

Record of Meeting



Purpose of Meeting	Tucabia Community Liaison Group Meeting No. 3		
Project	Wells Crossing To Iluka Road - Upgrading the Pacific Highway		
Prepared By	Jenny Bailey	Phone No	1800 557 673
Place of Meeting	Ulmarra Masonic Hall River Street, Ulmarra	Date	5 May 2005 6pm – 8pm
Present	Bruce Bird (BB) Roy Bowling (RB) Sarah Dunlop (SD) Roslyn Harradine (RH) Robert Jefferies (RJ) Kerry Lloyd (KL) Iven McLennan (IM) Megan McCullough (MM) Victor Pashkevich (VP) David Pinnells (DP) Mark Purcell (MP) Ian Rees (IR) Dorothy Scutt (DS) Sharron Todd (ST) Russell Widin (RW)	Peter Black (RTA) (PB) Scott Smith (RTA) (SS) Jo Moss (SKM) (JM) Paul Robilliard (PR) Jenny Bailey (SKM) (JB)	
Apologies	Heidi Beynon (HB)		
Distribution	All of the above		

The meeting commenced at 6:10 pm.

Agenda

JM welcomed everyone and advised that Tanyia Tuckey has left SKM.

PR was the meeting facilitator. He outlined the agenda for the Community Liaison Group (CLG) Meeting No. 3 as follows:

- Welcome, introduction, notes from last meeting and update from CLG members
- Update on consultation activity and issues
- Route options selection process
- Amendment of the study area boundary
- Update on environmental studies (land use, ecology and indigenous heritage)

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- Update on traffic and transport studies
- Questions and answers
- Close

Feedback from CLG Members

PR welcomed new CLG members.

PR asked the CLG members if they wished to discuss the record of meeting from the last CLG meeting. DP commented that he did not recall Tanyia Tuckey's discussion about the "Friends of Yuraygir" newsletter or PB's comments relating to the potential extension of the study area. KL commented that he could not recall the second point being raised. Other CLG members were unable to recollect details and confirm this, or otherwise comment. ST who had reviewed the record of meeting indicated that she had been asked to do so after the meeting and hence had not taken detailed notes at the meeting.

PR invited the CLG members to provide feedback on their community's or organisation's issues or concerns.

- SD reported a public meeting was held in Tucabia on 26/4/05. The meeting was attended by 91 people, who were predominantly from Pillar Valley and Tucabia. SD provided a handout summarising the main issues that were discussed at the Tucabia public meeting on 26/4/05. The main comments reported include:
 - a) There are mixed perceptions about the CLG's role, with some people believing it should be a lobby group and others believing it should facilitate the two-way flow of information¹;
 - b) A lack of confidence in the consultation process was expressed;
 - c) A lack of access to adequate information was expressed – it was suggested that maps (especially those available on the web) should be more detailed and should show road names;
 - d) There is concern that the amenity of Pillar Valley may be impacted;
 - e) There are mixed opinions about routes through State Forests and National Parks;
 - f) There was discussion about the constraints of flooding and fog;
 - g) There is community pressure to investigate alternative routes such as the New England Highway or a Coast Range route;
 - h) Some people believe the compensation process is unfair
- SD reported that a questionnaire was distributed at the meeting and 30 responses had been received. SD reported that most of the respondents believed the upgraded highway would provide positive benefits and all respondents felt there would also be negative impacts. The majority of respondents supported an upgrade of the existing highway or a Coast Range route, although SD acknowledged that what was meant by a Coast Range route varied considerably.
- RW commented that he had attended the public meeting and he supported SD's summary of the issues discussed.

¹ It is noted that later in the meeting JM clarified the role of the CLG and members as per the CLG Charter. JM commented that CLG members may have several different roles in the community and outside the CLG Charter.



- ST commented that she had also attended the public meeting and she supported SD's summary of the issues provided. ST indicated a second public meeting may be required in the future to update the local community.
- VP commented that recent road accidents have demonstrated that the existing highway is already a safe road and that it is the drivers who are at fault.
- MM stated that she is a new CLG member who is concerned about the environmental and amenity impacts of the upgraded highway. She is also concerned about safety, with respect to the volume of heavy vehicle traffic. MM lives on Firth Heinz Road.
- RJ stated that he is a new CLG member from the Tucabia area. He nominated to join the CLG so he could keep his local community informed.
- KL stated that his role on the CLG is as a community representative and he is not representing Clarence Valley Council. He indicated that the extension of the study area was poorly timed as a map showing an eastern route option emerged in the community immediately prior to the announcement and it appeared the events were related.² KL commented that local road funding may be affected by a deviation.
- RH reported that she did not attend the public meeting held on 26/4/05, however, she summarised the feedback she has received from other community members:
 - a) There is concern that the highway will be 8 lanes. PB stated that the new highway would not be 8 lanes – it would be 4 lanes, with the potential to be expanded to 6 lanes if there was sufficient demand in the future. The additional lanes would be constructed in the centre median area;
 - b) There are reports that a lobby group is being formed in the Pillar Valley area to oppose routes in that area;
 - c) Most people at the meeting seemed to support a Coast Range route (SD commented that the informal vote undertaken at the public meeting did not clearly define the location of a Coast Range route and many people did not understand the full implications of what they were voting for (eg. the questionnaires showed that some people thought, erroneously, that a Coast Range route could be entirely within State Forest.)
- RH also commented that the community should also consider the benefits of the upgraded highway e.g. she believes mobile phone coverage in the area would improve if a road was constructed to the east.
- DS commented that CLG members were not notified about the extension of the study area prior to the media announcement.³
- DP reported that he had organised a meeting of the Somervale Road residents. This meeting was attended by 32 community members. DP reported the following outcomes of that meeting:
 - a) The community objects to the extension of the study area and there is strong opposition to a route along the eastern boundary of the study area;
 - b) There is support for a Coast Range route or an upgrade of the existing highway;

² This plan was a submission from a community member, which was submitted to the RTA for consideration as part of the community consultation process.

³ The release of project information is preceded by a Ministerial announcement and letters advising of this announcement were sent to all CLG members with a map showing the extended study area as soon as it was possible to do so.



- c) Greater community activity is required.
- DP also reported that he and another community member had met with PB at a different time. He felt they had been given an opportunity to discuss their concerns but commented further answers were required.
 - DP stated that he, Bruce Walsh (from Maclean CLG) and Helen Busby (from Grafton CLG) propose a meeting on 16th May for all CLG members. DP indicated that it was not proposed that SKM/RTA attend the meeting to avoid possible constraints.
 - BB stated that he did not attend the public meeting in Tucabia. He commented that the Wooli community would like to know whether an on/off ramp would be provided to service Wooli.
 - IR reported that the Wooli community is predominantly in favour of an upgraded highway and that there is speculation that a preferred route has already been determined.
 - IM stated that he did not attend the public meeting in Tucabia. He reported that the community's main concerns are the map which shows an eastern route option that has been circulating in the community, a lack of meaningful consultation and a desire for a more comprehensive explanation justifying the exclusion of a Coast Range route from consideration.
 - RB reported that most community members claim to know where the route is going. He commented that a Coast Range route would still require private property acquisition.

Update on Consultation Activity

JM summarised the correspondence the study team has received to date. There have been 245 phone calls, 200 emails, 49 letters and 24 faxes. JM explained that the database is used to track the communications received and that it was originally developed as a mailing list.

JM outlined the 10 issues that have been recorded as most frequent to date, via phone, email, letter and fax. Most frequent communications relate to the CLGs, the consultation process and the project in general. SKM is continuing to receive requests from people who wish to be added to the mailing list.

Question

Are all concerns raised recorded in the database?

Answer

JM and PB – The database records the frequency with which issues are communicated via the 1800 number, email, letters and fax. There are also other means of recording communications such as the minutes of meetings. Regardless of the communication method, all issues raised are considered and investigated by the project team. The database is not a voting tool and its purpose is to flag issues that need to be investigated and issues that are emerging on the project.

PR – The project team also prepares a consultation report which outlines all consultation activities that have been undertaken and the issues raised.

Question

If there is a unanimous resolution from a group of people about a particular issue, is it counted once or multiple times? i.e. if 5,000 people raise a particular issue, is it counted 5000 times?



Answer

All issues are considered and investigated by the project team, whether they are raised by one person or 5,000 people.

DP stated that he wanted a yes or no answer and asked that it be recorded that he was not satisfied with the response provided. PB checked with everyone and there was general agreement that PB had answered the question asked.

Question

Is the consultation process documented in the EIS?

Answer

PB – Yes.

Question

The information on the project website said that there had been community consultation before the eastern extension of the study area boundary. What was this consultation - who wanted the area extended east?

Answer

The justification for the extension of the study area boundary will be presented later in the meeting.⁴

Summary of CLG Meetings

PB provided a summary of the topics discussed at the CLG meetings to date. He highlighted the purpose of the first two meetings was to provide CLG members with an understanding of the route development process and the process of identifying constraints for feasible routes. The routes are assessed against environmental, social, environmental and functional (engineering) criteria.

The purpose of this CLG meeting was to provide CLG members with an update on the investigations that have been undertaken to date. PB explained that the study team has identified potentially feasible route options, however, these routes are still being validated and refined and are still likely to change. Therefore, they cannot be released/discussed until they are final, as it would cause unnecessary anxiety in the community.

PB indicated the next CLG meeting will be held during the route options display period. PB explained that the study team's priority during the first week of the display will be communicating with potentially directly affected property owners.

Question

Will the CLGs be shown the route options prior to the public display?

⁴ The project website states that "the decision [to extend the study area] follows consideration of comments from the community and investigations by the RTA, which indicated that there are other feasible route options to the east of the original study area." One of the key issues raised at the Community Information Sessions and the first CLG meetings held in December 2004 was that the study area boundary should be extended further east. This issue has also been raised in formal correspondence to the project team.



Answer

PB – The route options will be on public display after the Ministerial announcement. The project team needs to respect the privacy of potentially affected property owners and as such they are the priority at that stage. CLG members cannot be notified in advance but will be advised as soon as possible.

Amendment of Study Area Boundary

PB explained that the project team has considered opportunities for feasible route options outside the study area. An opportunity to identify feasible route options existed to the east of Pine Brush State Forest and ecologically significant wetlands were identified and hence the study area boundary was extended. Field staff have been gathering information about the study area, including the extended area, to determine the feasibility of the route options under consideration. PB stated that the property owners in the extended study area have been contacted via letter and that the RTA/SKM is proposing to meet with some of these property owners to investigate constraints in this area.

Question

The map showing the extended study area indicates that the southern extremity has moved further south. Is Parker Road now in the Wells Crossing to Iluka Road study area? Why haven't property owners in this area been given the opportunity to nominate as CLG representatives?

Answer

PB – The southern cut-off point for this project is still Bald Knob Road, however, there may be a minor variance to achieve an appropriate tie-ins along the existing highway to the Woolgoolga to Wells Crossing project. Parker Road is still within the study area of the Woolgoolga to Wells Crossing project.

Question

Why has the study area boundary changed in the Gulmarrad area?

Answer

PB – The study area boundary is an indicative boundary for the purposes of data collection and is not a surveyed line. The amended boundary was drawn as a straight line between the extended section (in the vicinity of Pine Brush State Forest and the SEPP 14 wetlands) and the northern part of the study area, resulting in a minor deviation from the original boundary in the Gulmarrad area.

Update on Environmental Studies

PR referred to the study process that was discussed at the first two CLG meetings and indicated that he would present some of the preliminary findings from the investigations that have been undertaken to date.

Study Area Constraints

PR referred to the constraints slide that JM presented at the last CLG meeting and emphasised that there is no perfect solution to the highway upgrade.



Land Use and Planning

PR explained that there have been discussions with Clarence Valley Council about land use and planning. Council has supplied current and proposed future zoning information about the study area. The Clarence Valley Settlement Strategy also documents existing and proposed residential areas within the study area. Contact has also been made with DIPNR (NSW Department of Planning, Infrastructure and Natural Resources), DPI (NSW Department of Primary Industries) which comprises the former NSW Forests, NSW Agriculture, NSW Fisheries and NSW Mineral Resources to discuss land use. NSW Forests has also provided information about the different management zones within the State Forests, which reflect the land use.

New aerial photography over the study area was flown in November 2004. This has been used to identify all buildings which appear to be houses, schools, churches etc in the study area. This information will be used by specialists to identify potential impacts of route options.

Field investigations have been undertaken to verify the mapping information the study team has collected.

Question

Why isn't the Wells Crossing Flora Reserve shown on the land use constraints map?

Answer

PR – The Wells Crossing Flora Reserve is recorded as a constraint but it is positioned underneath the State Conservation Area layer and as such, does not appear on this map.

Question

Are all constraints given equal weighting? Are there 100% constraints?

Answer

PR – The project team has assigned different weightings to different constraints. There are no constraints that are considered to be absolute constraints although some constraints are regarded as very high.

Question

The old study area boundary traversed the Pine Brush State Forest. Is a route through the State Forest being considered?

Answer

PR – The study area boundary was extended to enable feasible route options which avoid Pine Brush State Forest to be considered. However, routes through Pine Brush State Forest would still be considered. At this stage, route options are considered if they are feasible when assessed against the selection criteria. This assessment will be documented in the Route Options Report. Different routes are not compared against each other until the value management stage, which occurs after the route options display.

Question

Once the route options are displayed, will any new options be considered?



Answer

PB – All feasible route options will be placed on public display. Therefore, new options would not be considered after the display unless new data emerge, although community comment on the options and further investigations will be important inputs to the refinement of the options.

PR summarised the key findings of the land use assessment:

- Rural residential areas, towns and villages are key constraints;
- The Clarence Valley Settlement Strategy provides an indication of future land use patterns. It is unlikely that urban areas will expand beyond existing zoned land;
- The floodplain is important to agricultural production;
- There are regulatory constraints which affect proposed development through SEPP 14 wetlands, State Forests, National Parks, State Conservation Areas and Nature Reserves. Development approvals and consents in these areas are complex, and may be subject to further approvals from local government, a state government agency or at the Ministerial level.

PR showed the land use and planning constraints on a GIS layer and explained the different land uses.

Ecology

PR explained that information about ecological constraints has been obtained from existing records which are compiled by DEC (Department of Environment and Conservation), from a local ecologist (Greg Clancy) who is a member of the study team, from property owners and from other sources. Preliminary field investigations were undertaken by ecologists in early April 2005 to verify the data and information collected to date, and to enhance this information with an overview of the vegetation and habitat conditions within the study area. The aim of the field investigations at this stage was to obtain information which is representative of different parts of the study area.

PR summarised the key findings of the ecological assessment:

- A large proportion of the study area has already been highly disturbed;
- Vegetation on the floodplain is of high value and has been listed by DEC as an endangered ecological community.
- Land in the eastern part of the study area which has not been cleared provides an important habitat corridor;
- There are several SEPP 14 wetlands, the Yaegl Nature Reserve, a State Conservation Area and some areas within the State Forests which are important ecological constraints.

PR showed the ecological constraints on a GIS layer and explained the different colourings associated with different areas.

Question

How can community members identify threatened species?

Answer

PR – The National Parks and Wildlife Service produces lists of threatened species.

PR reported that the study team has contacted several property owners to seek access to their land for ecological investigations. Some property owners expressed concern that the findings



of the ecological assessment might restrict their land usage. PR clarified the current understanding of the requirements for reporting threatened species:

- SKM/RTA are required by law to report all threatened species sightings to the DEC;
- Where a new development or land usage is proposed, Council must consider whether significant impacts on threatened species will be likely;
- The same approval requirements for development apply to the RTA and property owners, i.e. the consent/approval authority must consider the potential environmental impacts of any proposed development whether it is proposed by a private property owner or the RTA;
- It is an offence to damage or clear threatened species without approval.

Indigenous Heritage

PR explained that the information about heritage constraints has been obtained from existing records which are compiled by DEC (Department of Environment and Conservation) and from a landscape sensitivity analysis. Preliminary field investigations were undertaken by heritage consultants in early April 2005 to verify the landscape analysis and to identify heritage sites.

PR summarised the key findings of the indigenous heritage assessment:

- A relatively small number of sites were identified during the field investigations;
- Creek and river margins and ridgelines are more likely to have indigenous heritage significance;
- Glenugie Peak (Mt Elaine) has Aboriginal cultural heritage significance.

Question

Is a European heritage assessment also be undertaken?

Answer

PR – Yes, Navin Officer have been engaged to undertake indigenous and European heritage assessments.

PR showed the indigenous heritage constraints on a GIS layer and explained which areas had a higher level of sensitivity. PR explained that work is underway to update the mapping to include heritage constraints within the extended study area.

PR reported that the study team has contacted several property owners to seek access to their land for heritage investigations. Some property owners expressed concern that the findings of the heritage assessment might restrict their land usage. PR clarified the current understanding of the requirements for reporting heritage sites:

- SKM/RTA are required by law to report all Aboriginal sites to the DEC;
- It is an offence to damage or destroy Aboriginal sites without approval from the DEC;
- If an Aboriginal site is identified, land usage is not necessarily affected. For example, rural activities such as grazing are generally low impact and as such, would probably be allowed to continue;
- The same approval requirements for development apply to the RTA and property owners, i.e. the consent/approval authority must consider the potential environmental impacts of any proposed development whether it is proposed by a private property owner or the RTA.

Traffic and Transport

PB presented a graph illustrating the traffic growth on the Pacific Highway between Hexham and the NSW/Qld border, at a number of different locations. Traffic growth on the highway is

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currently about 2.5%p.a. The lowest traffic volumes along the highway between Hexham and the Queensland border are in the vicinity of Grafton.

Question

What does AADT mean?

Answer

PB – Annual average daily traffic. It is calculated by dividing the total traffic volumes over a year by 365 days.

PB provided a handout from Austroads showing the vehicle classification system. Refer to **Attachment A**.

PB presented a graph showing the results of the traffic survey. The light vehicle traffic volumes peak in the middle of the day whereas the heavy vehicle traffic volumes are much more consistent over a 24 hour period. Whilst there is a community perception that there are more heavy vehicle movements at night time, the survey shows that heavy vehicle movements peak at about 5pm. Overall, heavy vehicles account for approximately 20% of the total traffic volume. In the middle of the day heavy vehicle traffic accounts for approximately 9% of the total traffic volume and in the early hours of the morning, heavy vehicle traffic accounts for approximately 75% of the total traffic volume as the volume of total traffic decreases significantly at night time. In about 20 years time, it is anticipated that total traffic volumes will increase by about 50%.

PB explained that an origin-destination survey (OD survey) has been undertaken to measure traffic volumes and the proportion of local and through traffic within the study area. During the survey the number plates of all heavy vehicles and all white cars were recorded to identify the origins and destinations of a representative sample of the traffic. The survey showed that there are approximately 7,500 vehicles/day travelling on the Pacific Highway near Grafton and approximately 30-35% of these are through traffic i.e., traffic which has an origin and destination outside of the study area. Approximately 20% of the total traffic are heavy vehicles and up to 50% of the heavy vehicles are through (long distance) traffic.

Question

How recent is the data?

Answer

PB – The traffic survey was conducted late last year.

Question

Does the RTA consider Auslink's report which shows that rail will be used increasingly in the future for freight transport?

Answer

PB – Yes, consideration is given to predicted freight movements over the next 30 years.

Comment

Trucks have been bypassing the highway and travelling along Eight Mile Lane and Tyndale Road.

Response

PB – Council has been undertaking traffic counts in that area recently. The project team will contact Council to discuss the results.



Question

If the existing highway becomes a local/regional road, what condition will it be left in?

Answer

PB – The RTA would reach an agreement with Council on the hand-over condition.

Design

PB explained that the study team is currently undertaking field investigations to identify the geotechnical conditions in the study area. The soils in the floodplain are compressible soils and as such, are subject to settlement. A road through the floodplain would have a longer construction timeframe as the soils would need to be pre-loaded prior to road construction. Consequently, even though options closer to the existing highway would be attractive for local traffic this would result in potential construction constraints in the floodplain.

Questions and Answers

Question

If the Wells Crossing to Iluka Road section has the lowest traffic volumes, will it be constructed last?

Answer

PB – At this stage it is not known when this section would be constructed. Once the planning has been completed for all of the Pacific Highway projects, the Minister will prioritise the projects for construction.

Question

How does the accident rate along this stretch of the highway compare to other sections?

Answer

PB – The accident rate between Wells Crossing and Iluka Road is similar to other sections that have not been upgraded.

Question

Will the options be refined after the route options display?

Answer

PB – Options of a certain width will be shown at the route options display. The centre-line of the options may be moved after the display, however, these refinements are expected to be fairly minor and would not be expected to extend significantly beyond the corridor widths shown at the display.

Question

Will access points be shown on the display material?

Answer

PB – Possible interchange locations will be shown.

Question

How should CLG members provide feedback to SKM/RTA?

Answer

JM - The preferred method of communication is via the project 1800 number or the project email address rather than personal correspondence to individuals on the project



team. This ensures all communications are recorded in the database and attended to as soon as possible. However, community members are welcome to contact JM/PB directly if they would prefer.

Comment

It would be helpful to receive hard-copies of information which can be referred to/distributed to the community prior to the receipt of the minutes.

Response

PB – Copies of the presentation can be sent to all CLG members in advance of the record of the meeting.

Question

Who determines where the route options displays will be located?

Answer

JM – SKM/RTA has identified possible display locations but welcome suggestions from the community for consideration.

Question

Will a community information session be held during the route options display period?

Answer

JM – Staffed displays are planned to provide an opportunity for the greatest number of people to discuss their concerns individually with project team members.

Question

Will CLG members be notified of the public display date in advance?

Answer

PB – The timing of the route options display is dependent on a Ministerial announcement and CLG members will not be notified in advance. However, the project team will endeavour to contact CLG members as soon as possible after the announcement to provide them with as much notice as possible of the next CLG meeting.

Question

Is the Coast Range route being considered as an option?

Answer

PB - The project team has previously considered a Coast Range route and assessed it against the project objectives. No opportunities for a Coast Range route which exceed the opportunities within the study area have been identified and as such, it is not being considered as an option. This assessment will be documented in the Route Options Report.

PR thanked everyone for coming.

Meeting closed at 8:40pm



Attachments

- Attachment A - Vehicle classification system (Austroads)
- Attachment B - Powerpoint presentation delivered at the Tucabia CLG meeting