

Meeting Record

Project:	Coffs Harbour Highway Planning Strategy	Reference:	1093.57.GE
Location:	Coffs Harbour Community Village, Room 1, Earl Street, Coffs Harbour	Date:	12 February 2002

Present: Apology: Copy: Name:

SOUTHERN CFG			
	✓		David Doyle
✓			Wayne O'Brien
✓			Trish Welsh
✓			Murray Williams
✓			Bruce Partridge
✓			Gillian French
✓			Ron Woodlands
✓			Gail Latham
✓			Marlene Jacobs
	✓		Andrew Huggett
✓			Peter Lubans (proxy Ernie Armstrong attended)
✓			Hugh Saddleton
✓			Paul Norton
✓			Ron Smith
			John Marczan – WITHDRAWN
✓			David Pike
✓			Tom Hamilton-Foster
✓			Peter Jackson
PROJECT TEAM			
✓			Wes Stevenson RTA
✓			Bob Higgins RTA
✓			Jill Christy RTA
✓			René Burkart RTA

✓			Tim Paterson	Connell Wagner
✓			Rosemary Russell	Connell Wagner
✓			Bruce Penman	Connell Wagner
✓			Barry Hancock	Connell Wagner
✓			Andrew Smith	Pramax Communications
	✓		Bill Wood	Coffs Harbour City Council
	✓		Rick Bennell	Coffs Harbour City Council
	✓		George Stulle	Coffs Harbour City Council
	✓		Malcolm Imrie	PlanningNSW
	✓		John Finlay	PlanningNSW
✓			Jo Gardner	PlanningNSW
Recorded By: Pramax Communications				Total Pages: 6
Subject: Community Focus Group Meeting No 2 (Southern CFG)				

Details:

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1. INTRODUCTION

- Andrew Smith (Pramax) welcomed the group and introduced some members who had not made it to the first meeting. Mr Ernie Armstrong is taking the place of Peter Lubans who is away for a few weeks.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

- It was requested that all CFG members read the minutes prior to the current meeting so that time was not taken up having to read minutes. It was taken that the minutes of the previous meeting were read.

The minutes were accepted as an accurate and correct record of the meeting.

3. STRATEGY OBJECTIVES

Tim Paterson (Connell Wagner) began with a reminder of why a strategy was needed now. He read from the original brochure that went out to the community "The planning strategy must address short term needs to upgrade the highway between Sapphire and Woolgoolga while ensuring compatible long term strategy is in place to meet future traffic demands through Coffs Harbour."

- We need to understand what the traffic demand will be in 10 to 20 years.
- Traffic modelling has been developed from a model used by Coffs Council. This model has assisted CHCC to develop a city-wide planning strategy to meet traffic and transport needs. It is a predictive tool, which looks at housing, population, job trends, travel patterns over 20-year horizon.
- The traffic model also includes through-traffic.
- We'll present key summary findings later in the meeting. The intention is that, on release, the findings will be loaded on the web for all to view.

Information to be posted on web

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- Traffic volumes and travel time on both the existing highway and on potential bypass options have also been considered.

Video on Quantm route optimisation software

- The question has been asked by the CFGs of how the project team have come up with the proposed corridors for the highway. The video provides information on the software package (Quantm) which was used to assist in developing the highway corridors.
- Data for this process was sourced from aerial photography of the whole Coffs Harbour local government area.

4. INFORMATION UPDATE

- The Woolgoolga CFG has had an opportunity to look at preliminary corridors for highway upgrade including bypass options.
- It was noted that Coffs Harbour section of the strategy area has more topographic constraints than the northern section.
- In inputting information to the Quantm model, as well as topography, urban development and other known constraints (not rural residential) were identified as "no go" or "avoid" areas. The information was then run through Quantm using these constraints.
- In response to a question regarding the production of a virtual reality map (as shown on the video) it was noted that, while it is possible, it is a costly exercise and therefore might be done later in the process when a more defined route option has been decided on.

5. TECHNICAL INVESTIGATIONS

Environmental & Biodiversity

Rosemary Russell (Connell Wagner) spoke regarding the impacts of the outer, central and inner corridors as shown on constraints maps.

- Outer and Central corridors both affect large areas of agricultural land and impact on large areas of State Forest as well as Ulidarra National Park.
- Inner corridor impacts on smaller agricultural holdings such as bananas.
- Development for roads is prohibited in State Forests and National Parks unless permission is obtained under the relevant legislation.
- Inner corridor impacts on urban release areas at North Boambee and West Coffs. Also on Korora rural/residential and rural investigation areas. This would require substantial replanning by Coffs Harbour Council and PlanningNSW.
- Both outer and central corridors go through the Moonee release area as identified in the Moonee DCP.
- Biodiversity maps:
 - Blue – vulnerable/endangered fauna records
 - Red – vulnerable/endangered flora species
 - Yellow – known threatened habitat for vulnerable/endangered species
 - Green – potential habitat for vulnerable/endangered species – this is a conservative estimate and indicates lack of investigation in State Forest areas. The green is likely to become yellow zone once more investigations are done.
 - Red circle – major wild life linkages

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Dotted red circle - wild life linkages

- There are severe biodiversity constraints in outer and central corridors because of the identified endangered species and wildlife corridors.
- Inner corridor has a much lower impact on biodiversity but affects banana properties to a greater extent.
- It is likely to be difficult to obtain permission from National Parks and Wildlife Service and Environment Australia to build roads through areas with such a diversity of threatened wildlife.
- Far Western bypass - a lot of the area is outside of Coffs Harbour local government area. Again there are likely to be very severe restrictions due to biodiversity impacts.
- CFG concerned about changes to corridors. Most of the community group want some certainty that what comes out of this process will be followed through.
- The information on biodiversity has not mentioned the water catchment or fish - at a later stage when the route options are being looked at, specialist ecologists for bats, owls, fish, frogs etc., will report on potential impacts.

Request that the maps be attached to the minutes.

6. ECONOMICS

Barry Hancock (Connell Wagner) showed overhead: Coffs Harbour By-Pass Strategy, Preliminary Concept Design - Initial Scope Definition.

This overhead covered key features of the different route options – inner, central, outer and far western – in tabulated form. It showed estimated length, number of interchanges, earthworks, pavements, bridges, estimated construction costs, cost per kilometre, construction period, forecast traffic volumes for 2001 and 2021 and economic analysis indicators.

- CFG –questioned why had they not received this information before the meeting.
- The information was virtually “hot off the press” and was the first draft. The information would be released to the broader community in a few weeks. The CFG’s role is to look at this information and make comment to assist with further refinement before it is released. CFG requested that they be issued a copy of the information presented with the minutes. Emphasised that the information was preliminary and needed to have sensitivity testing before it could be released. Once finalised, it would be released to whole community and posted on web site.
- The further west you go the higher the total costs. The far west corridor would be a huge cost (up to \$2.2 billion). Only 2,000 vehicles a day were estimated to use this route.
- Question asked as to why this cost was unrealistic given other major roadwork projects in the State that have gone ahead. RTA only has budget of \$220 million a year for the Pacific Highway. A lot of other projects are underway and the money needs to be spread around different parts of the highway.
- The upgrading of the highway is planned section by section.
- The single biggest highway project cost \$348m and carries a volume of 12,000 vehicles per day.
- The far west is not a financially viable option.

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- CHCC traffic model (TRACKS) was used to predict future traffic movements.

Barry then ran through traffic volumes from TRACKS modelling: (overheads with traffic numbers shown on schematic maps).

- A CFG member was concerned that all streets were not labelled on the maps.
- Barry told the group that the traffic flow maps had only just been put together that day and they were brought to the group today to give them the information instead of in three weeks until they were in a proper presentation form. The names of roads were not relevant as the discussion centred on traffic assignments from the existing highway to a potential bypass, and not on minor roads.
- The outer and middle corridors did not take a huge percentage of traffic off the existing highway.
- The inner corridor has potential to take proportionally higher volumes of traffic off the existing highway.
- Enquiries from the CFG whether any work had been done on upgrading opportunities for the existing highway.
- The main focus for the project team has been to complete the studies relating to the bypass options as quickly as possible. This acknowledges the significant community feedback wanting to "fast track" the study. The enormity of this task coupled with the Christmas/New Year break period means that the results have only just been completed. The RTA is bound to examine all alternatives under the provisions of the EP&A Act which requires all feasible alternatives and the reasons why any are discarded to be documented.

In looking at scenarios for long-term upgrading of the existing highway:

- Benefits will be listed and considered ie. the benefit in travel time, distance, operating costs.
- Costs – visual, noise, you cannot quantify the cost of these. What protective measures are considered ie. noise barriers?
- Economic impacts and benefits also need to be considered eg. tourism.
- Question of how RTA can ensure that costs do not blow out. There is up to 35% built into the budget for unseen contingencies. The project team is confident that costs are realistic.
- The reason Bray Street construction costs changed was that the project also changed from installation of a few traffic lights to a major grade-separated highway intersection

7. TIMING ON STRATEGY AND PLANNING

- Tim Paterson (Connell Wagner) stated that at today's meeting of the Steering Committee it was agreed the information could be released.
- This information should be made available to the whole community. With a bit more checking of figures over the next week or so the best way of getting the information out was in the form of a newsletter, to be released in approximately three weeks time. That is the commitment the steering committee has made. This is a positive contribution to getting the strategy moving forward.

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8. ACCELERATED HIGHWAY PLANNING PROCESS (overhead of flow chart)–

- Need to accelerate looking at the existing highway.
- Go forward in March with release of current information to the public.
- The Woolgoolga CFG commenced working on identifying corridors in the Moonee to Woolgoolga section. These will be finalised and information regarding the Sapphire to Moonee highway upgrade would also be released.
- To assist in getting the information out, the Steering Committee was planning a series of community forums (Open Houses) where everyone can access a project team representative and talk one-on-one. These would run over a few hours so people could come and go, look at displays, talk to team members and make any comments.
- Open House sessions would be held in Coffs Harbour, Woolgoolga, Moonee, and probably some of the rural centres such as in Bucca, Orara etc.
- Newsletter would go out before meetings are held with details of venues and times and it would also contain a comments form to get community feedback.
- Suggestion that a display should be set up at Coffs Harbour Show
- Also radio could be used to promote information distribution points.
- Suggested that when they had closer to what the team considered a reasonable route would the team be able to personally visit the people affected. This was unlikely until the route selection stage, but it is possible to hold small local group meetings. It is about working together, which is where the CFG comes in – to facilitate meetings with these groups of residents. The project team are happy to come to resident meetings to discuss issues.
- CFG network is there to ensure we reach further into the community with the newsletter.
- Newsletters could be put in corner shops like Karangi Shop and petrol stations.
- The timing of an announcement on the preferred corridor is up to the Steering Committee.
- The Steering Committee's intention is to make these decisions as quickly as possible because of the numbers of people affected, but there was a huge amount of work to be done to work through the three options and we now have the existing highway to consider as well.
- Even for an upgrade of the existing highway there is still a lot to consider eg. intersections, interchanges, bridges etc.
- We need to make a decision now on the future of the Pacific Highway because Coffs Harbour is changing so rapidly.

9. CLOSE OF MEETING

- Meeting closed at 8.30pm

Next Meeting: Was set for Tuesday, 9 April 2002. Following feedback from members of the CFG, the next meeting will now be held Thursday, 21 March 2002 at Norm Jordan Pavilion, Coffs Harbour Showground, Coffs Harbour. Please note change of venue.