

Why are you doing the upgrade?

This upgrade will address long-standing challenges and cater for future growth. The project will:

- Deliver a safer, faster route over the mountains, improving congestion and the reliability of trips across the Great Dividing Range for all traveller types (commuters, tourists, locals, freight).
- Remove through and heavy traffic from the villages where bypasses are developed, preserving the character of Blue Mountains communities and creating capacity for local businesses and tourism to grow.
- In the short to medium term, provide the safest additional customer travel capacity between Katoomba and Lithgow, with the least adverse impact on the environment and community.

What are the next steps in the consultation process for Blackheath?

We are in very early stages of development for the project and for route options at Blackheath. This stage of consultation will be the first of many:

- **Early 2020:** Investigations and studies to be carried out. The project will start a process of co-design with council and representatives from a cross section of the community to develop options for Blackheath. The Feedback Summary Report from the 2019 consultation period will be published.
- **Mid 2020:** Route options arising from the co-design process will be displayed to the community for consultation. More information will be provided about the options, where they go, type of design characteristics (bridges, tunnel, etc.), and initial information on benefits and impacts, for example on properties, environment, strategic cost estimates and construction timeframes.

Can you extend the current consultation period?

This stage of consultation is to introduce the Great Western Highway upgrade program between Katoomba to Lithgow to the whole community. In order to move forward we need to put an end date for this round of consultation so that we can collate feedback and agree next steps in the development. We will consult with the community at all stages of development and there will be specific consultation with the Blackheath community to develop the route options.

Why is the strategic corridor through Blackheath so big?

We are in very early stages of planning for the upgrade of the Great Western Highway between Katoomba and Lithgow. We cannot build the Great Western Highway upgrade through the eastern side of Blackheath due to its likely impact on the World Heritage Area and this has been ruled out. All other options for the upgrade at Blackheath are open for consideration and this was the intention of the area coloured grey on the strategic corridor map.

We will start specific consultation with council and the community about developing these options in 2020. Studies and investigations will take place to provide detail about constraints and benefits of these proposed options and there will be opportunities for the community to be involved in and provide feedback throughout this process.

The aim of this approach was to be transparent in the development of the project and explain options that had been ruled out.

No properties have been identified as potentially being required for acquisition.

We encourage people to provide feedback throughout this project so we can work with the community to deliver improved and safer transport links through the Blue Mountains and minimise impacts on property and the environment.

Why have the safety works been completed when you are planning to duplicate the highway?

The safety upgrades have targeted specific and urgent safety needs along the corridor. The Great Western Highway upgrade between Katoomba and Lithgow will utilise the existing highway in many areas, and these safety upgrades will remain beneficial in the long term.

This type of approach has been used on many other highways as a short term solution to safety issues, while the long term solution is planned.

Are you only building this project for the communities in the Central West?

The Great Western Highway is a key corridor of national significance and has rising traffic volumes. The Great Western Highway through the Blue Mountains is already at capacity during certain periods which impacts the movement of residents and restricts the growth of tourism. This project will relieve these pinch points and we will work with the community of Blackheath to develop a solution that enhances the town, improves safety and eases movement around the township.

The key drivers for this project through the Blue Mountains are to improve journey reliability, separate local and long distance traffic, improve pedestrian and cyclist safety through the townships, and give towns back to the communities where we can build bypasses.

Why can't you upgrade Bells Line of Road instead?

Even upgraded, a proportion of traffic would still remain on the Great Western Highway. This coupled with the potential impact of an upgrade on Bells Line on the World Heritage Area and extremely challenging terrain, does not make upgrading this route economically viable at this time.

More information can be found at: <https://www.rms.nsw.gov.au/projects/01documents/bells-line-of-road/bells-line-of-road-long-term-strategic-plan-complete-report.pdf>

Why can't you just put more freight on rail?

The NSW Government is committed to moving more freight from road to rail and is investing in the capacity of the rail freight network. The Great Western Highway upgrade is being developed alongside long term rail options and both are required to meet future demand and address current issues around congestion, journey reliability and safety.

Is the upgrade just to get bigger trucks to use the Great Western Highway?

No. The upgrade will reduce congestion and significantly improve safety and travel time reliability. All vehicles using the road will benefit. An upgraded highway would be suitable for higher productivity vehicles than currently use it. Modern higher productivity vehicles are safer, emit lower emissions, and have greater capacity which allows freight operators to move greater volumes with fewer trucks.

Information on higher productivity vehicles can be found at:

<https://www.rms.nsw.gov.au/focusonfreight>

Further assessments need to be carried out across the entire length of the highway before a decision can be made on the size of vehicles permitted. There will be no changes to current road freight access without further consultation.

Will the upgrade impact rock climbing and bushwalking trails at Porters Pass?

Any route options around the western side of Blackheath could potentially impact rock climbing and bushwalking trails. The project team will consult and work with local businesses, clubs and community groups involved in this activity to better understand the potential impacts.

Contact us:

If you have any questions or would like more information please contact our project team:

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