



# Frequently asked questions

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DECEMBER 2020

## RE-EXAMINATION OF PREFERRED OPTIONS

### **What was the community's response to traffic lights being announced as the preferred short-term solution for both intersections on 3 August 2020?**

Following the announcement, Transport for NSW received considerable feedback from the community about the preferred options for both intersections. There was community feedback against installing traffic lights at Old Narrandera Road, with many in favour of a grade separated interchange. However there was agreement that the intersection was unsafe in its current condition. At Travers Street, there was an acknowledgement that the intersection was safer than the Old Narrandera Road intersection, and the community's preferred treatment was to retain the existing roundabout. The feedback also indicated that traffic flow along the Olympic Highway was only a concern during peak morning and afternoon times.

As a result of the feedback, Transport for NSW committed to reviewing the preferred options of traffic lights at both Old Narrandera Road and Travers Street.

### **What was the outcome of the review?**

The internal review took place over several months and considered the original options described in the Preferred Options Report, including roundabouts and grade separation. It also examined reduced work at Travers Street and potential further work at Old Narrandera Road. The review confirmed the original recommendation that traffic lights were the preferred option and would provide immediate improvements to road safety and network efficiency.

### **Was the original traffic lights announcement premature?**

No, Transport for NSW took a thorough and systematic approach during the planning of this project. The project team considered extensive technical information and design options against the project's primary objective to improve safety to ensure the best possible solution was reached, which would also address the identified community concerns at each location. The final recommendations were made in collaboration with technical specialists and key stakeholders, including Wagga Wagga City Council representatives, who were part of a process that evaluated all the data before recommending traffic lights be installed at both intersections.

### **Why are traffic lights considered the best option at Old Narrandera Road?**

Our investigations have shown that traffic lights provide the best immediate improvements to road safety at this intersection. Traffic lights improve access between the northern growth areas and the services in Wagga Wagga, and have the potential to be modified to suit expansion of the Olympic Highway in the future if required. Traffic lights would allow motorists to safely turn out of Old Narrandera Road on to the Olympic Highway. Traffic lights at this intersection would also be able to be phased to ensure traffic flows on the Olympic Highway are prioritised. This

ensures efficiency of the network in this part of Wagga is optimised. Once this treatment is implemented, Transport will continue to monitor and investigate medium to long-term solutions at the Old Narrandera Road intersection.

### **Wouldn't a grade separated interchange be a better solution at Old Narrandera Road?**

We investigated a grade separated interchange at this location, but found it was not a viable or safe engineering solution because the distance between this intersection and the existing Boorooma Street overpass and Gobbagombalin (Gobba) Bridge does not allow for safe merging on and off the Olympic Highway. In addition, a grade separated interchange would be quite limiting in the future as it could not be easily modified to cater for expansion of the Olympic Highway or possible duplication of Gobba Bridge.

### **The existing Travers Street roundabout works fine. Why change it?**

We have identified a number of safety benefits to relocating the Travers Street intersection and installing traffic lights. The current intersection's location close to the bridge results in traffic slowing down to turn left into Travers Street, which in turn causes safety and efficiency issues for highway traffic. Southbound traffic also slows down on the bridge causing delays to through traffic. Moving the intersection to the south, further away from the bridge, will allow for increased capacity, traffic efficiency and safety by enabling motorists to access two southbound lanes. Traffic lights will also remove the safety issues associated with traffic turning across the highway at Moorong Street at this location.

Lights will also improve traffic flow from central Wagga to the growing northern suburbs and would prevent the current roundabout reaching predicted capacity within a few years. Relocating the intersection further south would mean it would be easier to accommodate a possible duplication of Gobba Bridge in the future.

### **How will access to Moorong Street be affected?**

The preferred option includes access changes to the northern intersection of Moorong Street and the Olympic Highway, to left-in, left-out. This change will remove conflicts of traffic turning across the highway at this location, which will provide a safety outcome. Full access to Moorong Street will be maintained via Kincaid Street, as the preferred option only prevents some movements, and does not block off Moorong Street completely.

### **Will Moorong Street business be consulted about these changes?**

Of course. We understand that some Moorong Street businesses are concerned about the impacts of this work, and we promise to include affected stakeholders in conversations about potential changes during the planning process. We will also ensure the wider community is informed of changed traffic requirements, such as left-in, left-out movements, through education campaigns and signage, once proposed changes are implemented.

### **Will the horse tunnel under Olympic Highway be retained?**

Yes, we are well aware of the need for horses to safely access the Murrumbidgee Turf Club (MTC) and are working on a design that will see horses diverted to the at-grade crossing. We will continue to consult with the MTC on this matter as planning progresses.

### **Why not retain the Travers Street roundabout as it is and invest all the committed funding to building a grade-separated interchange at Old Narrandera Road?**

The \$30 million funding commitment by the NSW Government involved the upgrade of both Olympic Highway intersections, as well as widening the Sturt Highway at Marshall's Creek

Bridge. As 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, there is a pressing need to improve safety at these two intersections as soon as practicable.

The option to do nothing at Travers Street was looked at, but was not considered a satisfactory solution as it would result in the deterioration of intersection performance in the near future. This would lead to lengthy queues on all approaches, particularly in morning and evening peaks, which could potentially contribute to unsafe behaviours by frustrated motorists.

Building a grade separated interchange at Old Narrandera Road is not possible for a few reasons. Firstly, there is insufficient distance between this intersection and the existing Boorooma Street overpass and Gobba Bridge which would make the practice of merging on and off the highway unsafe. Secondly, a grade separated interchange would not provide a long-term safety solution as it could not be easily modified to cater for expansion of the Olympic Highway or possible duplication of Gobba Bridge in the future as required.

Instead, the installation of traffic lights at these two locations will meet the identified project scope of improving road safety, improving access and traffic growth between the northern growth areas and the Special Activation Precinct to services in Wagga Wagga, improving travel time and reducing delays for commuters and freight travelling on this section of the Olympic Highway. Traffic lights will also improve traffic flow from central Wagga to the growing northern suburbs and connectivity between Travers Street and Old Narrandera Road.

### **How involved has Wagga Wagga City Council been in this project so far?**

We consider Wagga Wagga City Council a key stakeholder in the Olympic Highway intersection upgrades project and, as such, have kept Council informed and involved every step of the way throughout the project's development. Recognising the value of working cooperatively to achieve the best safety outcome possible, we have welcomed every opportunity to include them in the investigation and review of potential options, as well as discussions to explain the methodology behind Transport's decisions. As an example, Council staff participated in the Value Management Workshop, serving as stakeholders, knowledge experts and community representatives.

As we transition through to the delivery phase of the project, Transport is committed to working collaboratively with Council to understand the implications of the upgrades, particularly the Old Narrandera Road upgrade, on traffic flows through the northern growth areas of Wagga and to ensure any changes align with Council's Integrated Transport Strategy and Wagga Wagga's wider transport landscape.

### **This project is being promoted as a short-term solution to the safety and traffic efficiency issues at these intersections on the Olympic Highway. What medium to long-term solutions are you looking at?**

Although traffic lights will provide immediate improvements to road safety and network efficiency at both of the Olympic Highway intersections, additional investment will be required in the medium to long-term to manage increased traffic volumes from the northern growth areas of Wagga and the Special Activation Precinct (SAP) across the Murrumbidgee River to Wagga Wagga. Transport is committed to working with Council to investigate an overall solution that improves connectivity between the CBD and the city's northern suburbs in the medium to long-term.

### **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.