



25 NOV, 2021

Have your say on plans to widen Hexham Straight

Port Stephens News of the Area, Port Stephens

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PLANS to upgrade a section of the Pacific Highway between the Newcastle Inner City Bypass and Hexham Bridge took a leap forward last week, with the release of the concept design and environmental assessment for community comment.

The Hexham Straight widening project is being delivered as part of the Australian and New South Wales governments' \$2 billion commitment towards the extension of the M1 Pacific Motorway to Raymond Terrace, which will transform journeys between Sydney and the Queensland border.

The Australian Government is contributing \$1.6 billion to the 15-kilometre M1 extension, with the New South Wales Government contributing the remaining \$400 million.

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development Barnaby Joyce said the proposed six-kilometre-long Hexham Straight project would improve traffic flow along a critical route.

"The M1 extension is another example of the Australian Government's record \$110 billion infrastructure investment plan delivering for communities," the Deputy Prime Minister said.

"This route is part of the National Land Transport Network and provides an important connection to the Port of Newcastle, ensuring goods and commodities can reach international markets and generate the export dollars Australia relies on."

NSW Minister for Transport and Roads Rob Stokes said Transport for NSW asked the community earlier this year for input into the initial design – and the concept design takes the feedback into account, where possible.

"A key issue raised by the community was related to improving traffic flow at the

intersection of the Newcastle Inner City Bypass and Maitland Road, so the new design includes an additional left-turn lane northbound and off-road shared path at that intersection," Minister Stokes said.

"Transport for NSW also gave consideration to feedback about access along Old Maitland Road and Shamrock, Fenwick and Merchant streets, but the

initial design was considered the safest option for residents and motorists.

"The community is now being asked to provide Transport for NSW with comment on the concept design and the Review of Environmental Factors (REF).

"In addition to this, comment is also invited by the City of Newcastle on an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), as the upgrade would potentially impact three small areas of land classified as coastal wetlands under the state's planning rules."

Senator for New South Wales Hollie Hughes said, "It is among the busiest transport corridors in NSW – used by about 50,000 motorists a day and carrying some of the highest traffic volumes in the Hunter region.

"The Hexham Straight proposal involves upgrading six kilometres of the existing highway from two to three lanes in each direction and building a new bridge across Ironbark Creek.

"Not only will this reduce congestion during peak periods, providing improved traffic flow for commuters and freight alike, it's estimated it will support up to 750 jobs during construction."

Community feedback on the concept

design, environmental assessment and EIS is invited until 5pm on Tuesday 14 December.

For more information or to view and comment on the concept design and REF, visit <http://nswroads.work/hexhamportal>.

The EIS is available for viewing online at www.newcastle.nsw.gov.au/council/news/public-notice.

To comment on the EIS, please include the development application reference number DA2021/01515 and send your written comments to DASubmissions@ncc.nsw.gov.au.