Authority, Ausgrid, Jemena Gas, Sydney Water, PIPE Networks, Optus, Telstra, Bike NSW and emergency services.

3. **Consultation summary**

3.1. **Overview**

We received comments from 28 people on nine different matters. There were eight people who supported the proposal and 20 that did not.

Key points raised included support for the proposal, alternative locations, the signs usefulness, the sign’s visual impact and the sign will cause a rat run through residential streets.

3.2. **Feedback summary and Roads and Maritime responses**

Roads and Maritime has provided responses to all feedback received on this proposal. The responses are to be provided directly to the person who commented along with a summary in this report which will be made available to the public.

All comments have been considered to help Roads and Maritime make decisions on this proposal. Matters raised during consultation that are not within our area of responsibility have been forwarded to the relevant party.
Table 1 – Feedback summary and Roads and Maritime Services’ responses

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Matters raised</th>
<th>Roads and Maritime’s response</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>The sign will distract drivers.</td>
<td>The sign is designed to be read by northbound motorists on Willoughby Road well in advance of the Artarmon Road/Small Street intersection.</td>
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<td>(18 Comments)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Motorists would also be informed of planned and unplanned incidents happening along Willoughby Road northbound, Mowbray Road, Penshurst Street and surrounds and it is considered to have no adverse impact to drivers and vehicle movements in the area.</td>
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<td>Roads and Maritime has guidelines for placement of permanent electronic signs that are aimed at ensuring a sign does not distract drivers or create a safety hazard. These include:</td>
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<td>• visibility of the sign as motorists approach and a clear line of sight</td>
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<td>• distance from where motorists can see the sign to the point where they can change their journey</td>
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<td>• distance to an intersection where lane changing and braking is common</td>
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<td>• distance to other signs and traffic lights.</td>
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<td>Following the selection of this site, a visual impact assessment of the proposal was carried out in December 2016, which confirmed Roads and Maritime’s guidelines had been met at the proposed location.</td>
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<td>Out of scope (1 Comment)</td>
<td>Proposing a T2 lane on Willoughby Road to encourage carpooling.</td>
<td>This request is outside of the scope of this project and has been forwarded to the appropriate team for consideration.</td>
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|                          | Sign will cause a rat run and congestion through residential streets. | The proposed sign would provide northbound motorists with information about planned and unplanned incidents on, Mowbray Road, Penshurst Street, Boundary Street, Victoria Avenue, Warringah Road, Eastern Valley Way and Archbold Road.  
In the event of an incident on Willoughby Road, Willoughby, other electronic signs on the network are also likely to be activated to warn motorists away from this area.  
The proposed new sign works with an existing electronic message sign on Warringah Freeway (northbound) near Ernest Street.  
Information on incidents would allow motorists to alter their journey and take alternative routes such as Brook Street, Miller Street or Pacific Highway.  
However, it can, on occasions, potentially add traffic on local roads as motorists try to navigate around a nearby incident or delay. |
| Consultation process (1 Comment) | Not enough time given for consultation. | Two weeks of consultation was conducted on this project which is consistent with Roads and Maritime Services guidelines. We distributed about 2750 letters to local residents and businesses inviting feedback on the proposal (Appendix A). Copies were also provided to the NSW Member of Parliament for Willoughby, Mayor of Willoughby, Willoughby Council, State Transit Authority, Ausgrid, Jemena Gas, Sydney Water, PIPE Networks, Optus, Telstra, Bike NSW and emergency services. Residents were sent the letter on Friday 9 December and were given to Thursday 22 December to provide feedback. All feedback received after the closing date were accepted and acknowledged. The community and stakeholders were encouraged to provide feedback via mail, email or phone. |
| Purpose of electronic message sign (7 Comments) | The location of the sign on Willoughby Road is past the decision point for alternate routes. | The benefits of a permanent electronic message sign include the improved ability to manage daily traffic conditions and flows that occur along the route and to display important information to help northbound drivers avoid delays in the area. The sign is also intended to provide northbound road users with advance notice of planned and unplanned incidents on Mowbray Road, Penshurst Street, Boundary Street, Victoria Avenue, Warringah Road, Eastern Valley Way and Archbold Road.  

The proposed sign is part of a broader electronic message sign network. It works with the existing northbound sign on Warringah Freeway near Ernest Street which will allow motorists to take alternative routes such as Miller Street, Brook Street and the Pacific Highway in case of any planned and unplanned incidents.  

This location on Willoughby Road was identified for a permanent electronic message sign as it:
- would have the least impact on residential properties (visual and physical)
- is within road reserve next to a public park
- has enough space to construct the sign and maintain it
- is within an existing vegetated area which is expected to ‘camouflage’ the electronic message sign support structure (amongst the trees)
- minimises the removal of mature trees
- provides a sign location away from existing intersections and decision making points
- avoids overhead utilities. |
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<td>Funding</td>
<td>Inappropriate use of funding for the sign.</td>
<td>The NSW Government is funding this proposal as part of its Pinch Point and Clearways Program, which aims to reduce traffic delays, manage congestion and improve travel times on Sydney’s major roads, particularly during weekday peak periods. Permanent electronic message signs are the most effective way to provide detailed, real-time information to all road users, including cyclists, on the exact location, impact and duration of incidents as well as any planned or unplanned road work. They are also important for reinforcing road safety messages. This proposed sign is part of a broader electronic message sign network to provide advanced warning to road users allowing them to plan journeys well in advance of incidents or planned work. The sign would provide northbound motorists with information about planned and unplanned incidents on, Mowbray Road, Penshurst Street, Boundary Street, Victoria Avenue, Warringah Road, Eastern Valley Way and Archbold Road. Motorists can then change their journey away from these roads and take alternative routes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(1 Comment)</td>
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<td>Category</td>
<td>Matters raised</td>
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<td>Visual impact</td>
<td>The sign is not visually appealing.</td>
<td>Permanent electronic message signs across NSW use a standard structural design and message display. In December 2016, Roads and Maritime conducted a visual impact assessment and considered the local landscape and other elements to confirm a suitable location for a permanent electronic message sign. The assessment notes that the proposed sign location is across from a vacant lot and has little impacts to the surrounding residential properties. Each property is set back by 45 metres from the main road with trees and vegetation. We also took into account environmental and urban design considerations including: • vistas or panoramic views • the existing streetscape • other major signage, traffic signals and intersections • heritage items • location of businesses and residential properties. In considering the above, the proposed location was chosen to minimise the impact on the local area while delivering the objective of the sign.</td>
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<td>(6 Comments)</td>
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<td>Location</td>
<td>Alternative locations suggested include:</td>
<td>We appreciate the alternative locations suggested. However, the proposed sign on Willoughby Road has been identified as a key journey decision point to provide real-time updates to road users travelling northbound on Willoughby Road. We looked at alternative locations nearby prior to consulting the community but none provided equal benefits to the proposed location due to site constraints. The proposed location will allow road users to make more informed decisions about their route and can improve travel time by giving</td>
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<td>(19 Comments)</td>
<td>• Warringah Freeway before Brook Street exit</td>
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<td>• Penshurst Street after Mowbray Road.</td>
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them the right information at the right point on the network so they can avoid delays and pick an alternative route.

This new sign location works with existing electronic message signs in the area. There is an existing sign for northbound motorists on Warringah Freeway near the Ernest Street exit.

Further electronic message signs across the Sydney road network will continue to be considered. The suggestions provided have been noted.
4. **Decision**

We thank everyone who took the time to consider our proposal and provide feedback.

Roads and Maritime has considered the feedback and has decided to proceed with the proposal without change.

5. **Next steps**

Roads and Maritime will start construction work in March 2017 weather permitting.

The community and stakeholders will be kept informed as the project progresses.
6. Appendices

6.1. Appendix A – Have your say letter

December 2016

Have your say – Proposed installation of a permanent electronic message sign on Willoughby Road, Willoughby

The NSW Government is funding this proposal as part of its $300 million Urban Roads Pinch Point Program, which aims to reduce congestion and improve travel time on Sydney’s busiest road corridors.

Roads and Maritime Services is seeking your feedback by Thursday 22 December 2016 on the proposed location of a permanent electronic message sign on Willoughby Road, approaching the intersection of Artarmon Road.

The sign would provide northbound road users with advance notice of planned and unplanned incidents on Mowbray Road, Penshurst Street, Boundary Street, Victoria Avenue, Warringah Road, Eastern Valley Way and Archbold Road.

We have included a map to explain the location of the proposed sign.

Installation work for the sign would include:

- Excavating and putting in foundations
- Installing the electronic sign
- Trenching and installing power and telecommunications cables
- Testing the sign.

In the first instance, we would need to carry out early field work to help us develop a final design. This includes investigating ground conditions and locating underground utilities at the proposed site.

How can you give feedback?

We encourage you to send us your comments on the proposed permanent electronic message by Thursday 22 December 2016 to:

LT Joint Venture
PO Box 380
Rockdale NSW 2216
or email info@lv.com.au

We will carefully consider your feedback and continue to keep you updated as the proposal progresses.

How do message signs improve traffic flow?

There are about 200 permanent electronic message signs throughout NSW. They are programmed by the Transport Management Centre (TMC), which manages and monitors the road network 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

We place electronic message signs before key journey decision points to provide real-time updates to road users. This allows them to make more informed decisions about their route and can improve travel time by giving them the right information at the right point on the network so they can avoid delays.

For more information on our permanent electronic message signs, please visit our website at rms.nsw.gov.au and search on ‘electronic message signs’.
Artist's impression and map of the proposed permanent electronic message sign on Willoughby Road, Willoughby.

Artist's impression of the proposed permanent electronic message sign on Willoughby Road, Willoughby.