



Great Western Highway Upgrade Program – Katoomba to Lithgow

Community Consultation Summary Report

Transport for NSW | May 2020

This page left intentionally blank

Executive summary

The Great Western Highway Upgrade Program (the Program) proposes to deliver approximately 34 kilometres of four lane divided highway between Katoomba and Lithgow. The NSW Government has committed \$2.5 billion in funding to the initial planning and construction of the duplication. The upgrade will reduce congestion and provide safer, more efficient and reliable journeys in, around and through the Blue Mountains.

The Great Western Highway upgrade has now been listed by Infrastructure Australia as a priority initiative. This means it is officially recognised as a priority infrastructure investment that Australia needs, to secure a sustainable and prosperous future.

Part of Australia's National Land Transport Network, the highway is unique because it is used and shared extensively by local communities, commuters, tourists and the freight industry.

Average daily traffic volumes in the corridor vary from around 15,000 to 20,000 vehicles per day near Katoomba to around 8,500 vehicles per day towards Forty Bends. A growth rate of 1 per cent per annum is expected between Katoomba and north of Blackheath, while a 1.7 per cent per annum growth rate is expected from north of Blackheath to Forty Bends. There is a relatively high proportion of heavy vehicles (between 12 per cent and 24 per cent) and this reflects the fact that the Great Western Highway link to the Central West carries 18,800 tonnes of freight per day (10,300 towards Sydney and 8,500 towards the Central West).

Upgrading the highway presents many opportunities to improve road use, safety, and village liveability. It will allow Transport for NSW to clear congestion points, separate long-distance and local traffic and cater for safer and more productive road freight vehicles.

The NSW Government has progressively upgraded sections of the Great Western Highway to make it safer and more reliable. Up to 95 kilometres of the highway through the Blue Mountains has been upgraded already.

We now propose to upgrade and duplicate the remaining 34 kilometres of the Great Western Highway between Katoomba and Lithgow. This includes a new strategic corridor between Katoomba and Mount Victoria and the corridor between Mount Victoria and Lithgow that was reserved in 2013 and is in the Local Environment Plans of the Blue Mountains City and Lithgow City Councils.

Once this section of the highway has been upgraded, road users can expect to save at least a further 25 per cent of their travel time between Katoomba and Lithgow. The entire length of the highway will be two lanes each way between Lapstone and Wallerawang. Other benefits of the upgrade include:

- Improved connections for residents, businesses, tourists, commuters and freight travelling in, around and through the Blue Mountains
- Improved road safety
- Better and more reliable travel times
- Long distance and heavy vehicles separated from local traffic, pedestrians and cyclists
- Supported regional economic growth
- Improved freight efficiency
- Increased transport capacity to meet future growth
- More resilient opportunities to manage traffic flow during natural or other disaster events such as bushfires.

As well as improving safety and increasing the liveability of towns along the corridor, the upgrade will allow better connection for communities in the Central West.

The Central West is NSW's third largest regional centre and contributes 12 per cent gross regional product to the state. The region is expected to grow to more than 300,000 people during the next 20 years and see dwellings increase by 12 per cent. This upgrade Program will support growth in key industries in the Central West.

Options for upgrading the highway between Katoomba and Lithgow are constrained by steep topography, the railway line, private property, existing towns, and the Blue Mountains National Park including the World Heritage Area. Since the existing highway is already constricted in space, we are seeking to use as much of the existing corridor as possible for the upgrade, to minimise impacts on the environment and manage costs.

The upgrade Program is investigating and considering the following features:

- Katoomba to Medlow Bath to include bridges between highpoints along the ridgeline
- Medlow Bath to include widening the existing highway within the current road corridor through the township maintaining the 60km/h speed limit
- Medlow Bath to Blackheath options to include widening the existing corridor or running along the western side of the rail line
- Blackheath to Mount Victoria to include tunnel and bypass corridor and changes to the Mount Boyce Heavy Vehicle Inspection Bay*
- Mount Victoria to the base of Victoria Pass to include a tunnel bypass of the village
- Base of Victoria Pass to South Bowenfels to include a four-lane divided road with a 100km/h speed limit along part of its length.
- Jenolan Caves Road intersection to be grade separated.

* We are currently undertaking a co-design process for Blackheath, as the route options through that village are more complex. No preferred routes for the village have been endorsed at this time. Options that run around the eastern side of Blackheath have been ruled out due to impact on the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area. Options that run directly through the Blue Mountains National Park have also been ruled out.

Initial community consultation

In November 2019, the strategic corridor for the proposed upgrade was revealed and put to the community for feedback. This included the previously reserved corridor from Mount Victoria to Lithgow and a new corridor between Katoomba and Mount Victoria.

This was intended as the first of many consultations throughout the program development, with the aim to gather early feedback on the community on key values and priorities, as well as to address any concerns or questions they had about the whole upgrade program, before progressing to the refinement route options and features within the corridor.

This report provides a summary of the suggestions and concerns raised in submissions to the Katoomba to Lithgow Great Western Highway Upgrade Program.

The proposed upgrade was displayed to the community between Thursday 7 November and Monday 16 December 2019 at locations including Katoomba, Oberon, and Bathurst and Orange libraries.

The display locations and website link were included in advertisements in the Central Western Daily, Bathurst Western Advocate, Lithgow Mercury, Blue Mountains Gazette and Oberon Review. They were also advertised on the NSW Roads Facebook page.

Twelve community information sessions were held in Katoomba, Medlow Bath, Blackheath, Mount Victoria, Hartley and Lithgow, and were attended by 1045 people. The community was invited to view the proposed corridor at the following staffed information sessions which provided an opportunity to learn more, ask questions and have their say.

Monday 25 to Wednesday 27 November

- Two pop-up displays in Lithgow and Katoomba shopping centres were held, with more than 100 people engaging with staff.
- Three evening Community Information Sessions were held, in Lithgow, Katoomba and Blackheath, where staff engaged with 26 people in Lithgow and Katoomba, and 315 at Blackheath.

Monday 3 to Wednesday 5 December

- Three evening Community Information Sessions were held, in Lithgow, Katoomba and Blackheath, where staff engaged with 15 stakeholders in Lithgow and Katoomba, and 114 at Blackheath. Attendance was lower than week one of sessions, and there were several return stakeholders at the Blackheath event (including some people not from Blackheath).

Monday 10 to Wednesday 11 December

- Three evening Community Information Sessions were held, in Medlow Bath, Mount Victoria and Hartley.
- There were 80 attendees in Medlow Bath, 50 in Mount Victoria, and 30 in Hartley.
- A public Meeting was held in Blackheath on Tuesday 10 December, from 6pm to 7:30pm, with a presentation by Transport for NSW Director West Alistair Lunn and a question and answer session. There were 315 people at this session.

Summary of issues and responses

During the consultation period, we received 1759 pieces of feedback from members of the community, businesses and stakeholders. Of this feedback, 446 were forms (hard and soft copy), 756 were via email and 557 were pinned comments on the online map.

The main issues from consultation and a summary of Transport for NSW's responses follow.

Transport for NSW should consider other options

ISSUE

The community would like to see rail options explored for freight in place of any investment in the duplication of the highway through the townships and communities in the Blue Mountains.

RESPONSE

The Highway upgrade is being developed alongside long term rail options. There is no substitute for upgrading the Great Western Highway, as we need both road and rail to meet future demands, ease congestion and increase safety. The rail line is being upgraded to allow for modern trains to provide service all the way to Lithgow.

ISSUE

The community queried why Bells Line of Road did not appear to be considered as an alternate route for development, given its connectivity to the Castlereagh Highway, and the potential to avoid impacts to Great Western Highway townships.

RESPONSE

The Great Western Highway is a key transport corridor through the Blue Mountains, which is already at capacity during certain periods. Traffic volumes are expected to continue to grow. If the Bells Line of Road was upgraded - with early indications the cost would be far in excess of this Program - significant traffic volumes would still remain on the Great Western Highway.

An upgrade of the Bells Line Road, which crosses extremely challenging terrain, could significantly impact the World Heritage Area. It would not achieve the same local benefits for the highway townships including to improve the movement of residents and boost the tourism industry by relieving congestion and providing safer, more reliable journey times.

Upgrading Bells Line of Road remains a longer term priority for Government.

ISSUE

Some community showed a preference for tunnel options through Blackheath, to avoid impacts to the township and the environment.

RESPONSE

We are at the start of the design phase. Many technical investigations are required to progress a tunnel option, which will only be done if a notional alignment, including a tunnel, is selected following further engagement with the community and Blue Mountains City Council.

The Government has committed to building a tunnel, even if it is the most expensive option, if that is the community's preference through the Blackheath Co-Design process and following broader consultation.

ISSUE

Those in favour of duplicating the highway believe the speed limit should remain a consistent 100km/h to support the current and future demand for an efficient connection from Sydney to the Central West.

RESPONSE

The Great Western Highway will need to cater for through traffic mixing with slower moving local traffic as it remains the key route between communities in the Blue Mountains. As the corridor design is progressed, including further community consultation, we will look at opportunities to improve travel times and deliver a more consistent speed limit along the route. A speed of 80km/hour is generally proposed at this stage, except for Medlow Bath, which is consistent with the Highway from Penrith to Katoomba.

Environment

ISSUE

Concerns were raised for the environment centred on protecting the cultural and historic heritage of the townships along the Highway. The community was concerned that the upgrade could impact the sense of community of the townships and impact the World Heritage Area.

RESPONSE

We aim to maintain local heritage in the Blue Mountains and avoid impacting listed items and places wherever possible. There will be no impact on the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area and the NSW Government is committed to minimising impacts to the natural environment, local heritage and property.

ISSUE

Anticipated noise and pollution created from the completed upgrade was a concern for community members living along the highway.

RESPONSE

A detailed noise assessment will be carried out as per the Environmental Protection Authority's *Road Noise Policy* in conjunction with Roads and Maritime Services' *Noise Criteria Guideline* and *Noise Mitigation Guideline*. If noise levels are predicted to exceed the NSW Environmental Protection Authority criteria, then noise mitigation measures will be considered. In addition, we understand air quality is important to the community. We are committed to improving air quality by effectively managing the NSW roads and traffic system. Air quality will be modelled as part of environmental assessments.

ISSUE

The community expressed concern about the potential impact of the proposed upgrade on the natural surroundings and visual aesthetics of the area. In addition to this, community was concerned the proposed upgrade could also impact recreational opportunities which attract tourists to the region and economic benefit to local industry.

RESPONSE

We are sensitive to the area's natural environment and the recreational value of the area. Community consultation will be ongoing throughout the Program and will help the project team to continue to identify and respond to these sensitive and highly valued areas.

Road use

ISSUE

Concerns were expressed for the safety of road users, including cyclists, as a result of a perceived increase in the number of heavy vehicles on the highway and the multiple speed limit changes.

RESPONSE

We appreciate the concern community members raised about potential increased heavy vehicle traffic. During the road design process, we will incorporate safety principles to ensure the upgraded highway meets road safety standards and that the risks to all road users including pedestrians and cyclists are minimised. This complements the existing investment on pedestrian and cyclist safety as part of the \$250 million package on safety upgrades

ISSUE

There were concerns about increased traffic congestion in towns where congestion is already an issue.

RESPONSE

The program is being designed to reduce congestion along the entire route, including through all the villages between Katoomba and Lithgow, and will separate long distance from local traffic where possible.

ISSUE

The size of freight vehicles moving through communities which want to preserve tranquillity and reduce pollution was of concern.

RESPONSE

The highway is being designed to carry the safest and most productive heavy vehicles, which means fewer heavy vehicles on the road and a safer road environment for local communities and motorists. This includes B-doubles up to 25 metres and more modern, productive vehicles up to 30 metres.

Property and business

ISSUE

Potentially impacted property owners are concerned for their homes and businesses and the lack of certainty about route options, particularly in Blackheath.

RESPONSE

We realise that some property owners have concerns about potential impacts including future property values. We are in the very early stages of planning and design for the project at Blackheath, and no decisions have been made about the location of the upgraded highway, however the route will be designed to minimise property impacts.. We are working to provide more certainty to residents as soon as possible. Feedback is vital in shaping the upgrade and the final route will be designed with the community, alongside further survey work, technical studies and environmental assessments.

ISSUE

There was interest in the property acquisition process and what is to be expected.

RESPONSE

If a property is required for the upgrade, compensation is assessed under the provisions of the *Land Acquisition (Just Terms Compensation) Act 1991*. We use professionally qualified industry based valuers to assess compensation. The process allows for both the owner and Transport for NSW to have valuations completed so that an agreement can be reached.

ISSUE

There are concerns from business owners that the upgrade will impact on their livelihood if their businesses are lost due to acquisition or impacted by a decline in tourism.

RESPONSE

The Great Western Highway upgrade is designed to make mountain communities more accessible and boost tourism and the Program will take every opportunity to increase the liveability of towns along the corridor. Our bypassed towns initiative has been proven to provide social benefits to towns in NSW.

Community consultation

ISSUE

Some community members requested a longer consultation period, away from the Christmas holiday season.

RESPONSE

The purpose of this consultation was to introduce the Great Western Highway Upgrade Program between Katoomba to Lithgow to the whole community. The initial consultation of nearly six weeks, which closed on 16 December 2019, was the first of several consultation periods planned for the Program. Late submissions were accepted from people impacted by the 2019/20 summer bushfires. The project team will continue to consult and talk with community throughout the Program.

ISSUE

Some community members shared interest and support for the Program, wanting a faster and safer connection through and between the Blue Mountains and Penrith, and onto Sydney.

RESPONSE

We acknowledge the benefits this Program will bring to those travelling in, around and through the Blue Mountains. Community feedback is vital in shaping the Program and the final route will be designed with the community, alongside further survey work, technical studies and environmental assessments. We always welcome community and stakeholder support for its key upgrade programs.

ISSUE

The letter sent in error to properties in Blackheath caused understandable community angst and uncertainty.

RESPONSE

We extend our sincerest apologies for the flyer distributed to residents of Blackheath on 15 November 2019. Please be assured that no properties have been identified as potentially being required for acquisition in Blackheath. This notification was sent in error and more importantly, does not reflect our current plans for this Program. Engagement with the Blue Mountains communities to help inform the decision-making on this matter has, and will continue to be, a central principle in the planning processes.

ISSUE

There was interest in the co-design process and how the community could be involved.

RESPONSE

In response to feedback received from the Blackheath community, we are establishing the Blackheath Co-Design Committee to discuss and refine route options for upgrading the Great Western Highway through Blackheath. Options will then be made available for broader community consultation. The Committee will be made up of key local stakeholders, community and Blue Mountains City Council staff representatives and Transport for NSW staff.

Budget and cost

ISSUE

There was interest in the status and development of the Program business case, cost benefit analysis and economic impact assessment.

RESPONSE

The project team has gone out to tender for a strategic business case for the entire length of the corridor which will consider all options for improving transport across the Blue Mountains including alternate route options and any flow on effects or constraints. An economic analysis will be completed as part of the business case.

ISSUE

There are concerns the upgrade will not provide a strong return on investment, considering the \$2.5 billion investment to start (but not complete) the Program.

RESPONSE

NSW Government has committed \$2.5 billion towards upgrading the Great Western Highway between Katoomba and Lithgow. This includes planning for projects such as Blackheath and delivery of other sections of the Program. Partial or staged funding of a Program of this magnitude is not uncommon and we are working to develop the Program further and will seek additional funding as required.

ISSUE

Feedback included calls for a tunnel to be built, and it was highlighted that this was a 2019 election commitment made by the current NSW Government.

RESPONSE

We are undertaking a co-design process with the Blackheath community, as the route options through this village are more complex. Community feedback from the Blackheath co-design process is vital in shaping the Program and the final route will be designed with the community, alongside further survey work, technical studies and environmental assessments. At this early stage, we are not aware of any engineering constraints which would render a tunnel under Blackheath unfeasible. The Government has committed to building a tunnel, even if it is the most expensive option, if that is the community's preference through the Blackheath Co-Design process and following broader consultation.

Construction impacts

ISSUE

There are concerns about the impact of construction on the environment and existing properties along the route.

RESPONSE

We appreciate that many residents have concerns about potential construction impacts. We are in the very early stages of planning and design for the project, which means it is too early to determine construction impacts in any detail. Ultimately, the project will be subject to environmental assessment and approval under the *Environmental Planning & Assessment Act 1979*. A construction noise and vibration management plan will be prepared as part of the Construction Environmental Management Plan and we will put mitigation measures in place to minimise impacts.

ISSUE

The community is interested in the construction timeframe for the project.

RESPONSE

Construction timeframes will be communicated in the future and we will ensure the community is actively engaged at each stage of the planning process. Work will be scheduled to minimise impacts to motorists as well as nearby residents and businesses. Where possible, construction will be undertaken during standard hours, however, some construction might need to take place outside these hours.

ISSUE

Commuter congestion during the construction period was of concern, including the impact on local roads.

RESPONSE

We appreciate that many residents have concerns about potential construction impacts. We are in the very early stages of planning and design for the project. This means it is too early to determine traffic impacts throughout the construction period in detail.

Request for information

ISSUE

More information was requested regarding technical investigations, assessments and studies.

RESPONSE

The upgrade is supported by the NSW Future Transport Strategy 2056 (Transport for NSW, 2018) and the NSW Freight and Ports Plan (NSW Government, 2018). Further investigations, survey work, technical studies and freight and transport studies will be completed to further refine our understanding in developing this Program.

ISSUE

There were questions referencing the Evans and Peck Independent Review of the Mount Victoria to Lithgow upgrade.

RESPONSE

The Evans and Peck Independent Review of Great Western Highway Upgrades West of Katoomba (the Review) was completed in January 2012 and focussed on upgrades between Mount Victoria and Lithgow. The current upgrade proposed is between Katoomba and Lithgow. The Review is almost eight years old, and the NSW Government has since developed policies, plans, and pursued projects which have met the Review's recommendations.

The online feedback form, available through the interactive portal on the project website, offered visitors the opportunity to select which, if any, of the possible strategic corridor options for the Great Western Highway upgrade through Blackheath they preferred. With only a basic overview given of the proposed routes, the majority of submitters selected "Not Sure" (46 per cent) or the long or short tunnel options (40 per cent). Other options, including duplicating the existing road, the outer bypass and the western bypass, all received less than 6 per cent of the vote each.

Next steps

Feedback and information received throughout the consultation period will be used to inform the next steps of the Upgrade Program. This will complement further technical studies and environmental assessments, and inform the Strategic Business Case, scheduled for completion in 2020.

The Program will be divided into staged projects to be delivered in coming years. We will continue to consult closely with the community at all stages.

The first stage will be the completion of the highway upgrade at Medlow Bath. We will consult with Medlow Bath residents in the next phase to gain local input into the detailed design for this section of upgrade.

Planning for options to upgrade the highway at Blackheath is in its initial phase. To ensure we have local input in the process, we are establishing the Blackheath Co-Design Committee to discuss and refine route options for upgrading the Great Western Highway through Blackheath. The Committee will be made up of representatives from the community, local stakeholder groups, local agencies, Blue Mountains City Council staff and Transport for NSW.

We expect to make refined options available for broader community consultation about the next phase, along with a more progressed design for the greater alignment from Katoomba to Lithgow.

Contents

1	Introduction and background	12
1.1	Purpose of this report.....	12
1.2	The proposal	12
1.3	Work completed to date	13
2	Strategic corridor between Katoomba and Lithgow	14
2.1	Design constraints and early options	16
3	Consultation approach.....	18
3.1	Values	18
3.2	Communication objectives	18
3.3	Consultation method	18
3.4	How consultation took place	19
4	Consultation summary	23
4.1	Overview	23
4.2	Key interest areas and concerns	24
4.3	Overview of interests and concerns at community information sessions	25
4.4	Summary of submissions and responses	29
5	Next steps.....	46

Document control	
Status	Published
Date of issue	May 2020
Version	Final
Document author	Aurecon Australia
Document reviewers	Transport for NSW
© Transport for NSW	

1 Introduction and background

1.1 Purpose of this report

Between Thursday 7 November and Monday 16 December 2019, Transport for NSW carried out public consultation and invited feedback from community, and stakeholders, on the proposed strategic corridor for the Great Western Highway upgrade between Katoomba and Mount Victoria, and the corridor reserved in 2013 between Mount Victoria and Lithgow.

This report captures the outcomes from the strategic corridor consultation, which is the first stage of engagement with stakeholders and community on the Program.

We will continue to build and maintain relationships with community and stakeholders throughout all phases of the Program and will continue to create formal and informal opportunities for people to have their say.

The insights and feedback gathered from the community and stakeholders in this initial stage of consultation – outlined in this report – will be considered in decision making as the Program progresses. Further survey work, technical studies and environmental assessments will continue to be carried out to inform development of the Program. The next stage of consultation, which will be the options refinement stage, is planned for the latter half of 2020.

Further information about the Program can be found on the Transport for NSW website at nswroads.work/greatwesternhighway.

1.2 The proposal

The Great Western Highway Upgrade Program proposes to deliver 34 kilometres of four lane divided highway between Katoomba and Lithgow. The NSW Government has committed \$2.5 billion in funding towards the planning and construction of the duplication. The upgrade, once completed, will reduce congestion and provide safer, more efficient and reliable journeys in, around and through the Blue Mountains.

This upgrade has also been listed by Infrastructure Australia as a priority initiative. This means that it is officially recognised as a priority infrastructure investment which Australia needs in order to secure a sustainable and prosperous future.

The NSW Government has progressively been upgrading sections of the Great Western Highway to make it safer and more reliable. The section between Emu Plains and Katoomba through the Blue Mountains has already been upgraded.

We now propose to upgrade and duplicate the highway between Katoomba and Lithgow. The corridor between Mount Victoria and Lithgow was reserved in 2013 and is in the Local Environment Plans of the Blue Mountains City and Lithgow City councils.

Once this section of the highway has been upgraded, road users can expect to save at least a further 25 per cent of their travel time between Katoomba and Lithgow, and the entire length of the highway between Lapstone and Wallerawang will be two lanes each way.

Other benefits of the upgrade include:

- Improved connections for residents, businesses, tourists, commuters and freight travelling in, around and through the Blue Mountains
- Improved road safety
- Better and more reliable travel times
- Separated long distance and heavy vehicles from local traffic, pedestrians and cyclists
- Supported regional economic growth
- Improved freight efficiency
- Increased transport capacity to meet future growth
- More resilient opportunities to manage traffic flows during natural and other disaster events such as bushfires.

As well as improving safety and the liveability of towns in the Blue Mountains, the upgrade will allow better connection for communities to the immediate west. The Central West is NSW's third largest regional centre and contributes 12 per cent gross regional product to the state. The region is expected to grow to more than 300,000 people during the next 20 years and see dwellings increase by 12 per cent. This Upgrade Program will support growth in key industries in the Central West.

The upgrade Program is investigating and considering the following features:

- Katoomba to Medlow Bath to include bridges between highpoints along the ridgeline
- Medlow Bath to include widening the existing highway within the current road corridor through the township maintaining the 60km/h speed limit
- Medlow Bath to Blackheath options to include widening the existing corridor or running along the western side of the rail line
- Blackheath to Mount Victoria to include tunnel and bypass corridor and changes to the Mount Boyce Heavy Vehicle Inspection Bay*
- Mount Victoria to the base of Victoria Pass to include a tunnel bypass of the village
- Base of Victoria Pass to South Bowenfels to include a four-lane divided road with a 100km/h speed limit along part of its length.
- Jenolan Caves Road intersection to be grade separated.

* We are currently undertaking a co-design process for Blackheath, as the route options through that village are more complex. No preferred routes for the village have been endorsed at this time. Options that run around the eastern side of Blackheath have been ruled out due to impact on the World Heritage Areas of the Blue Mountains. Options that run directly through the Blue Mountains National Park have also been ruled out.

1.3 Work completed to date

In 2008, the NSW Government began a project to upgrade the Great Western Highway between Mount Victoria and Lithgow. We worked closely for several years with the local community to develop route options and complete a concept design which was widely accepted by the community.

In September 2011, the NSW Government commissioned an independent review of the proposed upgrade, and a revised program of work was agreed in 2012. This included completing the concept design and road boundaries for a future highway upgrade between Mount Victoria and Lithgow, as well as building safety upgrades between Katoomba and Lithgow.

Extensive feedback was received from the local and wider community and stakeholders for the final concept design between Mount Victoria and Lithgow. This concept plan was confirmed and displayed to the community and stakeholders and is now included in the Local Environment Plans for Blue Mountains City and Lithgow City councils.

By 2015, the Great Western Highway had been upgraded to two lanes in each direction between Lapstone and Katoomba, and since then the NSW Government has been progressively upgrading further sections of the highway, with the most recent project at Kelso opening to traffic in March 2017.

In 2019, the NSW Government announced \$30 million to upgrade the section of road from Kelso to Raglan. That year, the NSW Government also announced \$2.5 billion funding towards the upgrade between Katoomba and Lithgow.

2 Strategic corridor between Katoomba and Lithgow

Below is the strategic corridor between Katoomba and Lithgow that was presented to community for consultation.

Strategic corridor between Katoomba and Mount Victoria

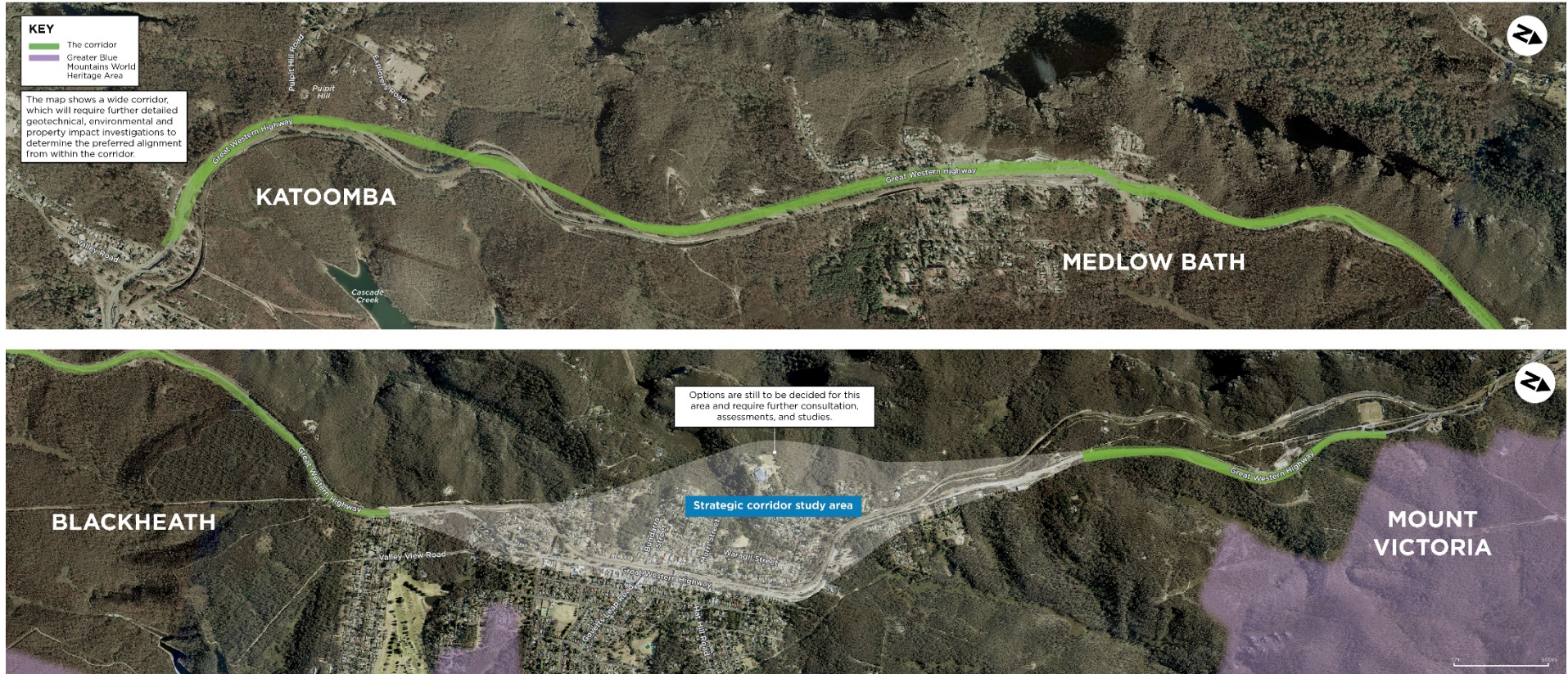


Figure 1: Strategic corridor between Katoomba and Mount Victoria

Reserved corridor between Mount Victoria to Lithgow

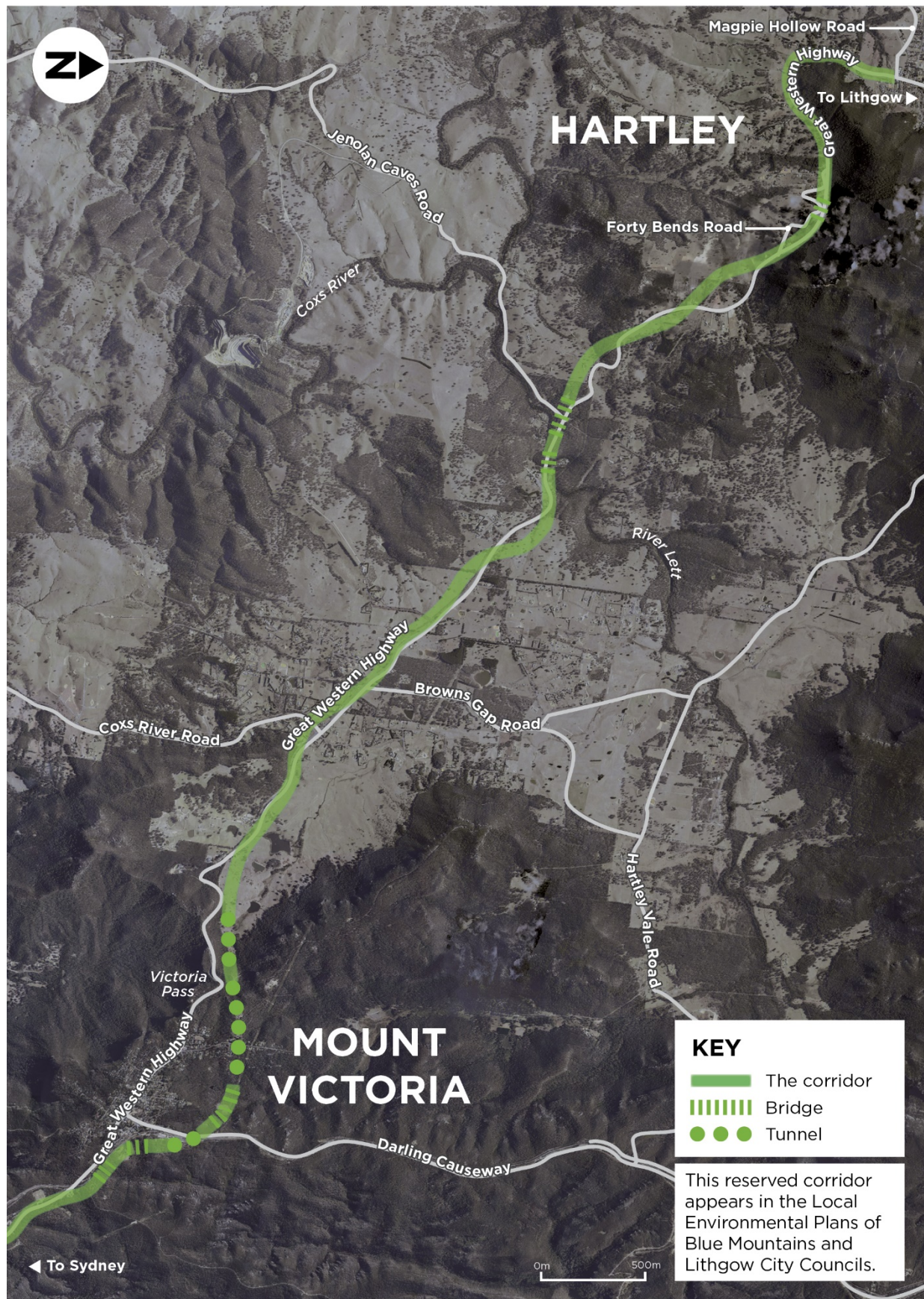


Figure 2: Strategic corridor between Mount Victoria and Lithgow

2.1 Design constraints and early options

We are sensitive to the Blue Mountain area's natural environment, culture and heritage, and the values and needs of local communities. Options for upgrading the highway between Katoomba and Lithgow are limited by steep topography, the railway line, private property, existing towns, and the presence of heritage items and features including Aboriginal Cultural Heritage, the Blue Mountains National Park and World Heritage Area, and Mitchell's Pass on the existing highway.

Since the current highway is a constrained space, we are seeking in our design to use as much of the existing corridor as possible to minimise impacts on the environment and manage costs.

One of the Program's key priorities is to minimise impact on the natural environment. The natural environment is of great importance and highly valued by the community. The NSW Government has already ruled out any impact on the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area and any route through the Blue Mountains National Park.

A strategic corridor was presented to the community between Katoomba and Mount Victoria, and the preferred option for the corridor reserved in 2013 between Mount Victoria and Lithgow. A summary of the options presented is outlined below.

Katoomba to Medlow Bath

The section from Katoomba to Medlow Bath has steep terrain and is constrained by the ridgeline, the rail line, and the Blue Mountains National Park. Planning is underway for bridges between the high points along the ridgeline to the north of Katoomba to overcome these constraints.

Options developed and presented for Medlow Bath are aimed at avoiding and mitigating any potential impacts to the Blue Mountains National Park, the village, businesses, including the heritage-listed Hydro Majestic Hotel, and the rail line.

Due to the steep terrain, the location of the village, the rail line, tourism popularity and the National Park, a bypass is not being considered. The key option being considered is widening of the existing highway within the current reserved road corridor.

Medlow Bath

Medlow Bath will include widening existing corridor within current property boundaries through the township maintaining the 60 km per hour speed limit.

Medlow Bath to Blackheath

Between Medlow Bath and Blackheath, the option presented to the community was a road widening of the existing corridor which ties into the existing bridge over the railway line at Medlow Bath.

Blackheath

We acknowledge the sensitivities of environment, heritage and local community, in particular to Blackheath.

Preliminary investigations identified several broad options and this important first stage of consultation has helped the project team better understand community concerns and the potential impacts of these options.

These options were discussed in the community engagement material:

- An option to duplicate the existing highway through the centre of Blackheath. This would result in the likely partial or full property acquisition of some residences, businesses, open space and potential relocation of some Blackheath Station buildings.
- An option to build an outer bypass with bridges crossing over Shipley Road, Centennial Pass, Porters Pass Track, and over the rail line at the north. Tunnels would cross the rail line at the south and under the Blue Mountains Christian College. There would likely be impact on the existing environment through the valley.

- An option to build a bypass running next to the rail line either at ground level or in a cut-and-cover tunnel. This would likely start at the southern end of Blackheath with a tunnel underpass of the rail line and finish with a bridge over the rail line at the northern extent of Blackheath. There would likely be impact to residential and commercial properties located along the rail line.
- Options to build long or short tunnels underneath Blackheath would remove some long-distance traffic from the village centre. The tunnel options presented would require, among other things:
 - Tunnel portals (entry and exit points) which may result in some property acquisitions and environmental impacts including within the Blue Mountains National Park
 - Subsurface (below ground) acquisitions
 - Ventilation outlets at either portal end
 - Tunnel operation facilities and associated power and water management systems.

We are currently undertaking a co-design process, as the route options through Blackheath are more complex than other villages. Options that run around the eastern side of the Blackheath village have been ruled out due to impact on the World Heritage Areas of the Blue Mountains.

Blackheath to Mount Victoria

The section from Blackheath to Mount Victoria has steep terrain and is constrained by the ridgeline, the rail line, and the Blue Mountains National Park. Planning is underway to widen the existing corridor mainly to the east of the current alignment.

Mount Victoria to Lithgow

The corridor between Mount Victoria and Lithgow was reserved in 2013 in the Local Environmental Plans of Blue Mountains City and Lithgow City councils to provide future community and planning certainty. The design is at concept level and is the preferred alignment. We have acquired about 23 per cent of properties along this corridor.

As a result of this consultation and once further environmental assessments, technical studies and survey work has been carried out, we will provide more information to the community and stakeholders about any modifications to the proposed detailed design for this section:

[https://www.rms.nsw.gov.au/projects/01documents/great-western-highway/safety-improvement-upgrades/mv2l concept design completion full report.pdf](https://www.rms.nsw.gov.au/projects/01documents/great-western-highway/safety-improvement-upgrades/mv2l%20concept%20design%20completion%20full%20report.pdf).

3 Consultation approach

3.1 Values

Transport for NSW values underpin our decisions and behaviours when working with customers, colleagues, stakeholders and partners.

- Customer focus - We place the customer at the centre of everything we do.
- Collaboration - We value each other and create better outcomes by working together.
- Solutions - We deliver sustainable and innovative solutions to NSW's transport needs.
- Integrity - We take responsibility and communicate openly.
- Safety - We prioritise safety for our people and our customers.

3.2 Communication objectives

The communication objectives for this Program are to:

- Provide clear, consistent and timely information to communities, stakeholders and customers on the Great Western Highway upgrade
- Build relationships and a database of contacts including interested and concerned community members with whom we will continue to engage throughout the planning and construction of the upgrade
- Provide meaningful opportunities for the community to provide feedback
- Listen to community and stakeholder views to help shape the design of the upgrade
- Raise awareness of the upgrade, its benefits, and potential impacts, throughout all phases from planning to construction.

3.3 Consultation method

Several activities were carried out in the lead-up to, and during, the 43-day consultation period, to inform the community and stakeholders on the status of the Program and to encourage their involvement in consultation. These activities provided the community with a range of opportunities to learn more about the Program, meet the project team and provide feedback. A detailed summary of consultation activities is provided in Table 1. Further analysis of the outcomes of consultation is detailed in Section 4.

During the display period, information was provided at:

- 11 staffed community information sessions in Katoomba, Medlow Bath, Blackheath, Mount Victoria, Hartley and Lithgow
- 5 unstaffed display locations at Katoomba, Lithgow, Oberon, Bathurst and Orange
- Many stakeholder briefings and meetings with business and property owners, transport operators and interest groups
- 1 public meeting in Blackheath, in response to community requests.

Our staff interacted with 1045 people during the 43-day consultation period. Stakeholders and community members were encouraged to provide feedback, leave comments, and make submissions to the project team in person, via email, mail or phone. The community was able to contact Transport for NSW on the details below:

1800 953 777
gwhd@rms.nsw.gov.au
PO Box 2332, Orange NSW 2800
rms.work/greatwesternhighway

These details were provided on all project communications.

The project team accepted late feedback from people impacted by the 2019/20 summer bushfires.

3.4 How consultation took place

Table 1: Communication and consultation activities

Tool/Activity	Description
Communications material	
Community update Appendix A	<p>A six-page community update was published to introduce the overall Great Western Highway Upgrade Program – Katoomba to Lithgow. The community update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided a map of the strategic corridor between Katoomba and Mount Victoria and the reserved corridor between Mount Victoria and Lithgow. • Raised awareness of the expected regional growth for NSW Central West and the improved freight movement benefits as a result of the Program. • Outlined the activities of the consultation period and provided instruction on how to provide feedback. <p>Hard copies of the community update were available at information sessions, static displays and the update could also be accessed on the Program’s website.</p>
Consultation Postcard Appendix B	<p>A double-sided postcard was distributed to residential properties (about 14,000) in Katoomba, Leura and Medlow Bath (postcode 2780), Blackheath and Megalong Valley (2785), Mount Victoria, Mount Wilson, Dargan, Mount Irvine and Bell (2786) and Lithgow, Hartley, Little Hartley, Bowenfels, South Bowenfels, Hassans Walls, Newnes and Jenolan (2790).</p> <p>The postcard introduced the Program and provided information for the community on how they could provide feedback. Hard copies of the postcard were also available at pop-up events, information sessions and static displays.</p>
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) Appendix C	<p>Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) were prepared for five Program topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview and strategic corridor • Upgrade at Blackheath • Property and environment • Freight and regional growth • Public consultation <p>These fact sheets provided the Program background, key benefits, Program timeframes, potential impacts, mitigation measures, consultation activities and early design considerations. The FAQs were available in hard copy at the information sessions and static displays and on the website.</p>
Display posters	<p>Display posters with a map and details of the Program including key features were produced. Posters were used at static displays, community information sessions and distributed to key stakeholders.</p>
Potentially affected property owner’s information pack	<p>An information pack was distributed to potentially affected property owners along the corridor (residential and businesses). This information pack included a letter to affected property owners outlining the early planning considerations and the potential impact the considered options may have on property and businesses. It also outlined the intent and process of working closely with property owners to understand and address potential impacts. Affected property owners also received the property and environment FAQs document and community update. In this pack it was communicated that we will start negotiations for property acquisition after the preferred alignment of the road corridor has been reserved and the Program enters the next phase of planning and detailed design.</p> <p>Blackheath community</p> <p>A flyer about possible property acquisitions in Blackheath was distributed in error and was later retracted by Transport for NSW. We understand the uncertainty and angst this caused people and apologised for the error and encouraged people to contact the project team for one-on-one meetings as well as holding a public meeting in Blackheath.</p> <p>In Blackheath, some residents and business owners and operators were also visited at their properties by members of the project team to provide further information about the Program and encourage feedback during the consultation period.</p>
Doorknocking	<p>In October 2019, the project team door knocked 225 residential and business properties in Blackheath to provide information on the strategic study area, options, consultation and potential property impacts for the upgrade.</p>

Tool/Activity	Description
Information sessions, displays and briefings	
Information sessions	<p>Eleven community information sessions were held in six towns along the corridor from Katoomba to Blackheath. The purpose of these sessions was to introduce the Program to the community and provide clear and relevant information, with relevant information for each impacted area. At each information session, the community were given the opportunity to meet project team representatives and were presented with early route options and considerations relevant to their location, as well as whole of corridor considerations.</p> <p>An additional public meeting was also held in Blackheath in response to community requests and to clarify concerns about potential property acquisition.</p> <p>The community sessions conducted were:</p> <p>Katoomba</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Katoomba Village Shopping Centre Tuesday 26 November 2019 – 11am to 2pm • Katoomba-Leura Community Centre Tuesday 26 November and 3 December 2019 – 5pm to 7pm <p>Medlow Bath</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hydro Majestic Monday 9 December – 5pm to 7pm <p>Blackheath</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blackheath Area Neighbourhood Centre Wednesday 27 November and 4 December 2019 – 5pm to 7pm • Public meeting and presentation, Blackheath Area Neighbourhood Centre Tuesday 10 December 2019 – 6pm to 7:30pm <p>Mount Victoria</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mount Vic Flicks Tuesday 10 December 2019 – 5pm to 7pm <p>Hartley</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hartley Hall Wednesday 11 December – 5pm to 7pm <p>Lithgow</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lithgow Valley Plaza Monday 25 November 2019 – 11am to 2pm • Hoskins Memorial Church Hall Monday 25 November and 2 December 2019 – 5pm to 7pm
Unstaffed displays	<p>Communication material for the Great Western Highway Upgrade Program – Katoomba to Lithgow was on display during normal business hours at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Katoomba Library, 30 Park Street, Katoomba • Oberon Library, corner of Dart and Fleming Streets, Oberon • Bathurst Regional Council, 158 Russell Street, Bathurst • Orange City Library, 147 Byng Street, Orange <p>These static displays also featured information about the overall Program, maps and posters, FAQs and community updates.</p>

Tool/Activity	Description
Key stakeholder briefings	<p>The following key stakeholders were briefed on the Program and advised of the community consultation period:</p> <p>Minister's Office, Regional Transport and Roads</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Honourable Paul Toole <p>Members of Parliament</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> State Member for Blue Mountains, Trish Doyle Federal Member for Calare (NSW), Hon Andrew Gee Federal Member for Macquarie (NSW), Susan Templeman <p>Local Government</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mayors, Councillors and General Managers from the Blue Mountains City Council, Lithgow City Council, Oberon Council, Bathurst Regional Council, Orange City Council and Central NSW Councils. <p>Key community and stakeholder groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chambers of Commerce Hydro Majestic Hotel Blue Mountains Christian College Advocacy groups Industry groups Interested Civic and Social clubs One-on-one meetings with property owners
Media and advertising	
Advertisement Appendix D	<p>An advertisement about the Program and community information sessions was published in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Central Western Daily (15 and 20 November 2019) Bathurst Western Advocate (15 and 20 November 2019) Lithgow Mercury (19 November 2019) Blue Mountains Gazette (20 November 2019) Oberon Review (21 November 2019)
Media Appendix E	<p>Two media releases were distributed via the project website and through engagement with local media. The media releases included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have your say on Great Western Highway (7 November 2019) Blackheath community invited to meeting to learn more about the Great Western Highway upgrade (3 December 2019)
Digital tools and social media	
Website and Interactive Portal	<p>Transport for NSW website, nswroads.work/greatwesternhighway was used to provide information about the Program, including a download-friendly version of the community update, FAQs, maps and media releases. It also provided background information, promoted opportunities to provide feedback and linked users to the online interactive map and videos. It was accessible via https://v2.communityanalytics.com.au/rms/great-western-highway.</p>
Animation	<p>An animation of the strategic corridor was available on the website. The animation can be viewed at nswroads.work/greatwesternhighway.</p>
Interactive map and form comments	<p>The online interactive map provided an opportunity for community to give feedback on the Program, specific to location and issue. Comments could be pinned on the map and categorised according to themes including environment, traffic and road safety, property access, public transport, parking, pedestrians and cyclists, freight and land use. The map was accessible via an interactive portal on the website.</p>
Facebook Appendix F	<p>Facebook was used to provide information about the Program and to promote consultation period dates and activities with a post on the NSW Roads page on 7 November 2019. It was also used to promote a public meeting and presentation session in Blackheath on Tuesday 10 December 2019.</p>

Direct contact channels

Email	A dedicated email address was established for the community to contact the project team directly with queries, concerns and to provide feedback. The Program's email is gwhd@rms.nsw.gov.au .
Phone	A dedicated hotline was set up for the community to contact the project team directly with queries and concerns. The hotline number is 1800 953 777.

4 Consultation summary

4.1 Overview

We received 1759 submissions from the community. Of these, 446 submissions were received on feedback forms, 756 via email and 557 on the interactive map.

The online feedback form, available through the interactive portal on the project website, offered visitors the opportunity to select which, if any, of the possible strategic corridor options for the Great Western Highway upgrade through Blackheath they preferred. With only a basic overview given of the proposed routes, the majority of submitters selected “Not Sure” (46 per cent) or the long or short tunnel options (40 per cent). Other options, including duplicating the existing road, the outer bypass and the western bypass, all received less than 6 per cent of the vote each.

Twelve community information sessions were held across Katoomba, Medlow Bath, Blackheath, Mount Victoria, Hartley and Lithgow and were attended by 1045 people.

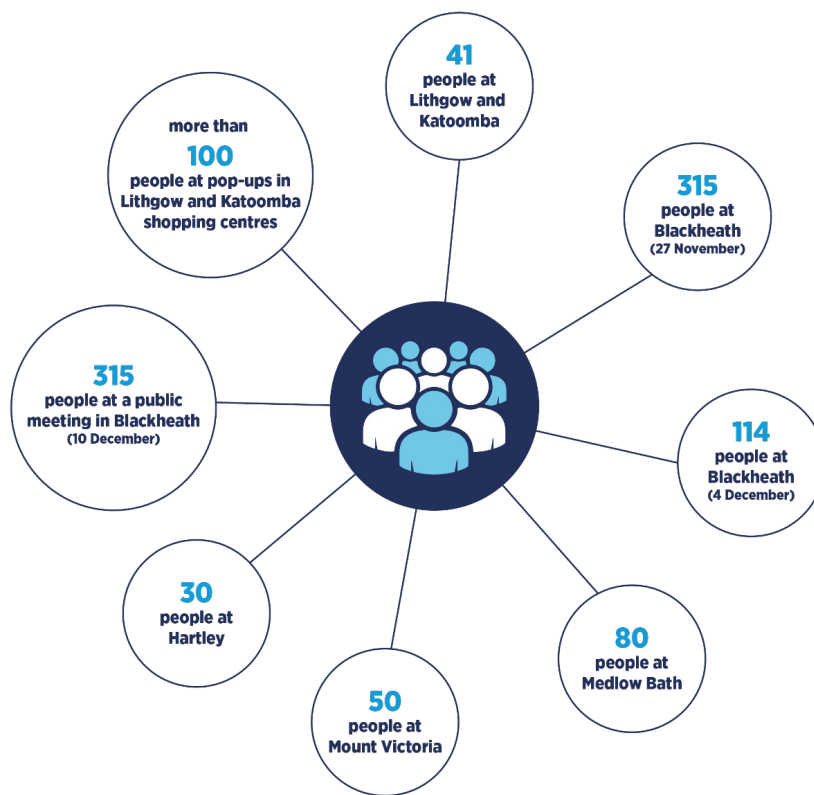


Figure 3: Attendance at community information sessions

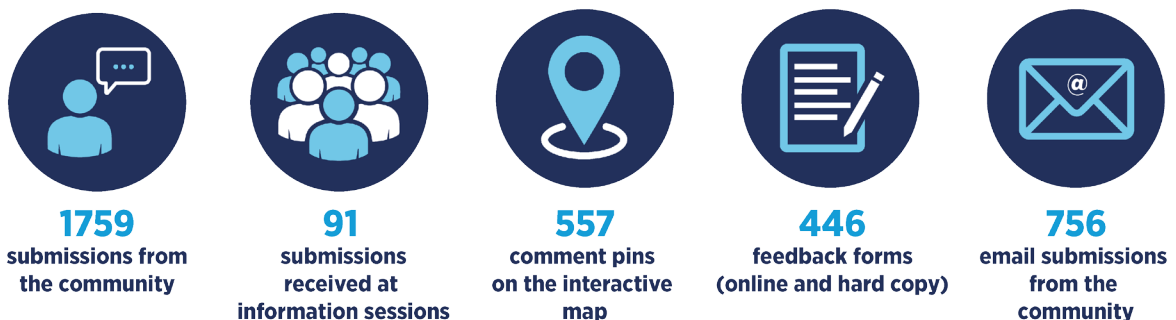


Figure 4: How submissions during consultation were received

A range of stakeholder groups including individual community members, business owners and operators, and community interest and advocacy groups provided feedback.

4.2 Key interest areas and concerns

The key areas of interest and concerns raised from the 1759 submissions from the interactive map, feedback forms and email submissions are shown in Figure 4.

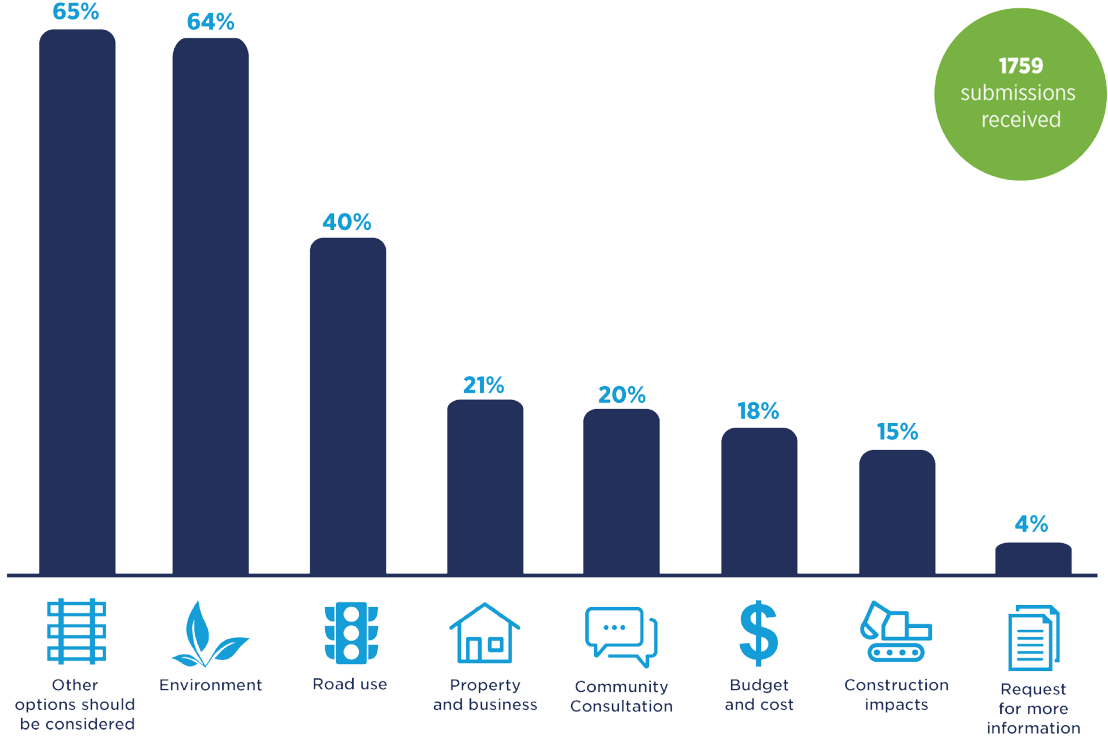


Figure 5: Overview of interests and concerns

4.3 Overview of interests and concerns at community information sessions

Across the twelve information sessions, the project team engaged with 1045 people. The key areas of interest and concern raised by people who attended an information session and made a written submission are:

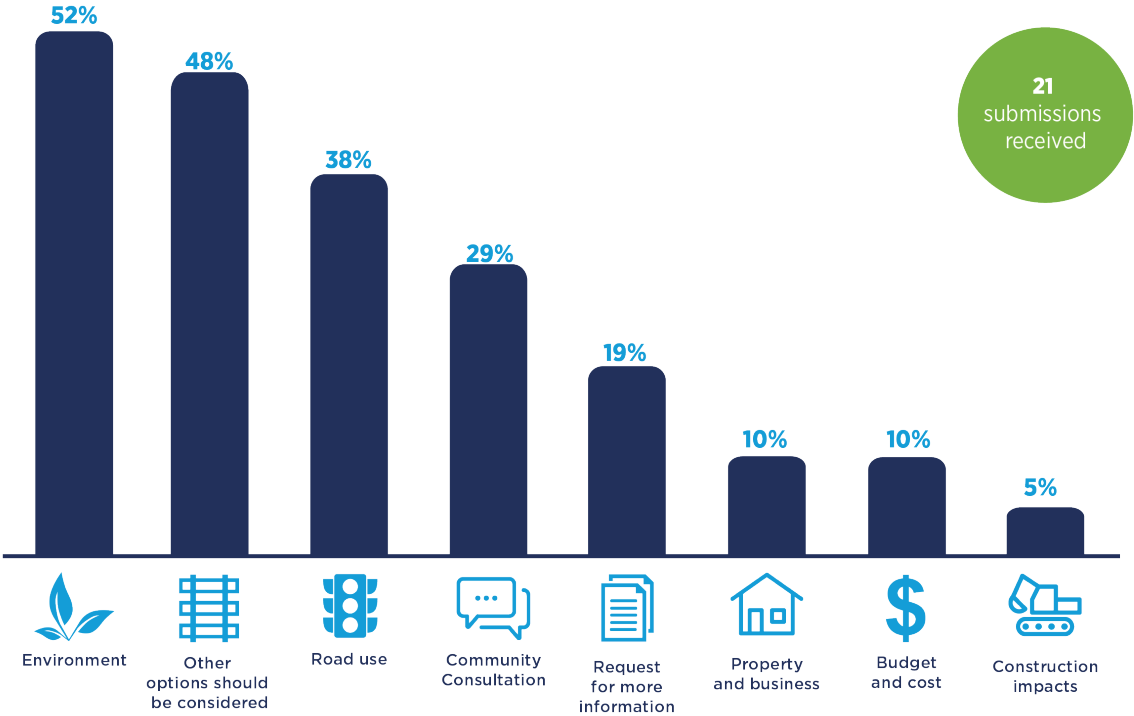


Figure 6: Katoomba information session feedback snapshot

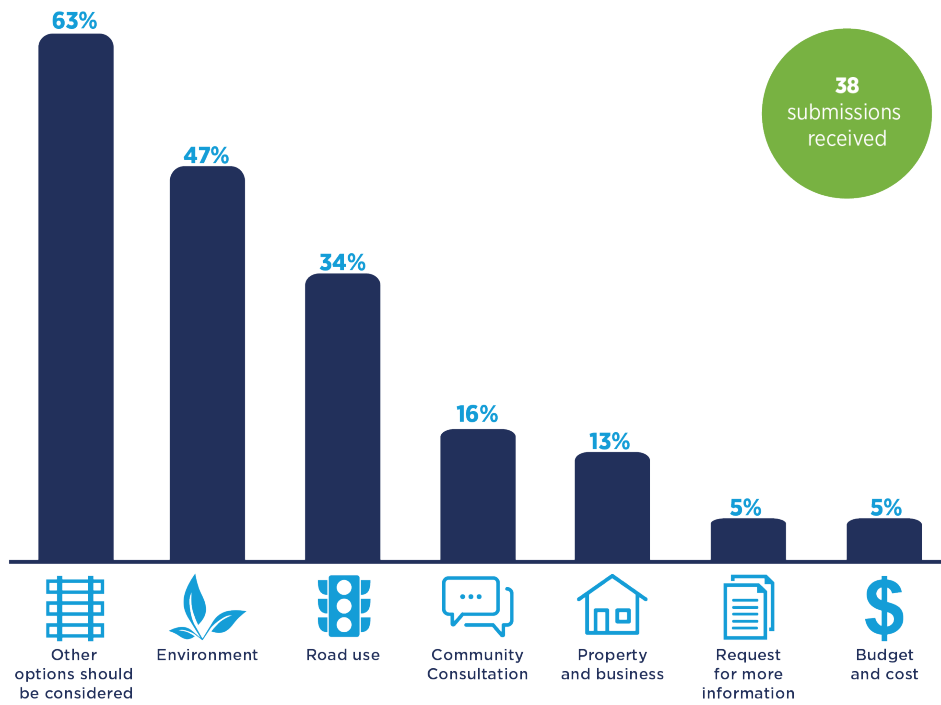


Figure 7: Medlow Bath information session feedback snapshot

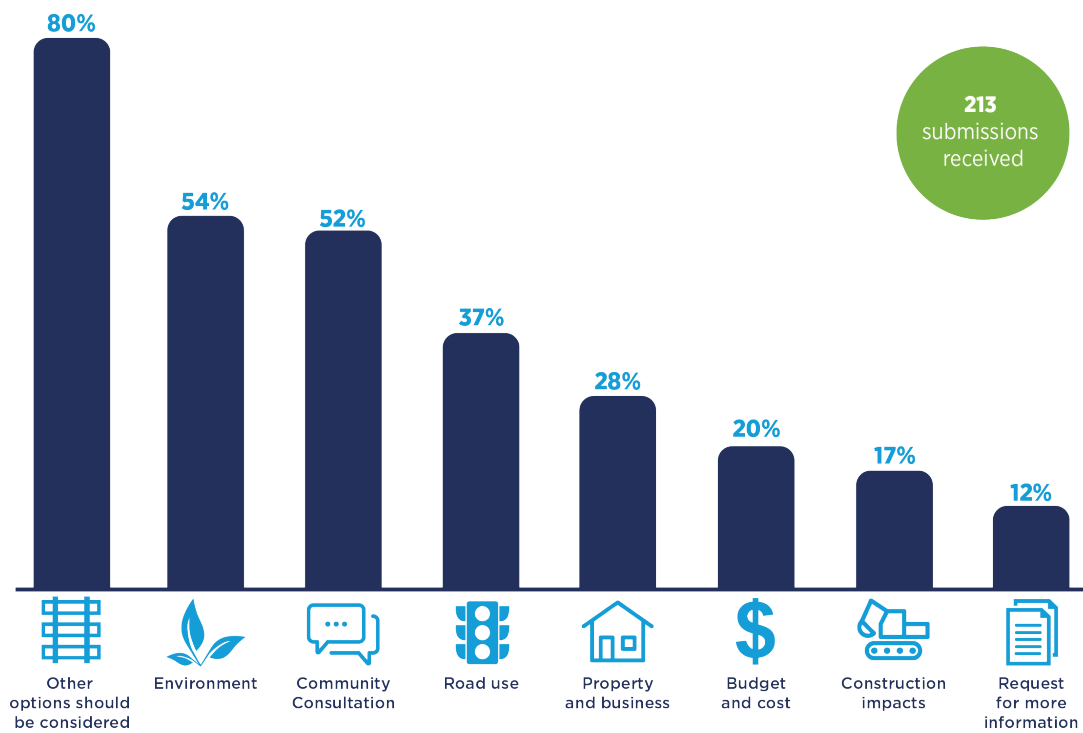


Figure 8: Blackheath information session feedback snapshot

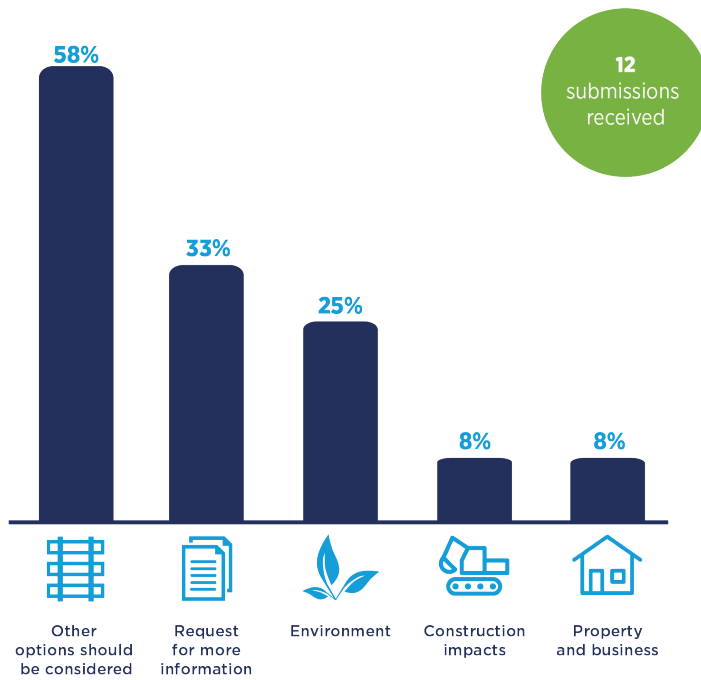
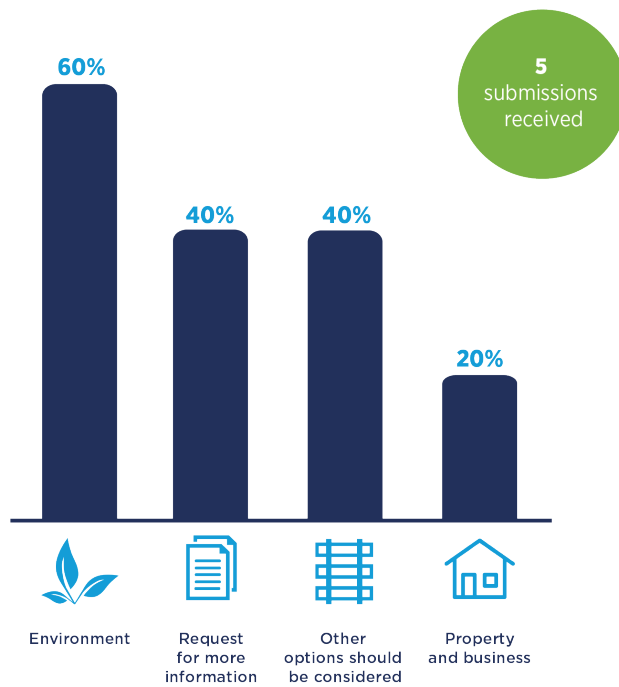


Figure 9: Mount Victoria information session feedback snapshot



4

Figure 10: Hartley information session feedback snapshot

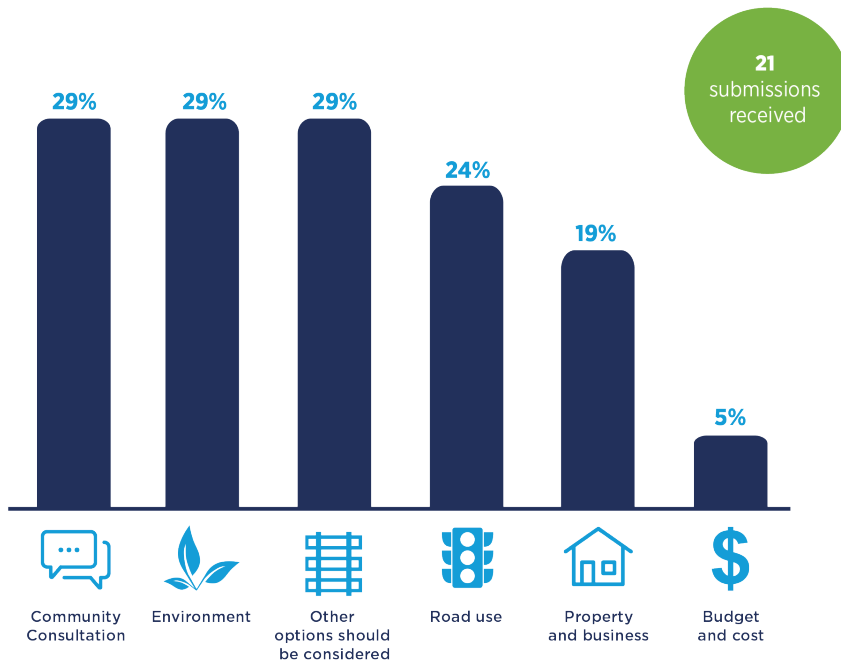


Figure 11: Lithgow information session feedback snapshot

4.4 Summary of submissions and responses

Table 2: Summary of submissions and responses

Issue	Category	Issues raised	Transport for NSW response
<p>Other options should be considered</p> <p>Number of submissions: 1051</p>	<p>Rail</p>	<p>Respondents felt there was a lack of consideration of investing in freight and passenger rail to relieve traffic congestion along the corridor.</p> <p>There is a view that investing in a rail freight solution would provide a greater return on investment than the road-only solution proposed in the Program.</p> <p>There are concerns about the perceived lack of long-term transport planning for NSW, by a perceived lack of focus on rail options to move freight between Sydney and the Central West.</p> <p>There is a view that a mix of road and rail investment should be considered together with rail tunnel options through the Blue Mountains.</p> <p>Questions were raised as to why the NSW Government was investing in a highway upgrade when alternate and potentially more environmentally friendly and sustainable options (such as rail transport) were available.</p>	<p>The NSW Government is committed to moving more freight from road to rail and already invests in the rail freight network to increase capacity, but this is not a substitute for investing in our road freight network. The Great Western Highway upgrade is being developed alongside long-term rail options, as both are needed to meet future demand and address current issues around congestion, journey reliability and safety.</p> <p>The roads and trains arms of Transport for NSW are working closely on developing a multi-modal strategy for east west connections between Sydney and the Central West that makes the most of road and rail for both passengers and freight.</p> <p>About half the freight on the Great Western Highway is carried on the road network and about one third of the road freight between Lithgow and Katoomba begins or ends its journey in the mountains.</p> <p>The type of freight that needs to move by road includes refrigerated goods, fuel, construction materials from local quarries, livestock, commercial and retail goods. Much of this freight requires direct access to freight hubs, such as retail precincts, light industrial areas or home deliveries.</p> <p>Bulk goods such as export containers, steel, grains, and coal will continue to rely on the rail line and 90 per cent of freight containers moving between the Central West and Sydney are already transported by rail.</p> <p>The Blue Mountains line is a shared rail corridor used by passenger and freight services. Both freight and passenger services are driven by demand and timetables are developed to move both freight and passenger services across the broader rail network efficiently.</p> <p>The rail line is providing a reliable service for Blue Mountains commuters however, the highway will remain a vital link for the Central West and the Blue Mountains.</p> <p>The rail corridor is constrained due to the alignment of the Great Western Highway, the Blue Mountains National Park, and the topography. The rail line is being upgraded in sections to allow for wider trains that currently use the Sydney Trains network, so they will be able to use tunnels within the Blue Mountains.</p> <p>Two passing loops (at Rydal and Georges Plains) were recently built after an assessment of rail freight needs on the western corridor. These loops increase rail network capacity on the corridor and improve reliability for all rail operations. In</p>

Issue	Category	Issues raised	Transport for NSW response
			<p>addition, funding for bi-directional signalling on some sections of the line west of Lithgow has been funded through the Fixing Country Rail Program. Delivery of this initiative will increase network reliability and operational flexibility.</p> <p>The NSW Government has committed to investing in improvements to the rail corridor for commuters through the Faster Rail Strategy and is also developing a Regional Rail Strategy.</p>
Other options should be considered	Bells Line of Road and other alternate routes	<p>The Bells Line of Road is considered a better option than upgrading the Great Western Highway from Katoomba to Lithgow as it is perceived to have less of a negative impact on the communities from Katoomba to Lithgow and on the surrounding environment.</p> <p>Questions were raised as to whether other alternative road routes had been considered.</p>	<p>Based on transport studies and investigations, the Great Western Highway is the key corridor for transporting goods and people between the Central West and Sydney and traffic volumes are expected to continue to increase.</p> <p>The Great Western Highway through the Blue Mountains is already at capacity during certain periods. The upgrade provides opportunities to improve the movement of local residents and boost the tourism industry by relieving congestion and providing safer, more reliable journey times.</p> <p>Even if the Bells Line of Road was upgraded – and early indications suggest this would be at a cost far in excess of this program – significant traffic volumes would still remain on the Great Western Highway.</p> <p>An upgrade of the Bells Line of Road would also potentially have a significant impact on the World Heritage Area and has extremely challenging terrain.</p> <p>Upgrading the Bells Line of Road remains a longer term priority for the NSW Government.</p> <p>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</p>
Other options should be considered	Tunnel boring	<p>There is general support for a bored tunnel underneath Blackheath which would protect the heritage and character of the local community. There is less support for cut-and-cover options due to the above-ground impacts.</p>	<p>The Government has committed to building a tunnel, even if it is the most expensive option, if that is the community's preference through the Blackheath Co-Design process and following broader consultation.</p> <p>No options have been endorsed yet for Blackheath. We are currently undertaking a co-design process with the Blackheath community, as the route options through that village are more complex.</p> <p>Community feedback from the Blackheath Co-design process is vital in shaping the Program and the final route will be designed with the community, alongside further survey work, technical studies and environmental assessments.</p>

Issue	Category	Issues raised	Transport for NSW response
			<p>We are at the beginning of the Program design phase and many technical investigations would be required to progress a tunnel option, if a notional alignment including a tunnel is selected.</p> <p>At this early stage, we are not aware of any engineering constraints which would render a tunnel under Blackheath unfeasible, and the project team is pursuing this as a valid option.</p>
Other options should be considered	Speed limits	There is a view that the upgrade should allow for 100km/h speed limit from Katoomba to Lithgow for freight and private vehicles to support economic growth of the region and to better connect the Central West and Sydney. Duplicating the highway with speeds less than this is not considered a good return on investment.	<p>Options for upgrading the highway are constrained by steep topography, the railway line, private property boundaries, existing towns and the Blue Mountains National Park and World Heritage Area.</p> <p>As a result, a speed limit of 80km/h is generally proposed at this stage, except for the section through Medlow Bath which is consistent with the Highway between Penrith and Katoomba.</p> <p>While the current alignment does not allow for 100km/h speed limit along the entire route, we have committed to providing 100km/h through the Hartley Valley. As the route design is refined through community consultation, we will be looking at opportunities to improve travel times and deliver a more consistent speed limit across the entire route.</p>

Issue	Category	Issues raised	Transport for NSW response
Environment Number of submissions: 1032	General environmental concerns	<p>There are concerns for the overall environmental impact of the Program including any potential impact on the Blue Mountains National Park and World Heritage Area.</p> <p>There are concerns for endangered flora and fauna in the strategic corridor including hanging swamps, giant dragonfly, black cockatoo, blue water skink and rare shrub <i>Epacris</i>.</p> <p>There are concerns tunnelling will damage aquifers and impact groundwater.</p> <p>There are concerns as to how the proposed design would address the risk of fire, severe winds and ice.</p> <p>There was an interest in biodiversity offset Programs and planting appropriate, drought tolerant trees.</p>	<p>We are sensitive to the area's natural environment and the project team is committed to minimising environmental impacts.</p> <p>Detailed environmental field work including surveys, flora and fauna studies, geotechnical and utilities investigations, heritage studies, and archaeological surveys, will be carried out on the preferred option as well as any other options considered to allow a balanced decision to be made.</p> <p>All environmental field work will be carried out by experts and in accordance with legislation.</p> <p>The findings from these investigations will help inform the design of the preferred route options and the environmental planning and assessment pathway for the Program.</p> <p>Once we have developed preferred options and concept designs, an Environmental Impact Statement or Review of Environmental Factors will be prepared as required by the NSW <i>Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979</i>, and if relevant, the Federal <i>Environment Protection Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i>.</p> <p>One of our key design principles is to avoid impacting the Blue Mountains National Park, as much as possible. The boundary of the national park is very close to the existing highway between Medlow Bath and Blackheath, and impacts may be unavoidable at that location. We will work with the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Services (NPWS) as part of the options development process.</p> <p>An upgrade through the eastern side of Blackheath has been ruled out due to its likely impact on the World Heritage Area.</p> <p>Community consultation will be ongoing at key stages of the Program and environmental reports will be part of the environmental assessment which will be available for you to provide feedback upon.</p> <p>We recognise that upgrading the highway will have some impacts on biodiversity, including trees. The environmental assessment will include detailed studies on flora and fauna to identify and avoid impacts where possible, and ways in which we can mitigate those impacts, such as offsets or alternate planting strategies in consultation with NPWS.</p> <p>Examination of extreme weather conditions, the resilience of the road network and use and protection of the road as a transport corridor during bushfires and other weather events will form a key part of considerations during the design process.</p>

Issue	Category	Issues raised	Transport for NSW response
Environment	Aboriginal cultural heritage	<p>There are concerns that options to the west of Blackheath will impact Centennial Glen which is considered to have Aboriginal cultural significance and should be protected.</p> <p>There is concern that recognition of Aboriginal sites and heritage has previously been ignored in the Blue Mountains National Park area and this Program will impact areas of similar significance.</p>	<p>Protection of Aboriginal cultural heritage is of great importance to us.</p> <p>We recognise that the development and delivery of this project has the potential to impact Aboriginal cultural heritage. Managing this impact will follow our official Procedure for Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Consultation and Investigation. It will meet its business, legislative and social responsibilities, while being culturally sensitive, appropriate, practical and cost-effective.</p> <p>Effective consultation with Aboriginal people is an important step in identifying and minimising cultural heritage impacts. We have consulted with the relevant Local Aboriginal Lands councils and Native Title groups, have conducted Aboriginal Cultural Heritage field surveys in impacted areas, and are currently identifying potential Aboriginal cultural knowledge holders who will help us prepare a cultural heritage assessment report for the Great Western Highway Upgrade Program.</p> <p>The project team has a dedicated Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Officer and Aboriginal Engagement Team that will sensitively manage any potential impacts to Aboriginal Cultural Heritage.</p> <p>The Project team will consult closely with local Aboriginal groups, organisations, and cultural knowledge holders and elders to identify and either avoid or mitigate impacts on Aboriginal cultural heritage.</p>
Environment	Noise and pollution	<p>There are concerns that the Program would increase the volume of heavy and private vehicle traffic through the corridor area which will increase noise and air pollution.</p> <p>Questions regarding what natural or physical noise mitigation measures are being considered.</p> <p>Requests for noise monitoring to be conducted particularly on Station Street and surrounding areas in Blackheath, in Little Hartley and in Medlow Bath.</p>	<p>Traffic studies to date indicate the number of vehicles will increase regardless of the Great Western Highway Upgrade Program.</p> <p>As part of the Great Western Highway Upgrade Program, a detailed noise assessment will be carried out as per the Environmental Protection Authority's Road Noise Policy in conjunction with Transport for NSW' <i>Noise Criteria Guideline and Noise Mitigation Guideline</i>.</p> <p>These guidelines outline a consistent approach for determining:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • any applicable noise criteria • the methodology for the evaluation • the selection and design of reasonable noise mitigation measures for road upgrades. <p>The assessment would model the predicted road traffic noise levels for both the year of opening and 10 years after opening, with and without the Program.</p> <p>Noise modelling requires the monitoring of existing noise and traffic levels at various locations along the route to predict noise levels at residences that might be affected.</p>

Issue	Category	Issues raised	Transport for NSW response
			<p>Specific locations for noise monitoring will be decided in consultation with traffic noise specialists but we will likely respond to requests and include the streets surrounding Blackheath, Little Hartley and Medlow Bath.</p> <p>If noise levels are predicted to exceed those set by the NSW Environmental Protection Authority, then we will consider noise mitigation measures.</p> <p>The types of noise mitigation applied to road upgrades include low noise pavements, barriers, noise walls and at-receiver architectural treatment.</p> <p>Details about the Program can be found at: rms.nsw.gov.au/about/environment/reducing-noise/noise-abatement-program.html</p> <p>We understand that air quality is extremely important to the local communities within the study areas as this is one of the area's main attractions for both residents and tourists.</p> <p>As with any road upgrade air quality will be monitored before, during and after construction in accordance with guidelines and licensing requirements from the EPA.</p> <p>During construction we will put dust suppression measures in place, which will be strictly enforced as part of the contractor's Environmental Management Plan. Construction plant will also be required to comply with relevant exhaust emission standards.</p> <p>The environmental assessment process will include dispersion modelling to help designers to achieve optimum results in terms of grades etc.</p> <p>By separating through and local traffic, especially during busier times like holidays and weekends, villages will see an improvement in local air quality due to less congestion and fewer heavy vehicles.</p> <p>Through traffic would also be travelling at a higher average speed rather than stopping and starting in traffic. This would mean that engines would be operating at a more efficient level and exhaust fumes would be reduced.</p> <p>Air quality generally for all road users and adjacent land users will also improve over time as older vehicles are replaced by lower emission vehicles or electric and hybrid vehicles.</p>
Environment	Visual amenity	Regarding Blackheath, there have been concerns expressed that the option to build an outer bypass with bridges over Shipley Road, Centennial Pass, Porters Pass Track, and over the rail line at the	<p>We are sensitive to the area's natural environment, and the value the community places on visual amenity.</p> <p>A key design principle is to avoid areas of environmental or community sensitivity where possible. Community consultation will be ongoing throughout the Program and</p>

Issue	Category	Issues raised	Transport for NSW response
		<p>north will create an eyesore within the pristine natural environment.</p> <p>Also in Blackheath, concerns have been raised that any above ground duplication will require the removal of trees, particularly on the east side of the Great Western Highway, which will impact natural views and tranquillity for residents and tourists in both Medlow Bath and Blackheath.</p> <p>There are concerns that a potential increase in large freight trucks and traffic movements through Medlow Bath and Blackheath will divide the town, impacting the unique sense of place and separate communities on the ridgeline from natural views.</p> <p>There are concerns the visual impact of the upgraded highway will affect the natural small-town charm of communities along the corridor.</p>	<p>will help us identify these sensitive and highly valued areas as well as identify opportunities to enhance current visual amenity.</p> <p>Throughout the design process the landscape character and visual impact are assessed as part of the environmental assessment requirements.</p> <p>An Urban Design Framework for the Katoomba to Mount Victoria corridor will be developed, expanding on the Great Western Highway Urban Design Framework for the Lapstone to Katoomba section of previous years.</p> <p>An Urban Design Strategy was also developed for the Mount Victoria to Lithgow section as part of the 2013 proposal.</p> <p>These strategies will support the planning and design process to ensure design features consider the existing natural environment and aim to mitigate impacts on visual amenity.</p> <p>Following an Urban Design and Landscape Strategy the team will develop Urban Design and Landscape Plans for each of the staged project approvals. The team will be guided by the Beyond the Pavement policy, the Landscape design guidelines, and further guidelines provided at rms.nsw.gov.au/business-industry/partners-suppliers/centre-for-urban-design/index.html.</p> <p>We recognise that upgrading the highway will have some impacts on biodiversity, including trees. The environmental assessment will include a detailed analysis of impacts on flora and fauna biodiversity including trees, to identify and avoid impacts where possible, and identify ways in which we can mitigate those impacts, such as offsets or alternate planting strategies in consultation with National Parks and Wildlife Service.</p> <p>We are sensitive to the local heritage and communities along the corridor and will do everything we can to maintain the cultural value of the Blue Mountains communities, avoiding impacting listed heritage items and places wherever possible.</p>
Environment	Heritage	<p>There are concerns for the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area given its proximity to the highway.</p> <p>There are concerns that the highway upgrade through Blackheath and Medlow Bath will impact the cultural and heritage value of the townships.</p> <p>There are concerns for several National Trust listed properties in Blackheath including The Gardens,</p>	<p>There will be no impact on the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area and the NSW Government is committed to minimising impacts to the natural environment, local heritage and property.</p> <p>We are sensitive to the local heritage and communities along the corridor and will do everything we can to maintain the cultural value of the Blue Mountains communities, avoiding impacting listed heritage items and places wherever possible.</p> <p>The upgrade will be completed in stages over the next decade, with significant planning and consultation planned for each of the sections.</p>

Issue	Category	Issues raised	Transport for NSW response
		<p>Nalawa, Headstones from Old Blackheath Military Cemetery and Gwandoban,</p> <p>There are concerns for Heritage Conservation Areas listed on the Blue Mountains Local Environmental Plan 2015 including Blackheath Village and Setting, Blackheath West and Lookout Hill.</p> <p>Regarding Blackheath, there are concerns that three out of the four options proposed impact homes on Station Street which have heritage value.</p> <p>Maintaining the heritage value and 'village' charm of Blackheath is of utmost importance to the community.</p> <p>There are concerns for the area around Warriga and Murri streets in Blackheath is a significant heritage site which includes the site of the first brewery in the Blue Mountains, 'the Mountain Brewery', and surrounding 19th century gardens and buildings.</p> <p>There are concerns for the impact on heritage buildings in Hartley and Little Hartley including Meads Farm, 1837 Hartley Courthouse and Hartley Historic Site.</p>	<p>Any potential heritage impacts will be identified through the environmental assessment process, including any impacts on Hartley Historic Village and other buildings and sites near the corridor alignment. These studies will be carried out and managed by accredited heritage specialists.</p> <p>Heritage NSW has regulatory responsibilities in relation to potential heritage impacts. We will consult with this agency early in the Program development and throughout the delivery.</p> <p>We will also offer to consult with the Heritage Council.</p> <p>The Hartley Historic Site area is managed by NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service and we have already started talking with them about managing impacts in this area.</p> <p>No options have been endorsed for Blackheath. We are currently undertaking a co-design process with the Blackheath community, as the route options through that village are more complex.</p> <p>Community feedback from the Blackheath Co-design process is vital in shaping the Program and the final route will be designed with the community, alongside further survey work, technical studies and environmental assessments.</p>
Environment	Community facility, amenity, recreation and tourism.	<p>There are concerns an upgrade of the highway to the west of Blackheath could have a significant impact on recreational opportunities for locals and tourists including access and amenity of world-class rock-climbing areas, birdwatching and bushwalking.</p> <p>There are concerns that visitors who are attracted to the area west of Blackheath (Porters Pass, Fort Rock and Centennial Glen) for recreation will be deterred from visiting and this will impact the local economy.</p> <p>The sentiment is that any opportunities to improve community facilities in the townships along the</p>	<p>We are sensitive to the area's natural environment and the recreational value of the area.</p> <p>Community consultation will be ongoing throughout the Program and will help us identify these sensitive and highly valued areas.</p> <p>Consultation has made the project team aware of the impact one of the possible options for Blackheath would likely have on bushwalking and climbing trails to Fort Rock, Centennial Glen Creek, and Porters Pass Track.</p> <p>No options have been endorsed for Blackheath. We are currently undertaking a co-design process with the Blackheath community, as the route options through that village are more complex.</p>

Issue	Category	Issues raised	Transport for NSW response
		Great Western Highway to promote tourism and improve amenity should be prioritised.	<p>Options that run around the eastern side of the Blackheath village have been ruled out due to impact on the World Heritage Area of the Blue Mountains. Options that run directly through the Blue Mountains National Park have also been ruled out.</p> <p>Additionally, we recognise that the reserved corridor between Mount Victoria and Lithgow would likely impact Berghofers Pass.</p> <p>During the development of options, the project team will consult with community and key stakeholders such as bush walking groups, rock-climbing groups, local councils and others to identify any further features and to identify mitigation measures. Further investigations and studies need to be done to assess any potential impacts on these trails and natural features.</p>
Road Use Number of submissions: 646	Road safety	<p>Concerns have been raised that the project promotes heavy freight through townships, and this could create a more dangerous environment for school children and pedestrians.</p> <p>Concerns have been raised that any increase in the number of 25m B-Doubles and 30m Performance Based Standard (PBS) heavy vehicles through towns (seen to be facilitated by the upgrade) could impact safety of road users, pedestrians and cyclists.</p>	<p>We appreciate your concerns about a potential increase in heavy vehicle traffic.</p> <p>Traffic studies to date indicate the number of vehicles will increase regardless of the Great Western Highway Upgrade Program.</p> <p>The highway is being designed to carry the safest and most productive heavy vehicles, which means fewer heavy vehicles on the road and a safer road environment for local communities and motorists. This includes B-doubles up to 25 metres long and Performance-Based Standard (PBS) vehicles up to 30 metres.</p> <p>Despite being larger vehicles, they are safer and more efficient than the shorter general access vehicles, such as the 19-metre semi-trailers currently on the Great Western Highway.</p> <p>For example, a 26-metre PBS A-double produces 46 per cent less emissions than a 19-metre semi-trailer, requires 55 per cent fewer trips to transport the same amount of freight, and can stop and turn in the same space. You can read more about more efficient modern vehicles at: rms.nsw.gov.au/business-industry/heavy-vehicles/focus-on-freight/index.html.</p> <p>During the road design process, we will incorporate safety principles to ensure the upgraded highway meeting road safety standards and that the risks to all road users including pedestrians and cyclists are minimised. This complements the existing investment on pedestrian and cyclist safety as part of the \$250 million package of safety upgrades delivered recently.</p>
Road Use	Truck movements / haulage routes	There are concerns regarding access for 25m B-Doubles and 30m Performance Based Standard heavy vehicles along the project scope between Katoomba and Lithgow, suggesting this be deferred until the pinch points on the older upgraded sections	The highway is being designed to carry the safest and most productive heavy vehicles, which means fewer heavy vehicles on the road and a safer road environment for local communities and motorists. This includes B-doubles up to 25 metres long and more modern productive vehicles up to 30 metres.

Issue	Category	Issues raised	Transport for NSW response
		of the Great Western Highway are resolved to mitigate risks to cyclists and road users.	These vehicles will not be operating on the highway before the upgrade is complete.
Road Use	Impact on local traffic	<p>There are concerns the upgrade will result in congestion at Blackheath because of the frequency of speed limit changes (school zones) and the amount of traffic lights through the town.</p> <p>There are concerns the proposed options do not adequately solve the issues of traffic congestion.</p>	<p>The safety of all pedestrians, particularly school children, is of utmost importance.</p> <p>The Program is being designed to reduce congestion along the entire route, including through all the villages in the Blue Mountains between Katoomba and Lithgow, and separate long distance from local traffic where possible.</p> <p>As the route design is refined through community consultation, we will be looking at opportunities to improve travel times and deliver a more consistent speed limit across the entire route.</p>
Road Use	Impact on cyclists	<p>There was a suggestion that the design for the upgrade should aim to provide separation of heavy vehicles and vulnerable road users including cyclists.</p> <p>Road treatments should consider shared paths and amenity for cyclists with an opportunity to invest in cycling tourism.</p>	<p>Consultation with stakeholder groups such as bicycle user groups will be an important part of the ongoing design process.</p> <p>Wherever possible, the design will include treatments like wider shoulders and share paths to make the roads safer for everyone.</p>
Property and business Number of submissions 348	Impact to property	<p>Residents and property owners who have a property within the strategic corridor and study area of Blackheath are concerned about property impacts.</p> <p>There are concerns the upgrade will impact the value of properties close to the highway.</p> <p>There are concerns that lengthy decision-making on the Program will impact the ability of owners to sell their homes.</p> <p>There are concerns the Program will create hardship and financial loss for property owners through direct acquisition or impact on the sense of community of townships.</p>	<p>We acknowledge concerns property owners have about upgrade impacts including future property values and how the upgrade might impact the sense of community of each village.</p> <p>We are in the very early stages of planning and design for the Program at Blackheath, and no decisions have been made about the location of the upgraded highway in this area, however the route will be designed to minimise property impacts.</p> <p>Feedback is vital in shaping the upgrade and the final route will be designed with the community, alongside further survey work, technical studies and environmental assessments.</p> <p>The project team aims to provide clearer details about routes and a higher level of certainty about any possible property impacts as soon as possible.</p>

Issue	Category	Issues raised	Transport for NSW response
Property and business	Property acquisitions	<p>Respondents are unclear on the process for valuing property for potential acquisition and compensation terms and calculation and have requested more information.</p> <p>There are concerns that the Government are currently making offers on Shipley Road for less than market value.</p>	<p>While a 'Strategic Corridor Study Area' has been released in Blackheath, no property requirements for the Program have yet been determined in this area, therefore no property acquisitions are currently being assessed or paid.</p> <p>A goal of all Programs is to provide the best option for all road users and simultaneously minimise impacts on property. If a property is required for the upgrade, compensation is assessed under the provisions of the <i>Land Acquisition (Just Terms Compensation) Act 1991</i>.</p> <p>We use professionally qualified Industry based valuers to assess compensation. The process allows for both the owner and Transport for NSW to have valuations completed so that an agreement can be reached.</p> <p>Property valuations are based on the property being unaffected by the current road proposal.</p> <p>Please find below links to help explain the process in more detail.</p> <p>How the NSW Government acquires property: propertyacquisition.nsw.gov.au/</p> <p>The legislation that governs the way land is acquired by the NSW Government: www8.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/viewdb/au/legis/nsw/consol_act/latca1991442</p> <p>The Program website where you will find brochures, FAQs and other information: rms.work/greatwesternhighway.</p>
Property and business	Impact on business and the local economy	<p>There are concerns from tourism operators and businesses that options for Blackheath will have a detrimental impact to their business, as it is considered that the highway will discourage tourists from visiting the area, during and after construction.</p> <p>There are concerns that disruption caused by the Program will create hardship and lead to financial loss or closure for local businesses.</p> <p>Questions were raised about whether a business impact assessment has been completed and what the overall impact of the upgrade is expected to be.</p> <p>There are concerns for the impact the project will have on the Dhamma Bhumi Vipassana Meditation Centre at Blackheath.</p>	<p>The Great Western Highway upgrade is designed to make mountain communities more accessible and boost tourism and the Program will take every opportunity to increase the liveability of towns along the corridor.</p> <p>The Great Western Highway is a key corridor of national significance and is experiencing increasing traffic volumes. It is already at capacity during certain periods which impacts the movement of residents and restricts the growth of tourism. This upgrade Program will relieve these pinch points. We will work with the community of Blackheath to develop a solution that enhances the town, improves safety and eases movement around the township.</p> <p>The key drivers for this Program 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.</p> <p>Should a bypass option be selected, we would implement strategies to attract vehicle traffic to the town. This would include wayfinding, which has been used very successfully in many bypass towns through the bypassed town signage initiative.</p>

Issue	Category	Issues raised	Transport for NSW response
<p>Community consultation</p> <p>Number of submissions: 328</p>	<p>Feedback relating to consultation</p>	<p>Respondents felt the four-week consultation period was not long enough and requested consultation to be conducted over six months.</p> <p>Respondents questioned the authenticity of the engagement given the timing was four weeks prior to Christmas.</p> <p>Respondents felt the Program had been rushed and were concerned that there had not been enough consultation to develop the options to date.</p> <p>Respondents felt there was not enough detail and information provided on the options presented.</p>	<p>A bypass can provide social benefits to a town. One of the common themes that has come up in towns that have been bypassed is a universal improvement in amenity and lifestyle. The community feels they have 'got their town back' because there is less noise, congestion, and exhaust emissions.</p> <p>You can read more about the bypass town initiative at rms.nsw.gov.au/roads/using-roads/trip-information/bypasses/signage-initiative.html</p> <p>A key challenge in developing this Program is balancing the needs of all community members as well as the Great Western Highway users.</p> <p>We will consult with business owners and develop measures to ensure continued access to properties during the construction work. Socio-economic studies will also be undertaken.</p> <p>We acknowledge concerns about potential impacts of highway upgrade options on the Dhamma Bhumi Vipassana Meditation Centre at Blackheath.</p> <p>No options have been endorsed for Blackheath. We are currently undertaking a co-design process with the Blackheath community, as the route options through that village are more complex.</p> <p>Community feedback from the Blackheath Co-design process is vital in shaping the Program and the final route will be designed with the community, alongside further survey work, technical studies and environmental assessments.</p> <p>Public feedback is a crucial part of this Program and will be key to shaping the upgrade as it progresses.</p> <p>The initial consultation of nearly six weeks, which closed on 16 December 2019, was the first of several consultation stages planned for the Program. The purpose of this consultation was to introduce the Great Western Highway Upgrade Program between Katoomba to Lithgow to all communities along the corridor.</p> <p>In order to move forward, we needed to collate that feedback and use it to inform the next steps of the Program.</p> <p>Given the impacts of the 2019-20 summer bushfires, the project team accepted late submissions for as long as possible.</p> <p>We have now reviewed all feedback and the responses to the matters raised are addressed in this report.</p> <p>We are taking the time to get this Program right, which means the community will be actively involved at each step in the process of designing the final alignment.</p>

Issue	Category	Issues raised	Transport for NSW response
			<p>The project team will consult with the community at all stages of development and there will be further opportunities to provide comments and feedback.</p> <p>Ultimately, the Program will be subject to environmental assessment and approval under the <i>Environmental Planning & Assessment Act 1979</i>, and this process will also be subject to community consultation.</p>
Community consultation	Interest and support for the program	<p>There is support for making the travel from Penrith to Lithgow faster and more convenient for motorists.</p> <p>There is support for making a safer connection from Katoomba to Lithgow.</p> <p>Respondents felt this project was long overdue and support its urgent delivery.</p> <p>There is interest in, and support for, the employment growth and opportunities this project will provide in NSW's Central West region.</p>	<p>We acknowledge the benefits this Program will bring to those travelling in, around and through the Blue Mountains, including reducing congestion and providing safer, more efficient and reliable journeys for all road users travelling in, around and through the Blue Mountains.</p> <p>We realise that many stakeholders are very eager to see this Program delivered. We are in the very early stages of planning and design for the Program.</p> <p>The Central West is the third largest regional contributor to the state's economy and will grow to more than 300,000 people in the next 20 years. Better connecting the Central West and Sydney, is critical to the economic and regional development of communities, not only along the highway but in surrounding areas and beyond. This Program will support growth in key industries including agribusiness, manufacturing, mining and tourism.</p> <p>While the current alignment does not allow for 100km/h speed limit along the entire route, we have committed to providing 100km/h through the Hartley Valley. As the route design is refined through community consultation, we will be looking at opportunities to improve travel times and deliver a more consistent speed limit across the entire route.</p> <p>You can stay up to date on the project by visiting rms.work/greatwesternhighway.</p>
Community consultation	Flyer sent in error	Concern and uncertainty as a result of the flyer distributed in error.	<p>We extend our sincerest apologies for the flyer distributed to residents of Blackheath on 15 November 2019. We understand the uncertainty and angst this has caused people. We wrote to residents to retract this flyer.</p> <p>Please be assured that no properties have been identified as potentially being required for acquisition in Blackheath. This notification was sent in error and more importantly, does not reflect our current plans for this Program.</p> <p>During consultation we made every effort to ensure concerns were alleviated through additional engagement activities such as the public meetings and several one-on-one meetings.</p> <p>We assure you that no decisions have been made regarding the location of the upgraded highway in Blackheath. While we are considering several options, the final</p>

Issue	Category	Issues raised	Transport for NSW response
			<p>alignment of the Great Western Highway bypass of Blackheath will be co-designed with the community, alongside further survey work, technical studies and environmental assessments.</p> <p>Engagement with the Blue Mountains community to help inform the decision-making has, and will continue to be, a central principle in the planning processes.</p>
Community consultation	Interest in the co-design process	Requests for more information on how the co-design process will work	<p>In response to feedback, we are establishing the Blackheath Co-Design Committee to discuss and refine route options for upgrading the Great Western Highway through Blackheath. The Committee will be made up of representatives from the community, local stakeholder groups, local agencies, Blue Mountains City Council and Transport for NSW.</p> <p>The Blackheath Co-Design Committee will help us find the best routes for Blackheath. Members will look at options and provide local input, and we will use this to help identify preferred route(s) to consult with the wider community in the latter half of 2020.</p> <p>This will give Blackheath residents a lot more certainty about impacts in their neighbourhood.</p> <p>The committee meetings will be Chaired by Alistair Lunn, Transport for NSW Director – Western Region, with the support of professional facilitators from KJA, one of Australia’s leading stakeholder engagement and communication consultancies.</p>
Budget and cost Number of submissions: 291	Investment, cost and commitment	<p>There is a concern that the Great Western Highway upgrade from Lithgow to Katoomba is not cost effective or viable and that spending \$2.5 billion on road-only freight solutions to achieve a 10-minute travel time saving for private vehicles is not an effective use of NSW Government funding.</p> <p>There are concerns that the budget of \$2.5 billion is not reflective of the overall cost of the upgrade from planning to completed construction of all sections. The entire cost is considered to likely be significantly larger than what has been made public.</p> <p>There are concerns that Transport for NSW is progressing with the upgrade when there is no completed business case made available to the public to support it.</p>	<p>The NSW Government has committed \$2.5 billion funding to upgrade the Great Western Highway between Katoomba and Lithgow. This includes planning for projects such as Blackheath and delivery of other sections of the 34km Program. Partial or staged funding of a program of this magnitude is common and the team is working to develop the Program and will seek additional funding as required.</p> <p>The project team has gone to tender for a Strategic Business Case for the entire length of the corridor which will consider all options for improving transport across the Blue Mountains including alternate route options and any flow on effects or constraints such as issues with the existing section of highway east of Katoomba.</p> <p>An economic analysis will be completed as part of the Strategic Business Case, and the evaluation of the Program will consider other social benefits such as safety upgrades, the reduction in congestion through the Blue Mountains and benefits for local communities.</p> <p>No options have been endorsed for Blackheath. We are currently undertaking a co-design process with the Blackheath community, as the route options through this village are more complex.</p>

Issue	Category	Issues raised	Transport for NSW response
		<p>Questions regarding when a cost benefit analysis will be completed.</p> <p>Blackheath was promised a tunnel in the 2019 State Election by the current NSW Government and respondents want this delivered.</p>	<p>The Government has committed to building a tunnel, even if it is the most expensive option, if that is the community's preference through the Blackheath Co-Design process and following broader consultation.</p> <p>Community feedback from the Blackheath co-design process is vital in shaping the Program and the final route will be designed with the community, alongside further survey work, technical studies and environmental assessments.</p> <p>At this early stage, we are not aware of any engineering constraints which would render a tunnel under Blackheath unfeasible.</p>
<p>Construction impacts</p> <p>Number of submissions:</p> <p>236</p>	<p>General construction impacts</p>	<p>Questions regarding where the on and off ramp locations will be and what affect this will have on traffic flow and congestion during and after construction.</p> <p>There are concerns regarding the footprint for construction and how this will be managed.</p> <p>There are concerns construction in Blackheath would affect the structural integrity of homes.</p> <p>Questions regarding the construction timeframes for the project.</p>	<p>We appreciate that many residents have concerns about potential construction impacts.</p> <p>We are in the very early stages of planning and design for the Program which means it is too early to determine the construction impacts in any detail.</p> <p>We are liaising closely with local stakeholders and will hold community information sessions in the future where there will be additional opportunities to comment on the proposed alignment options and the designs for the highway upgrade.</p> <p>We are taking the time to get this Program right, which means that you will be actively involved in each step in the process of designing the final alignment.</p> <p>Ultimately, the Program will be subject to environmental assessment and approval under the <i>Environmental Planning & Assessment Act 1979</i>, and this process will also be subject to community consultation.</p> <p>A construction noise and vibration management plan will be prepared as part of the Construction Environmental Management Plan and we will put mitigation measures in place to minimise impacts.</p> <p>We will contact impacted residents and businesses individually to talk about vibration impacts.</p> <p>We will also ensure that pre and post construction dilapidation assessments are undertaken by independent experts at potentially impacted properties.</p> <p>Work will be scheduled to minimise impacts to motorists as well as nearby residents and businesses.</p> <p>Where possible, construction will be undertaken during standard hours; however, some construction might need to take place outside these hours. The Environmental Assessment will address appropriate mitigative measures that should be employed for work undertake outside normal business hours.</p>

Issue	Category	Issues raised	Transport for NSW response
Request for information Number of submissions: 71	Requests for further information, studies and investigations.	<p>Request information on future growth of the Central West region.</p> <p>Request for a corridor study to be undertaken comparing both road and rail options.</p> <p>Request for a carbon emissions study to be undertaken to determine impact on the environment.</p> <p>Questions whether there will be a rail freight study undertaken to support this project that investigates rail corridor upgrades, freight volumes and the potential shift of existing and future freight from road to rail.</p> <p>Information on the potential impact Inland Railway will have on freight traffic flows in the Central West and questions whether these resulting freight volumes have been factored into the Great Western Highway proposal.</p>	<p>The Central West is NSW's third largest regional centre and contributes 12 per cent gross regional product to the state. The region is expected to grow to more than 300,000 people during the next 20 years and see dwellings increase by 12 per cent.</p> <p>For more information on the predicted growth of the Central West region please visit the Central West and Orana Regional Plan, available here: planning.nsw.gov.au/Plans-for-your-area/Regional-Plans/Central-West-and-Orana.</p> <p>The NSW Government is committed to moving more freight from road to rail and already invests in the rail freight network to increase capacity, but this is not a substitute for investing in our road freight network. The Great Western Highway upgrade is being developed alongside long-term rail options, as both are needed to meet future demand and address current issues around congestion, journey reliability and safety.</p> <p>The upgrade is supported by the NSW Future Transport Strategy 2056 (Transport for NSW, 2018) and the NSW Freight and Ports Plan (NSW Government, 2018).</p> <p>The NSW Government's overall transport policy is outlined in Future Transport 2056. Chapter 9 of this strategy, Sustainability, refers specifically to how the NSW Government's overall multi-modal transport policy will meet Australia's commitment made at the Paris Agreement in 2016 to a zero-carbon economy by 2050.</p> <p>Further investigations, survey work, technical studies and freight and transport studies will be completed to refine our understanding in developing the Program.</p>
Request for information	Evans and Peck Independent Review of the Mount Victoria to Lithgow Upgrade (2012)	There are concerns that this project conflicts with recommendations made in the Review (2012) regarding value for money and inter-modal transport.	<p>The Evans and Peck Independent Review of Great Western Highway Upgrades West of Katoomba (the Review) was completed in January 2012 and focussed on upgrades between Mount Victoria and Lithgow.</p> <p>The current upgrade proposed is between Katoomba and Lithgow.</p> <p>The Review considered the then project's cost effectiveness, impact on the local community, and potential for directing funds to safety upgrades on the Bells Line of Road.</p> <p>The Review is almost eight years old, and the Government has since developed policies and plans, and pursued projects which have met the Review's recommendations. A key outcome identified and delivered was the \$250 million safety improvement work, which included projects between Hartley Valley and River Lett Hill, and at Blackheath, Mount Victoria, and Forty Bends.</p> <p>Upgrading the Great Western Highway between Katoomba and Lithgow is an NSW Government commitment which requires further technical studies, economic analysis, transport studies, and community consultation as part of the planning process that</p>

Issue	Category	Issues raised	Transport for NSW response
			<p>goes beyond the work in the Review. This is especially the case as the scope of the Program now includes Katoomba to Mount Victoria.</p> <p>In March 2018, the Government released the Future Transport 2056 Strategy, a vision that sets out strategy, service and infrastructure plans for Sydney and regional NSW during the next 40 years. As part of the Strategy, the NSW Government is committed to prioritising, investing in and delivering vital infrastructure to open up the state's west.</p> <p>We are leading the Connecting Central West and Orana Program, which has been established to identify short, medium and long-term service and infrastructure initiatives to improve connectivity for the Central West and Orana regions. Initial work has looked to consolidate transport-related initiatives in the regions which impact connectivity, such as the Great Western Highway upgrades, Inland Rail, the Regional Rail Project, Parkes Special Activation Precinct, Fast Rail, and future crossings of the Great Dividing Range.</p>

5 Next steps

Feedback and information received throughout the consultation period will be used to inform the next steps of the Upgrade Program. This will complement further technical studies and environmental assessments, and inform the Strategic Business Case, scheduled for completion in 2020.

The Program will be divided into staged projects to be delivered in coming years. We will continue to consult closely with the community at all stages. More detailed planning and design for the Medlow Bath section, which is expected to be one of the first sections constructed, will occur following release of this report.

Planning for options to upgrade the highway at Blackheath is in its initial phase. In response to feedback, we are establishing the Blackheath Co-Design Committee to discuss and refine route options for upgrading the Great Western Highway through Blackheath. The Committee will be made up of representatives from the community, local stakeholder groups, local agencies, Blue Mountains City Council staff and Transport for NSW.

We expect to make refined options available for broader community consultation in the latter half of 2020.



Great Western Highway Upgrade Program

Katoomba to Lithgow | Community update

Transport for NSW | November 2019



Great Western Highway looking towards Hartley Valley

The NSW Government is investing \$2.5 billion towards upgrading the Great Western Highway between Katoomba and Lithgow. The program will provide safer, more efficient, more reliable journeys, and better connect communities with the Central West.



Improve safety



Connect communities



Boost regional economies



Preserve natural environment

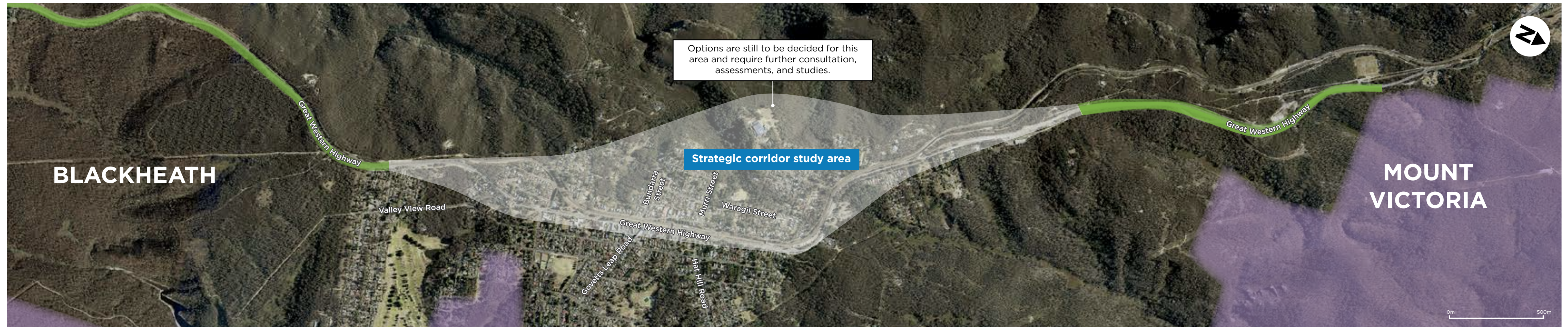


Improve freight connection

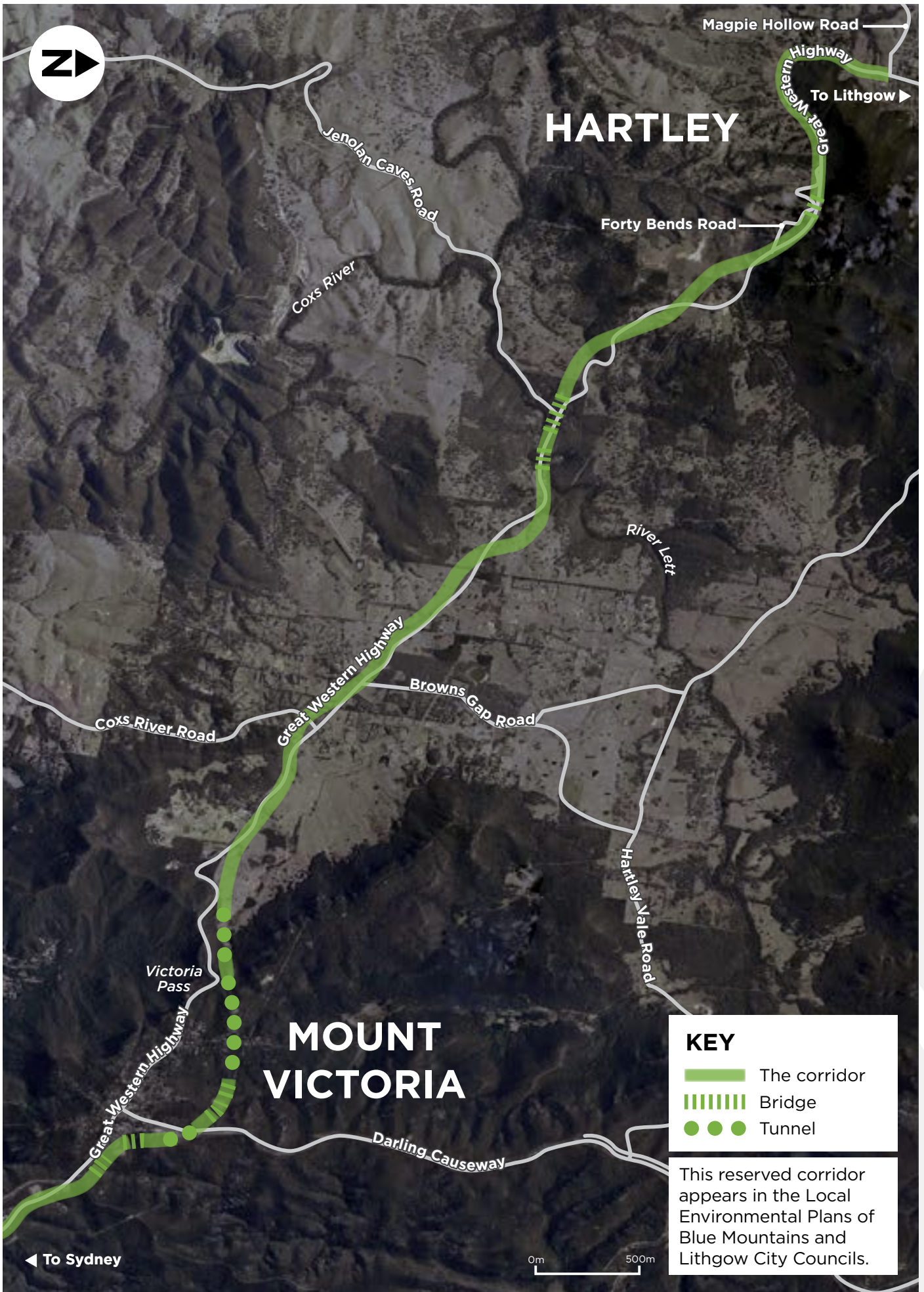


Reduce travel time

Strategic corridor between Katoomba and Mount Victoria



Reserved corridor between Mount Victoria to Lithgow





Medlow Bath looking north

The program

We are now seeking feedback from the community, and stakeholders on the strategic corridor between Katoomba to Mount Victoria and for the corridor reserved in 2013 between Mount Victoria and Lithgow.

Once the highway has been upgraded between Katoomba and Lithgow, road users will save at least 10 minutes in travel time and over 95km would be two lanes each way between Emu Plains and Wallerawang.

The NSW Government has progressively upgraded sections of the highway to make it safer and reliable with the most recent project at Kelso opened to traffic in March 2017. In 2018, \$30 million was announced to upgrade the highway between Kelso and Raglan.

There have already been important safety improvements delivered through the safety upgrade program along the Great Western Highway at Blackheath, Mount Victoria and Forty Bends. This work has seen improved road surfaces, intersection upgrades, and lane widening delivered as part of the \$250 million investment by the Australian and NSW governments.

Regional growth

The Central West is NSW's third largest regional centre and contributes 12 per cent gross regional product to the state. The region is expected to grow by more than 300,000 people during the next 20 years and see dwellings increase by 12 per cent. This program will support growth in key industries including agribusiness, manufacturing, mining and tourism.

With a duplicated highway, journeys into and out of the Central West will become safer, more efficient, more reliable, and better connect communities.

Freight benefits

The Great Western Highway is an important route identified as part of the Land Transport Network (Roads), which has been developed through collaboration between Commonwealth, State, and Territory governments. It details the road and rail routes connecting economic hubs.

Out of the four major freight connections into Sydney from the regions, the Great Western Highway is the key east-west route. However, it is the only one of the four routes not two lanes in each direction and limited to 19m B-Double and 20m Performance Based Standard (PBS) vehicles. Alternate routes around the Great Dividing Range use either the Hume Highway or the Golden Highway and are up to 100km longer. This program looks to open up access to more productive vehicles as well as improve more general access for commuters and tourists.

Overview

Options for upgrading the highway between Katoomba and Lithgow are constrained by steep topography, the railway line, private property, existing towns, and the Blue Mountains National Park. Since the current highway is a constrained space, upgrading it without using as much of the existing corridor as possible would make the program more expensive and would have a large and serious impact over the environment.

Generally, the route options presented here are based on a speed limit of 80km/h within the Blue Mountains, except sections of reduced speed limit, and 100km/h through the Hartley Valley. The upgrade program is investigating and considering the following options:

- Katoomba to Medlow Bath to include bridges between highpoints along the ridgeline.
- Medlow Bath to include widening the existing corridor within the current property boundaries through the township with a 60km/h speed limit.
- Medlow Bath to Blackheath options to include widening the existing corridor or running along the western side of the rail line.
- Blackheath options to include: widening the existing corridor; an outer bypass with bridges over Shipley Road, Centennial Pass and Porters Pass Track; a western bypass; or a long tunnel or short tunnel bypass (both beneath the town).

- Options that run around the eastern side of the Blackheath village have been ruled out due to impact on the World Heritage Areas of the Blue Mountains. Options that run directly through the Blue Mountains National Park have also been ruled out.
- Blackheath to Mount Victoria to include widening the existing corridor and changes to the Mount Boyce Heavy Vehicle Inspection Bay.
- Mount Victoria to the base of Victoria Pass to include a tunnel bypass beneath the village.
- Base of Victoria Pass to South Bowenfels to include a four lane divided road with a 100km/h speed limit.
- Jenolan Caves Road intersection to be grade separated.

We are still in the early stages of planning and design, and need your feedback in order to take forward the project.

Further survey work, technical studies and environmental assessments are also needed to refine our understanding in developing the program.

What happens next?

At the end of this consultation period, the team will produce a consultation summary report that includes responses to feedback that will be published on the program's website. Feedback gathered will inform project design.



From Mount Boyce looking north.

Information sessions

We are presenting the Great Western Highway Upgrade Program for your feedback. You can comment online, contact the team, or attend an information session. No formal presentation will be given, so please feel free to drop in at any time.

- **Katoomba Street entrance (outside) to Katoomba Village Shopping Centre, 79 Katoomba Street Katoomba**
Tuesday 26 November 2019 - 11am to 2pm
- **Katoomba-Leura Community Centre, 81-83 Katoomba Street Katoomba**
Tuesday 26 November and 3 December 2019 - 5pm to 7pm
- **Hydro Majestic (Delmont Room 2) Great Western Highway Medlow Bath**
Monday 9 December - 5pm to 7pm
- **Blackheath Area Neighbourhood Centre (Bates Hall), corner Gardiner Crescent and Great Western Highway Blackheath**
Wednesday 27 November and 4 December 2019 - 5pm to 7pm
- **Mount Vic Flicks, 2A Harley Avenue Mount Victoria**
Tuesday 10 December 2019 - 5pm to 7pm
- **Hartley Hall, 2 Mid Hartley Road Hartley**
Wednesday 11 December - 5pm to 7pm
- **Lithgow Valley Plaza, Corner Lithgow and Bent Streets Lithgow**
Monday 25 November 2019 - 11am to 2pm
- **Hoskins Memorial Church Hall, 43 Bridge Street Lithgow**
Monday 25 November and 2 December 2019 - 5pm to 7pm

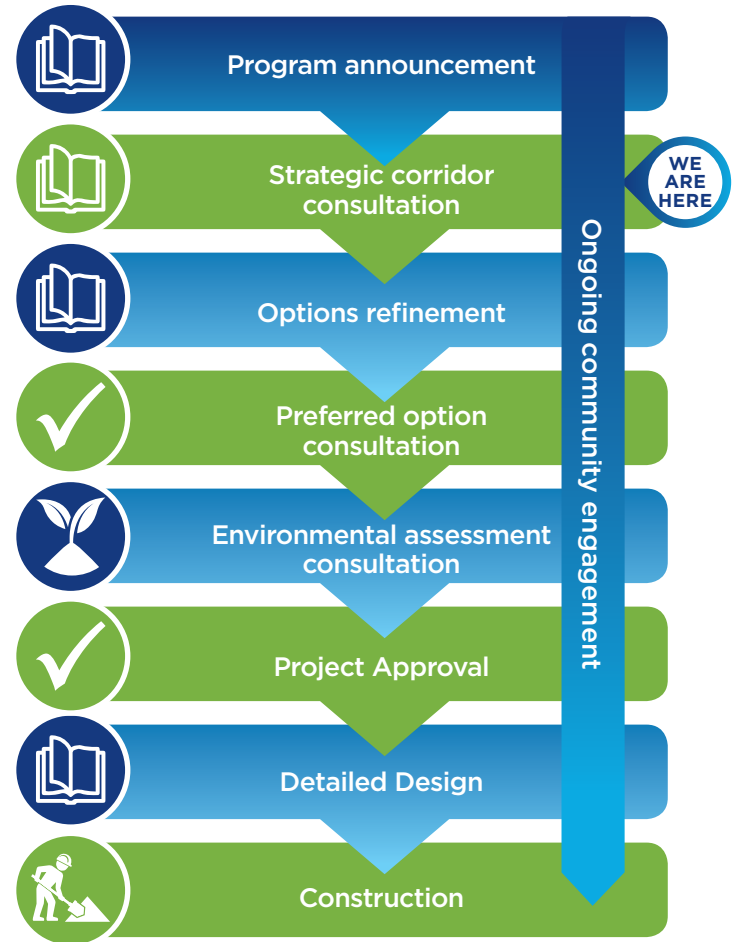
Unstaffed displays will also be available during normal business hours in the following locations.

- **Katoomba Library**
30 Park Street, Katoomba
- **Lithgow Library and Learning Centre**
157 Main Street, Lithgow
- **Oberon Library**
corner of Dart and Fleming Streets, Oberon
- **Bathurst Regional Council**
158 Russell Street, Bathurst
- **Orange City Library**
147 Byng Street, Orange



If you need help understanding this information, please contact the Translating and Interpreting Service on 131 450 and ask them to call us on 1800 953 777.

Next steps



There are several ways you can find out more information and have your say:

- visit the website: rms.work/greatwesternhighway
- visit an information session
- comment on the collaborative map online
- complete a feedback form either online or through the post, or
- contact the team through phone call, email, or post.

Feedback closes at **5pm** on **Monday 16 December 2019**.

Contact us

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

- 1800 953 777
- gwhd@rms.nsw.gov.au
- rms.work/greatwesternhighway
- Great Western Highway Upgrade Program
PO Box 2332, Orange NSW 2800



November 2019

RMS.19.1396

Privacy Roads and Maritime Services ("RMS") is subject to the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 ("PIIP Act") which requires that we comply with the Information Privacy Principles set out in the PIIP Act. All information in correspondence is collected for the sole purpose of delivering this project. The information received, including names and addresses of respondents, may be published in subsequent documents unless a clear indication is given in the correspondence that all or part of that information is not to be published. Otherwise RMS will only disclose your personal information, without your consent, if authorised by the law. Your personal information will be held by RMS at 27 Argyle Street, Parramatta NSW 2150. You have the right to access and correct the information if you believe that it is incorrect.

Appendix B - Postcard

Great Western Highway Upgrade Program

Public consultation



Great Western Highway at Mount Victoria

How can I have my say?

We are inviting feedback from the community, customers and stakeholders about the strategic corridor upgrade proposed between Katoomba and Mount Victoria and the corridor reserved in 2013 between Mount Victoria and Lithgow. Your feedback is important and it will be used to help inform our future plans for upgrading the Great Western Highway.

There are several ways you can become involved including visiting an information session, commenting on the interactive map on the website, or by contacting the team through phone call, email, or post.

Feedback closes at 5pm on Monday 16 December 2019.

What are your communication objectives?

We will provide clear information about the project and use different tools and techniques to explain the project to our communities, customers and stakeholders.

Building relationships with the community and stakeholders across the life-cycle of this program will be a key objective.

Above all, we want to hear your feedback. it will help to shape the design of the upgrade program.

How will we communicate to stakeholders and the community?

We will provide clear, consistent, and timely information to communities, stakeholders, and customers. We will build and maintain relationships with key stakeholders throughout all phases. We will raise awareness of the program and its benefits throughout all phases including planning and construction.

What information will I be able to see?

- You will be able to access an online interactive map of the corridor
- You will have frequently asked questions that outline the strategic options and impacts and benefits
- You can access a collaborative map where you can pin your comments at specific points along the corridor
- You can attend a community information session to meet the team and find out more about the program
- You can view static display information at libraries and council chambers
- A dedicated email, project phone number, and multiple ways to provide feedback.



Great Western Highway at Medlow Bath

How else do I get involved?

If you are unable to make an information session but would like to speak to a member of the team, please contact us to discuss or arrange another time that is suitable for you.

If you would like to join our mailing list and receive information directly about the progress of this program, then please call, email or submit a feedback form.

You can also make a comment through our feedback form that you can post or submit online.

Will this be the only opportunity to have my say?

Our journey with stakeholders and the community on this program has just begun. We value the area's natural environment, heritage, and local communities. We will build and maintain relationships with key stakeholders throughout all phases of the program and continue to speak to community members. We will organise regular formal and informal opportunities for the community and stakeholders to speak to the team. Please subscribe to updates if you would like to be kept informed.

Will the program scope change because of public consultation?

The NSW Government is investing \$2.5 billion to begin the planning and delivery of the Great Western Highway Upgrade between Katoomba and Lithgow. Public feedback is an important part of any road project within NSW and we aim to seek and listen to feedback from local communities and other stakeholders. This feedback will be an important consideration in shaping the program as it progresses.

What happens next and how will you use my feedback?

At the end of this consultation period, the team will produce a consultation summary report that includes responses to feedback. Information gathered will be considered in decision making as the program progresses. Further public consultation beyond this time is being planned.

The next step will be to review comments, carry out further investigations, and continue to consult with the community as the options are refined.



Great Western Highway looking towards Hassans Walls

Information sessions

We are presenting the Great Western Highway Upgrade Program for your feedback. You can comment online, contact the team, or attend an information session. No formal presentation will be given, so please feel free to drop in at any time.

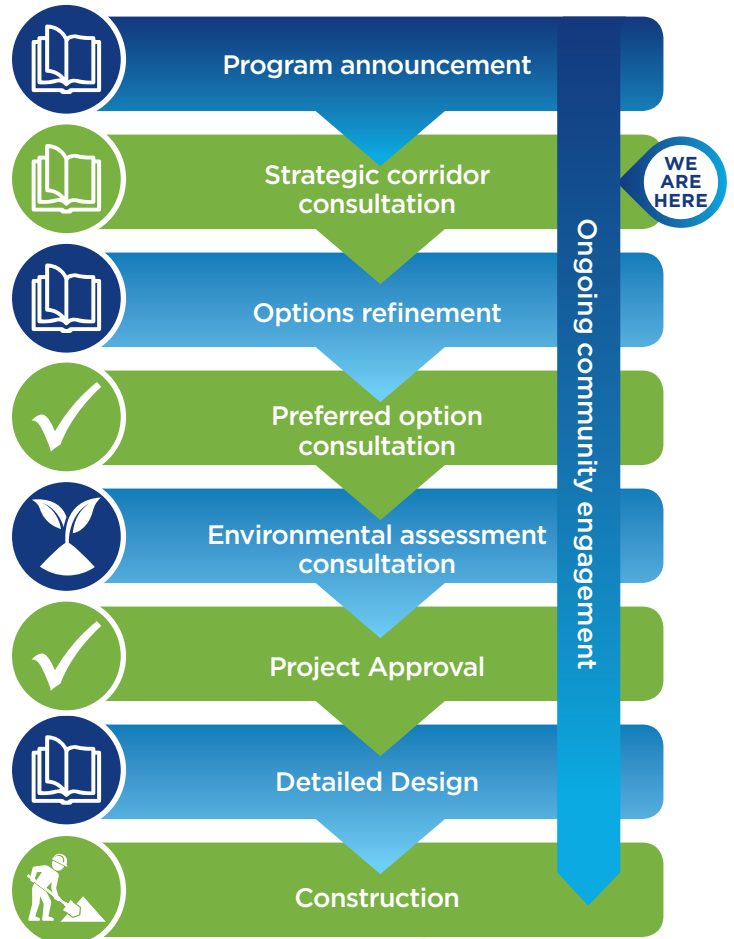
- **Katoomba Street entrance (outside) to Katoomba Village Shopping Centre, 79 Katoomba Street Katoomba**
Tuesday 26 November 2019 – 11am to 2pm
- **Katoomba-Leura Community Centre, 81-83 Katoomba Street Katoomba**
Tuesday 26 November and 3 December 2019 – 5pm to 7pm
- **Hydro Majestic (Delmont Room 2) Great Western Highway Medlow Bath**
Monday 9 December – 5pm to 7pm
- **Blackheath Area Neighbourhood Centre (Bates Hall), corner Gardiner Crescent and Great Western Highway Blackheath**
Wednesday 27 November and 4 December 2019 – 5pm to 7pm
- **Mount Vic Flicks, 2A Harley Avenue Mount Victoria**
Tuesday 10 December 2019 – 5pm to 7pm
- **Hartley Hall, 2 Mid Hartley Road Hartley**
Wednesday 11 December – 5pm to 7pm
- **Lithgow Valley Plaza, Corner Lithgow and Bent Streets Lithgow**
Monday 25 November 2019 – 11am to 2pm
- **Hoskins Memorial Church Hall, 43 Bridge Street Lithgow**
Monday 25 November and 2 December 2019 – 5pm to 7pm

Unstaffed displays will also be available during normal business hours in the following locations.

- **Katoomba Library**
30 Park Street, Katoomba
- **Lithgow Library and Learning Centre**
157 Main Street, Lithgow
- **Oberon Library**
corner of Dart and Fleming Streets, Oberon
- **Bathurst Regional Council**
158 Russell Street, Bathurst
- **Orange City Library**
147 Byng Street, Orange

Feedback closes at 5pm on Monday 16 December 2019.

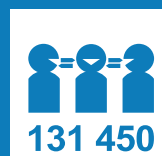
Next steps



How can I comment on the program or talk to the project team?

We have established a dedicated email address, phone number, collaboration map where you can pin your comments, and feedback form that you can post to the project or submit online:

- 1800 953 777
- gwhd@rms.nsw.gov.au
- rms.work/greatwesternhighway
- PO Box 2332, Orange NSW 2800



If you need help understanding this information, please contact the Translating and Interpreting Service on 131 450 and ask them to call us on 1800 953 777.



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:

Phone: 1800 953 777

Email: gwhd@rms.nsw.gov.au

Website: rms.work/greatwesternhighway

Post: Great Western Highway Upgrade Program. PO Box 2332, Orange NSW 2800.

Great Western Highway Upgrade Program

Property, planning, heritage and the environment



Blackheath over the train station looking north

What kind of environmental assessments and approvals will this program need to obtain before construction starts?

We are sensitive to the area's natural environment, Aboriginal cultural heritage, local heritage and communities.

Investigations are planned on the corridor including: survey work, flora and fauna studies, geotechnical drilling, utilities investigations, technical studies, heritage studies, and archaeological surveys. Community consultation will be ongoing as a result of these investigations.

The findings from these investigations will help inform the environmental planning and assessment pathway to be used on the program.

Once preferred options are developed and concept designs completed for the program, environmental assessment reports will be prepared as required by the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*. We will not impact the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area.

How will you manage the impacts from the Great Western Highway Upgrade Program?

A key design principle is to avoid areas of environmental or community sensitivity where possible. The Environmental Assessments will identify impacts arising from the project and provide strategies to avoid or mitigate impacts. Engagement and consultation with the community and stakeholders is a key part of determining and managing potential impacts from the project.

What impact will you have on Aboriginal cultural heritage?

Protection of Aboriginal cultural heritage is a key program focus. We will consult closely with local Aboriginal groups, organisations, and cultural knowledge holders to identify and either avoid or mitigate impacts on Aboriginal cultural heritage.

What impact will you have on the World Heritage Area?

The route options will not affect the World Heritage Areas of the Blue Mountains. Please see over the page for a map of the world heritage area for this part of the Blue Mountains.

What impact will you have on the Blue Mountains National Park?

Our design principle is to avoid impacting the Blue Mountains National Park. Between Medlow Bath and Blackheath, the boundary of the national park is very close to the existing highway and impacts may be unavoidable if the highway is upgraded here. We will closely consult the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Services as part of the options development process.

What impact would you have on the drinking water catchment?

Our strategic corridor avoids directly impacting drinking water catchments. Environmental management controls will be developed as required with Water NSW to avoid indirect impacts. We will keep the community updated as the program develops further.

What impact will you have on non-Aboriginal heritage?

Most non-Aboriginal heritage is well recorded and mapped in locations within the villages. The strategic corridor will, where possible, avoid impacting registered heritage items and places. We will consult with the Office of Environment and Heritage.

What impact will you have on bushwalking routes?

Where possible, we will avoid impacting bushwalking routes as we are sensitive to the community's high regard for these environmental assets. However, a possible option for Blackheath would likely impact bushwalking trails to Fort Rock, Centennial Glen Creek, and Porters Pass Track. The reserved corridor between Mount Victoria and Lithgow would likely impact Berghofers Pass.

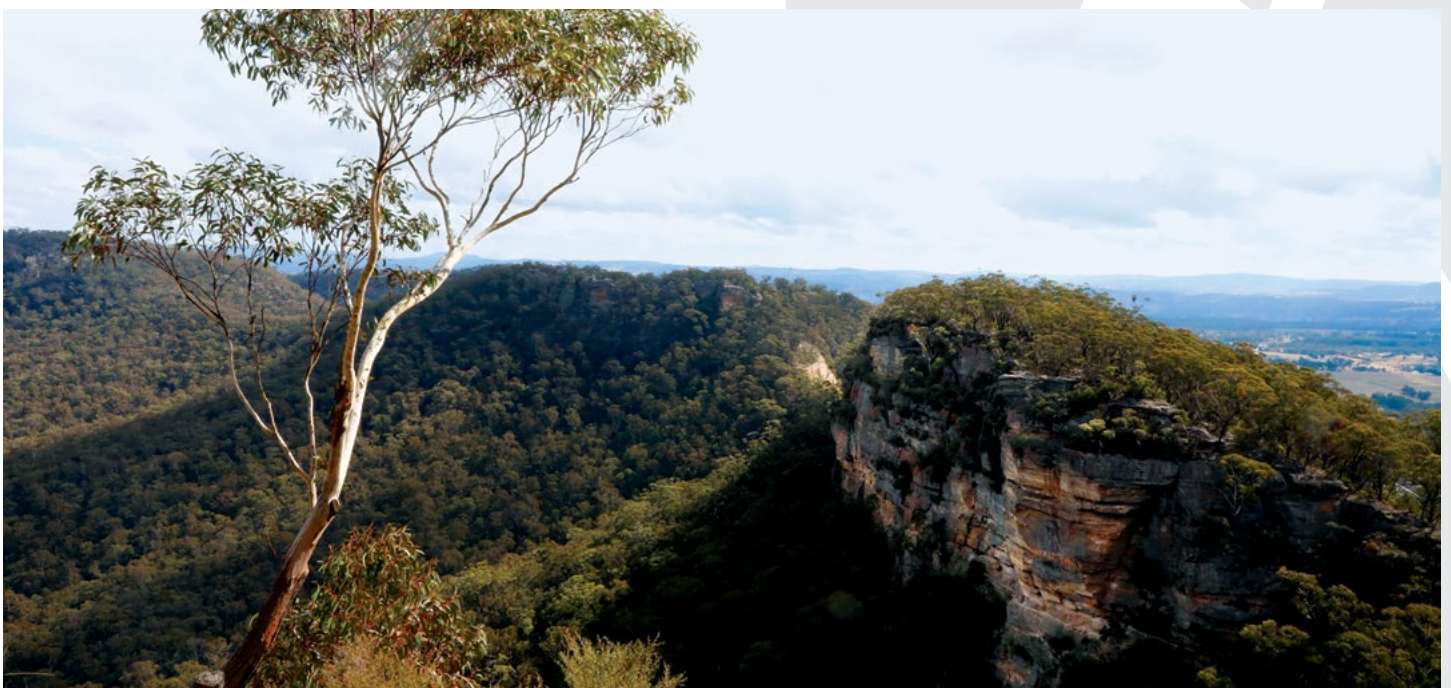
The program team will consult with stakeholders such as bush walking groups, local councils, and others to mitigate impacts during the development of these options. Further investigations need to be done to assess the impacts on these trails.

What impact will you have on trees?

Upgrading the highway will impact biodiversity, including trees. The environmental assessment will include an assessment of tree impacts and options to mitigate, such as, offsets or alternate planting strategies. This may include the biodiversity offset scheme, but it is too early to confirm at this stage.

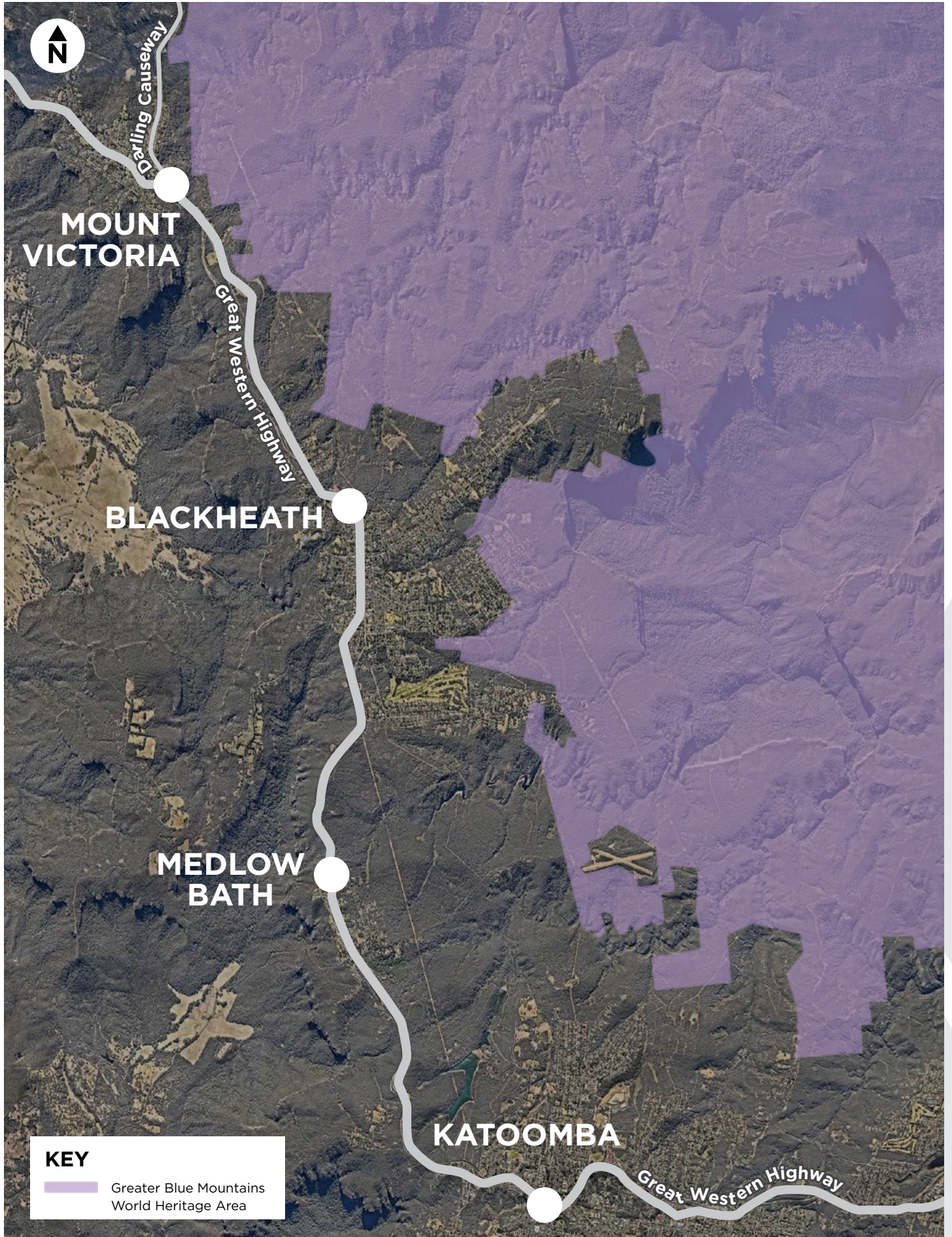
What urban design features are you planning?

An urban design strategy will form part of the environmental assessment. It is still too early to detail precisely what this would look like, including if features like noise walls would be required. This will be an important part of future public consultation and stakeholder engagement.



From Mitchell Ridge looking at Victoria Pass

Blue Mountains World Heritage Area



What are the air quality and noise impacts from the program?

We will be carrying out studies to assess the possible impacts on noise and air quality. These will be detailed in the environmental assessment when the program reaches that stage.

Will you affect my property?

The Great Western Highway Upgrade has been designed to minimise property acquisitions. However, as with all major infrastructure projects, there will be an impact on property owners. The program team is very conscious of this and will work closely with property owners.

Property owners will be consulted once they have been identified as potentially impacted.

When a property is acquired in NSW, compensation for the acquisition of land is determined under the *Land Acquisition (Just Terms Compensation) Act 1991*. More information on the property acquisition process can be found at the Centre for Property Acquisition.

We will start negotiations for property acquisition after the preferred alignment of the road corridor has been reserved and the program enters the next phase of planning and detailed design.

Will you affect my business?

The program is in very early planning stages and we will be consulting with business owners and stakeholders to understand the potential impacts of each option.

We will consult with business owners and use innovations to come up with construction methods that will allow continued access to properties during the construction project. Socio-economic studies will be undertaken in planning approval documents delivered.

Will you compensate me?

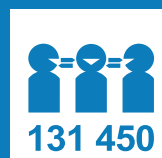
If your property is acquired as part of the project, Transport for NSW will make you an offer for the acquisition of your property. The offer will be based on the current market value of the property and based on recent sales in the area.

Strategic corridor between Katoomba and Mount Victoria



Where can I find out more on the upgrade program?

1800 953 777
@ gwhd@rms.nsw.gov.au
rms.work/greatwesternhighway



If you need help understanding this information, please contact the Translating and Interpreting Service on 131 450 and ask them to call us on 1800 953 777.

Great Western Highway Upgrade Program

Overview and strategic corridor



Great Western Highway from Mount Boyce looking north

What is the Great Western Highway Upgrade Program?

The Great Western Highway Upgrade Program will deliver around 34 kilometres of four lane divided highway between Katoomba and Lithgow.

The program is currently in the early stages of planning; we are presenting a strategic corridor between Katoomba and Mount Victoria for public consultation and the corridor reserved in 2013 between Mount Victoria to Lithgow (South Bowenfels).

The NSW Government has committed \$2.5 billion in funding towards the planning and delivery of the duplication.

Once the highway has been upgraded between Katoomba and Lithgow, road users will save at least 10 minutes in travel time and over 95km would be two lanes each way between Emu Plains and Wallerawang.

Separating long distance and heavy vehicles from local traffic, pedestrians and cyclists will improve road safety.

The highway will be able to support safer and more productive vehicles to help unblock the east-west choke-point going to and from the Central West and Sydney.

What has happened to date?

By 2015, the Great Western Highway had been upgraded to two lanes in each direction between Emu Plains and Katoomba. A proposed corridor for upgrade between Mount Victoria and Lithgow was reserved in 2013 and appears in the Blue Mountains City Council's and Lithgow City Council's Local Environmental Plans.

Since then, the NSW Government has progressively upgraded further sections of the highway, with the most recent project at Kelso opened to traffic in March 2017. In 2018, the NSW Government announced \$30 million to upgrade Kelso to Raglan. The Australian and NSW Governments have spent \$250 million to prioritise safety improvements along the Great Western Highway at Blackheath, Mount Victoria, and Forty Bends.



Medlow Bath from the railway bridge looking towards the station

What are the benefits of the upgrade?

- Improved connection for freight, businesses, and tourism between Central West NSW and Sydney.
- Supports regional economic growth.
- Better and more reliable travel times.
- Improved road safety.
- Improved freight efficiency.
- Separate long distance and heavy vehicles from local traffic, pedestrians and cyclists.
- Increased transport capacity to meet future growth.





Victoria Pass, between Mount Victoria and Hartley Valley

What are the design constraints?

We are sensitive to the area's natural environment, heritage, and local communities. Options for upgrading between Katoomba and Lithgow are limited by steep topography, the railway line, private property, existing towns, and the Blue Mountains National Park.

Since the current highway is a constrained space, upgrading it without using as much of the existing corridor as possible would make the program more expensive and would have a large and serious impact over the environment.

Additionally, one of the program's key priorities is protecting and maintaining the natural environment. We understand the community treasures the natural environment and part of our detailed investigations looks to avoid environmental impact.

We will minimise impact on property and work with property owners that may become impacted by the corridor. Property owners will be consulted once they have been identified as potentially impacted.

We are still in the early stages of planning and design and your feedback is vital in shaping the design of the program. Further survey work, technical studies and environmental assessments are also needed to inform the development.

Strategic corridor between Katoomba and Mount Victoria



What are the options between Katoomba and Medlow Bath?

The terrain is steep and constrained by the ridgeline, the rail line, and the Blue Mountains National Park. We are already planning for bridges between the highpoints along the ridgeline to overcome these constraints. However, we need to conduct further environmental assessments, survey work, technical studies, and community consultation to plan this section.

What are the options for Medlow Bath?

We have investigated options for Medlow Bath that aim to avoid and mitigate impacts to the Blue Mountains National Park, the village itself, businesses, including the Hydro Majestic, and the rail line, while improving road safety. However, due to the steep terrain, the location of the village, the rail line, the towns popularity for tourism and the National Park, it is not possible to bypass Medlow Bath.

From preliminary investigations, there are two options north of the village: one that crosses the rail line at the current corridor; and one that does not but could cross closer to Blackheath along Station Street.

Further environmental assessments, survey work, technical studies, and consultation with the community will be undertaken before a final option is presented.

What are the options for Blackheath?

We are sensitive to Blackheath's environment, heritage, and local community. There are many options being considered for Blackheath and we need to consult with the community to understand views and impacts. Options to the east of the village have been ruled out as this will impact the World Heritage area. Options that run directly through the Blue Mountains National Park have also been ruled out.

We welcome and encourage feedback on how we can upgrade the highway while enhancing the village community.



decided for this
er consultation,
nd studies.

r study area



Further environmental assessments, survey work, technical studies, and consultation with the community are required. From preliminary investigations we understand the following details:

- An option to duplicate the existing highway through the centre of Blackheath, could see the likely partial or full property acquisitions of some residences, businesses, open space, and potential relocation of some Blackheath Station buildings.
- An option to build an outer bypass with bridges crossing over Shipley Road, Centennial Pass, Porters Pass Track, and over the rail line at the north. Tunnels would cross the rail line at the south and under the Mountains Christian College. There are likely impacts on the existing environment through the valley but the potential to create a scenic route for locals and visitors.
- An option to build a bypass running next to the rail line either at ground level or in a cut-and-cover tunnel would start at the southern end with a tunnel

underpass of the rail line, and finishing with a bridge over the rail line at the north. There would be some impacts to residential and commercial properties located along the rail line. The tunnel option provides the possibility of reusing the surface above with open space or other community purposes.

- Options to build long or short tunnels underneath Blackheath would remove traffic from the centre of Blackheath, require tunnel portals (entry and exit points) with some property and environmental impacts. Both options would require subsurface acquisition. Both options would have ventilation stacks constructed at either portal end.

What are the options between Mount Victoria and Lithgow?

In order to provide community and planning certainty the corridor between Mount Victoria and Lithgow was reserved in the Local Environmental Plan in 2013. This continues to be our preferred alignment and we have acquired about 23 per cent of properties along this corridor.

Once further community consultation, environmental assessments, technical studies, and survey works have occurred we will provide more information to the community and stakeholders about the proposed design for this corridor.

What will happen to parts of the Great Western Highway that are bypassed?

Where the existing highway is not upgraded as part of the program it would become a local access road.

Are routes between Katoomba to Lithgow likely to change between now and construction?

Further planning work is required, including detailed design and further technical studies, to fully assess and determine the preferred upgrade option between Katoomba and Mount Victoria. Route detail and options may change as this information is provided.

Further planning work is also required for the reserved corridor between Mount Victoria and Lithgow.

We will continue to consult with stakeholders and the community throughout the development of these projects.

Are these options final?

Your feedback is needed on all aspects of the program. The upgrade has many complexities and constraints and further survey work, environmental assessment and technical studies along the highway will be needed before options are finalised. Community consultation is needed at all stages of the program.

Why is the Great Western Highway being upgraded between Katoomba and Lithgow?

The NSW Government has investigated ways to cross the Blue Mountains to connect the Central West region of NSW and Sydney for many years.

The Central West is NSW's third largest regional centre and contributes 12 per cent gross regional product to the state. The region is expecting significant growth during the next 20 years with population growth of 7.6 per cent and dwellings increasing by 12 per cent.

This growth needs to be met with adequate infrastructure that services the region. The Great Western Highway is a key transport corridor that experiences traffic congestion and delays between Katoomba and Lithgow. The Great Western Highway is an east-west choke-point for freight as it's the only route to Sydney that is not two lanes in each direction. The upgrade will support the region's future population and growth in key industries including agribusiness, manufacturing, mining and tourism.

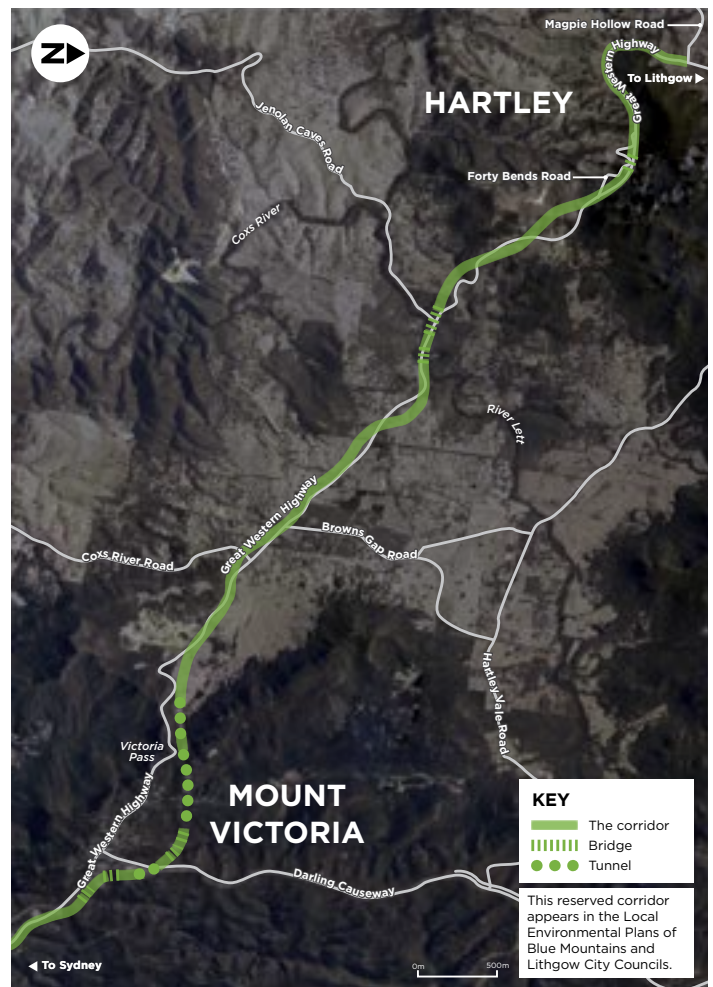
Why is the Bells Line of Road not being upgraded?

The NSW Government continually investigates potential transport options and corridors across the state and has identified many of these within the NSW Future Transport 2056 document.

Based on transport studies and investigations, the Great Western Highway is the key corridor for transporting goods and people from the Central West to Sydney. Funding has been prioritised for the Great Western Highway to plan and deliver the upgrade of the highway between Katoomba and Lithgow.

Upgrading the Bells Line of Road remains a long term option for the NSW Government.

Reserved corridor between Mount Victoria to Lithgow



Why is the road being upgraded instead of the rail line?

The NSW Government continually investigates potential transport options and corridors across the state.

The NSW Government has committed to duplicating the Great Western Highway between Katoomba to Lithgow to support regional growth and improve road safety.

However, as part of the 20-Year Economic Vision for Regional NSW document, the NSW Government is investigating fast rail to better connect the Central West communities to Sydney.

Why aren't you upgrading other sections of the Great Western Highway?

The NSW Government will continue to investigate future transport needs and investments to meet the growth within the Central West region of NSW.

The NSW Government has committed to upgrading the Great Western Highway between Katoomba to Lithgow. Further planning would need to be undertaken to upgrade the highway beyond Wallerawang, which is outside the scope of this current program.

The NSW Government has progressively upgraded further sections of the highway, with the most recent project at Kelso opened to traffic in March 2017.

In 2018, the NSW Government announced \$30 million to upgrade Kelso to Raglan. The Australian and NSW Governments have spent \$250 million to prioritise safety improvements along the Great Western Highway at Blackheath, Mount Victoria, and Forty Bends.

Why is government focused on the Great Western Highway rather than other roads?

The Great Western Highway is an important route identified as part of the Land Transport Network (Roads), which has been developed through collaboration between Commonwealth, State, and Territory governments. It details the road and rail routes connecting economic hubs.

Out of the four major freight connections into Sydney from the regions, the Great Western Highway is the key east-west route. However, it is the only of the four routes limited to 19m B-Double and 20m Performance Based Standard (PBS) vehicles. Alternate routes around the Great Dividing Range use either the Hume Highway or the Golden Highway and are up to 100km longer.

This program looks to open up access to more productive vehicles as well as improve more general access for commuters and tourists.

When will the program be completed?

Since the program's planning and scheduling is still being refined, it is too early to confirm the date or year when this program will be completed.

How much will this project cost?

The NSW Government is investing \$2.5 billion towards the program, which is sufficient for planning and early work to start and for construction of some sections.

When will construction begin and at what sections?

The Great Western Highway Upgrade Program will be delivered as a series of construction projects. Exact staging arrangements will be determined once a preferred option is decided. Early works packages for sections of the highway may also be considered. The NSW Government is committed to starting early work and construction on some sections in 2021.

How will the program be delivered?

Once a preferred option has been assessed and decided for the entire alignment, engagement will take place with the construction industry to determine how best to deliver the program.

Where is the business case for the program?

Work on the strategic business case is in early development. All major infrastructure projects like this are required to go through assurance phases and ongoing monitoring by Infrastructure NSW to ensure value for money.

What government strategies does this program align with?

The Great Western Highway Upgrade Program is aligned strategically to the following Australian and NSW Government plans, policies, and frameworks.

- NSW Future Transport 2056
- NSW Freight and Port Plan 2018-2023
- NSW Heavy Vehicle Access Policy Framework
- NSW Road Safety Plan 2021
- The Australian Infrastructure Audit 2019
- Regional NSW Services and Infrastructure Plan 2018
- NSW Tourism and Transport Plan 2018
- Central West and Orana Regional Plan 2036
- A 20 Year Economic Vision for Regional NSW.

How do I talk to the program team?

We welcome the opportunity for you to talk directly to the program team. You can meet the team at a drop-in community information session, phone or email to arrange a time to speak to the program team directly, or you could leave a comment online through the collaborative map or through the feedback form that will be responded by the team or within the community feedback report.

How can I comment on the program or talk to the project team?

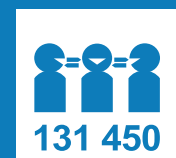
We have established a dedicated email address, phone number, collaboration map where you can pin your comments, and feedback form that you can post to the project or submit online:

 gwhd@rms.nsw.gov.au

 1800 953 777

 PO Box 2332, Orange NSW 2800

 rms.work/greatwesternhighway



If you need help understanding this information, please contact the Translating and Interpreting Service on 131 450 and ask them to call us on 1800 953 777.

Information sessions

We are presenting the Great Western Highway Upgrade Program for your feedback. You can comment online, contact the team, or attend an information session. No formal presentation will be given, so please feel free to drop in at any time.

- **Katoomba Street entrance (outside) to Katoomba Village Shopping Centre, 79 Katoomba Street Katoomba**
Tuesday 26 November 2019 – 11am to 2pm
- **Katoomba-Leura Community Centre, 81–83 Katoomba Street Katoomba**
Tuesday 26 November and 3 December 2019 – 5pm to 7pm
- **Hydro Majestic (Delmont Room 2) Great Western Highway Medlow Bath**
Monday 9 December – 5pm to 7pm
- **Blackheath Area Neighbourhood Centre (Bates Hall), corner Gardiner Crescent and Great Western Highway Blackheath**
Wednesday 27 November and 4 December 2019 – 5pm to 7pm
- **Mount Vic Flicks, 2A Harley Avenue Mount Victoria**
Tuesday 10 December 2019 – 5pm to 7pm
- **Hartley Hall, 2 Mid Hartley Road Hartley**
Wednesday 11 December – 5pm to 7pm
- **Lithgow Valley Plaza, Corner Lithgow and Bent Streets Lithgow**
Monday 25 November 2019 – 11am to 2pm
- **Hoskins Memorial Church Hall, 43 Bridge Street Lithgow**
Monday 25 November and 2 December 2019 – 5pm to 7pm

Unstaffed displays will also be available during normal business hours in the following locations.

- **Katoomba Library**
30 Park Street, Katoomba
- **Lithgow Library and Learning Centre**
157 Main Street, Lithgow
- **Oberon Library**
corner of Dart and Fleming Streets, Oberon
- **Bathurst Regional Council**
158 Russell Street, Bathurst
- **Orange City Library**
147 Byng Street, Orange

Feedback closes at 5pm on Monday 16 December 2019.

Great Western Highway Upgrade Program

Freight productivity and regional growth



Photo of Lithgow from South Bowenfels

Why does Government want to invest in road infrastructure in this region?

The Central West is the third largest regional contributor to the State's economy and will grow to over 300,000 people in the next 20 years.

Better connecting Central West NSW to Sydney, is critical to the economic and regional development of communities along the highway and surrounding areas. This program will support growth in key industries including agribusiness, manufacturing, mining and tourism.

Will there be more heavy vehicles along the highway once it's upgraded?

We anticipate an increase in freight vehicles on the highway, especially of the safer and more reliable High Performance Vehicles and Performance Based Standards Vehicles. Further freight and transport studies need to be done to determine this.

What size vehicles will be able to use an upgraded Great Western Highway?

The highway is being designed to carry the safest and most productive heavy vehicles, including B-doubles up to 25 metres and Performance Based Standards Vehicles up to 30 metres. This is consistent with the NSW Freight and Ports Plan and the NSW Heavy Vehicle Access Policy Framework

Why is government focusing on the Great Western Highway rather than other roads?

The Great Western Highway is an important route identified as part of the Land Transport Network (Roads), which has been developed through collaboration between Commonwealth, State, and Territory governments. It details the road and rail routes connecting economic hubs.

Out of the four major freight connections into Sydney from the regions, the Great Western Highway is the key east-west route. However, it is the only of the four routes limited to 19m B-Double and 20m Performance Based Standard (PBS) vehicles. Alternate routes around the Great Dividing Range use either the Hume Highway or the Golden Highway and are up to 100km longer.

This program looks to open up access to more productive vehicles as well as improve more general access for commuters and tourists.

What are the benefits to the freight industry from the Great Western Highway Upgrade Program?

Some of the benefits of the upgrade program include improving access, safety and efficiency. Upgrading the corridor will also reduce congestion. The proposal to bypass villages will further improve road safety by reducing the interaction between pedestrians and heavy vehicles. Reducing the steepness of the highway will also increase reliability of travel time by allowing freight vehicles to travel at a more consistent speed limit. A duplicated highway will mean High Performance Vehicles and Performance Based Standard Vehicles, that are safer and more reliable, will be able to use the road.

Why can't freight use the rail line?

Around two-thirds of freight in NSW is carried on the road network; this includes refrigerated goods, livestock, commercial and retail goods. Much of the freight currently on the road network requires direct access to freight hubs, such as retail precincts or light industrial areas or home deliveries. Freight transporting bulk goods such as export container, steel, grains, and coal will continue to rely on the rail line.

Why can't more passengers use the rail line?

The Blue Mountains line is a shared rail corridor used by passenger and freight services. Both freight and passenger services are driven by demand and timetables are developed to move both freight and passenger services across the broader rail network efficiently. The network shares the line with passenger services and freight services, while needing to consider other parts of the network further away.

Instead of upgrading the highway, why can't the rail line be upgraded to allow more freight and passengers?

The rail corridor is already constrained due to the alignment of the Great Western Highway, the Blue Mountains National Park, and the topography. The rail line is being upgraded in sections to allow for wider trains that currently use the Sydney Trains network to use tunnels within the Blue Mountains.

The rail line is already providing a reliable service for Blue Mountains commuters; however, the highway will remain a vital link for the Central West and the Blue Mountains. The NSW Government has also committed to investigate improvements to the rail corridor for commuters through the Faster Rail strategy.

What government strategies does this program align with?

The Great Western Highway Upgrade Program is aligned strategically to the following Australian and NSW Government plans, policies, and frameworks.

- NSW Future Transport 2056
- NSW Freight and Port Plan 2018-2023
- NSW Heavy Vehicle Access Policy Framework
- NSW Road Safety Plan 2021
- The Australian Infrastructure Audit 2019
- Regional NSW Services and Infrastructure Plan 2018
- NSW Tourism and Transport Plan 2018
- Central West and Orana Regional Plan 2036
- A 20 Year Economic Vision for Regional NSW.

The Great Western Highway Upgrade Program responds to government's commitment to invest in regional NSW, and recognises the strategic need to invest in and grow the Central West.



Base of Victoria Pass

Where can I find more information?

Contact the project team:



1800 953 777



gwhd@rms.nsw.gov.au

More information is also available at:



rms.work/greatwesternhighway



If you need help understanding this information, please contact the Translating and Interpreting Service on 131 450 and ask them to call us on 1800 953 777.

Appendix D - Media releases

Blackheath community invited to meeting to learn more about the Great Western Highway upgrade

3 December 2019

A public meeting has been scheduled to provide the community with information about the proposed Great Western Highway upgrade between Katoomba and Lithgow, and how route options will be developed through Blackheath.

Transport for NSW Western Director Alistair Lunn said it is great to see the community actively involved in the project and providing feedback on potential route options to help co-design an upgraded highway.

"We are still in the very early stages of investigating options through Blackheath and community feedback is critically important in shaping the final plans for the upgrade," Mr Lunn said.

"Since community consultation started last month, feedback has included issues raised about potential environmental impacts, potential impacts to properties along the proposed route, and investigations into upgrades to alternative routes and transport options through the mountains. Feedback is invited until Monday 16 December."

Mr Lunn said to ensure the community of Blackheath understands the plans proposed for investigating options through Blackheath, Transport for NSW will host a public meeting in Blackheath - in addition to the planned drop-in sessions - where the largest number of submissions has been received.

"The session has been planned with a later start to ensure the best attendance by interested community members," Mr Lunn said.

The public meeting will be held at Phillips Hall on Gardiner Crescent in Blackheath on Tuesday 10 December from 6pm, with doors to open at 5pm.

Transport for NSW Director Western Region Alistair Lunn will provide the community with all of the available information about the current stage of the planning process and what the next steps will be for public consultation with the community to develop route options through Blackheath.

"We will ensure all feedback submitted by community members or anyone interested in the project is carefully considered and the community's voice is actively incorporated in to the project."

A community information session will also be held at Blackheath Area Neighbourhood Centre tomorrow, 4 December, from 5pm to 7pm. This is a drop-in session and the community is invited to attend at any point to speak with project team members.

For more information and to have your say visit the [Great Western Highway upgrade from Katoomba to Lithgow](#) website.

Have your say on Great Western Highway

7 November 2019

The community will help shape plans for the \$2.5 billion duplication of the Great Western Highway between Katoomba and Lithgow, which will deliver a safer, faster route over the Blue Mountains.

Minister for Regional Transport and Roads Paul Toole said the upgrade would reduce travel times and congestion along the 34 kilometre route.

"As someone who drives the Great Western Highway each week, I know how much of a game-changer this project will be for safety and congestion, especially in communities like Medlow Bath, Blackheath and Mount Victoria," Mr Toole said.

"It will deliver a safer, faster route over the mountains and dramatically improve connectivity with the Central West."

Mr Toole said the Great Western Highway was the last main corridor out of Sydney to be upgraded and once complete would see dual carriageway in both directions for almost 100 kilometres.

"We took a promise to the election to build this because we know it is crucial for better connections to the Central West and improving productivity," Mr Toole said.

"We've always said it will be a complex project, which is why we're involving the community in the design from day one."

Mr Toole said a proposed corridor between Mount Victoria and Forty Bends had been reserved in 2013, and was part of both Blue Mountains City Council and Lithgow City Council's Local Environment Plans.

"We recognise the challenges of this. We need to work around steep topography, the rail line, minimise impacts on the environment and preserve the heritage and character of these communities. That's why we want the community's feedback."

The project will not impact on the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area, and impacts on the Blue Mountains National Park will be avoided or minimised where possible.

Mr Toole said the project was in the early stages of planning and design, with construction expected to commence in 2021 and to be completed in 2028.

Community consultation will take place from Thursday, 7 November and will close at 5pm on Monday, 16 December. It will include nine community information sessions at Katoomba, Medlow Bath, Blackheath, Hartley Valley, Mount Victoria and Lithgow.

Key Facts

- In 2013, a corridor for the upgrade of the Great Western Highway between Mount Victoria and Forty Bends was reserved in both the Blue Mountains City Council and Lithgow City Council Local Environment Plans (LEPs).
- The Strategic Corridor Study Area through Blackheath has been identified as a section with considerable environmental, local heritage and engineering challenges. Options are still to be decided for Blackheath and require further community consultation, environmental assessments, and technical studies.
- The project will be delivered in phases, with the first section anticipated to see shovels in the ground in 2021, subject to planning approvals.
- Once the Katoomba to Lithgow upgrade is complete, almost 100km of the Great Western Highway would be two lanes in each direction between Emu Plains and Wallerawang.

Recent Investments in the Great Western Highway

- Since 2012, the Australian and NSW Governments have invested \$250 million in priority safety upgrades along the Great Western Highway at Blackheath, Mount Victoria and Forty Bends.
- In 2017, \$104 million of works was completed on the Great Western Highway at Kelso.
- In 2018, the NSW Government announced a further \$30 million to upgrade the Great Western Highway from Kelso to Raglan.

Appendix E - Social media

 **NSW Roads** added an event.
2 December 2019 · 🌐



WED, 11 DEC 2019

Info Session: Hartley

Hartley Hall, 2 Midley Road, Hartley

📅 Other

★ Interested

 **NSW Roads** added an event.
4 December 2019 · 🌐



TUE, 10 DEC 2019

Blackheath Community Meeting

Blackheath Area Neighbourhood Centre · Blackheath,...

📅 Other · 110 people

★ Interested

👍 9

1 comment

 **NSW Roads** added an event.
2 December 2019 · 🌐



MON, 9 DEC 2019

Evening Info Session: Medlow Bath

Hydro Majestic Hotel · Medlow Bath, NSW

📅 Other

★ Interested

 **NSW Roads** added an event.
2 December 2019 · 🌐



TUE, 10 DEC 2019

Evening info session: Mount Victoria

Mount Vic Flicks · Mount Victoria, NSW

📅 Other

★ Interested

👍 4

2 comments

 **NSW Roads** added an event.
2 December 2019 · 🌐



TUE, 3 DEC 2019

Evening Info Session: Katoomba

Katoomba Leura Community Centre · Katoomba, NSW

📅 Other

★ Interested

 **NSW Roads** added an event.
2 December 2019 · 🌐



MON, 2 DEC 2019

Info Session: Lithgow

Lithgow Uniting Church Parish - Hoskins Memorial,...

📅 Other

★ Interested

👍 8



20.178
ISBN: 978-1-922338-74-7