

Great Western Highway Upgrade Program



Australian Government

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NSW
GOVERNMENT



Coxs River Road will be the first section of the Little Hartley to Lithgow upgrade to be constructed (visualisation indicative only, final layout to be determined through detailed design)

Together, the Australian and NSW Governments have committed more than \$2.5 billion towards the East and West sections of the Great Western Highway Upgrade, between Katoomba and Blackheath, and between Little Hartley and Lithgow, respectively.

The Katoomba to Lithgow duplication will provide major economic and safety benefits. It will improve the connection between Central West NSW and Sydney, reduce congestion, improve resilience and freight productivity, and provide a safer and more reliable journey for thousands of residents, commuters, tourists and freight operators who travel in, around and through the Blue Mountains.

Transport for NSW (Transport) will upgrade around 14 kilometres of the Great Western Highway between Little Hartley and Lithgow to a safer, four-lane divided carriageway.

The Little Hartley to Lithgow upgrade has now been approved with the exception of land currently reserved in the National Parks Estate. Transport will approve this section if a National Park revocation Bill passes NSW Parliament.

The project will be managed by Transport and jointly funded by the Australian and NSW Governments.

A construction contract for the initial stage of works at Coxs River Road is expected to be awarded in late 2022.

The Little Hartley to Lithgow (West Section) Review of Environmental Factors (REF) Submissions Report and Consultation Report are available on the project website at nswroads.work/gwhwestconsult

Exhibition of the REF

The Little Hartley to Lithgow (West Section) REF and concept design was publicly displayed and feedback was sought from the community from 23 November 2021 to 16 January 2022.

The REF and concept design consultation was widely promoted within the Blue Mountains, the Central West and Western Sydney.

Six public consultation sessions were held between 23 November and 11 December 2021. These were a mixture of online and COVIDSafe face-to-face sessions.

Phone consultations were offered for anyone unable to engage either online or in person.

We received 203 formal submissions from 188 members of the community and stakeholders over the display period.

Issues raised in submissions included:

- rest areas
- connectivity to and across the highway
- speed limits
- road safety
- visual impacts
- Aboriginal heritage
- non-Aboriginal heritage
- potential impact on the River Lett platypus population
- construction noise and vibration impacts.

Community feedback provides valuable input to help Transport create a better upgrade for everyone. We are using the knowledge gained to improve the design, minimise impacts of the project and create added benefits for the community.

The Submissions Report and Consultation Report

Submissions received from the community and stakeholders during the REF display have been categorised and formally responded to in the Little Hartley to Lithgow (West Section) Submissions Report.

We have also prepared a Consultation Report summarising the community engagement activities carried out during the display period.

If you provided an email or a postal address with your submission, you will receive a letter advising you of your submission number and referring you to the page(s) in the Submissions Report which contain a response to your submission.

Both reports are available online at nswroads.work/gwhwestconsult

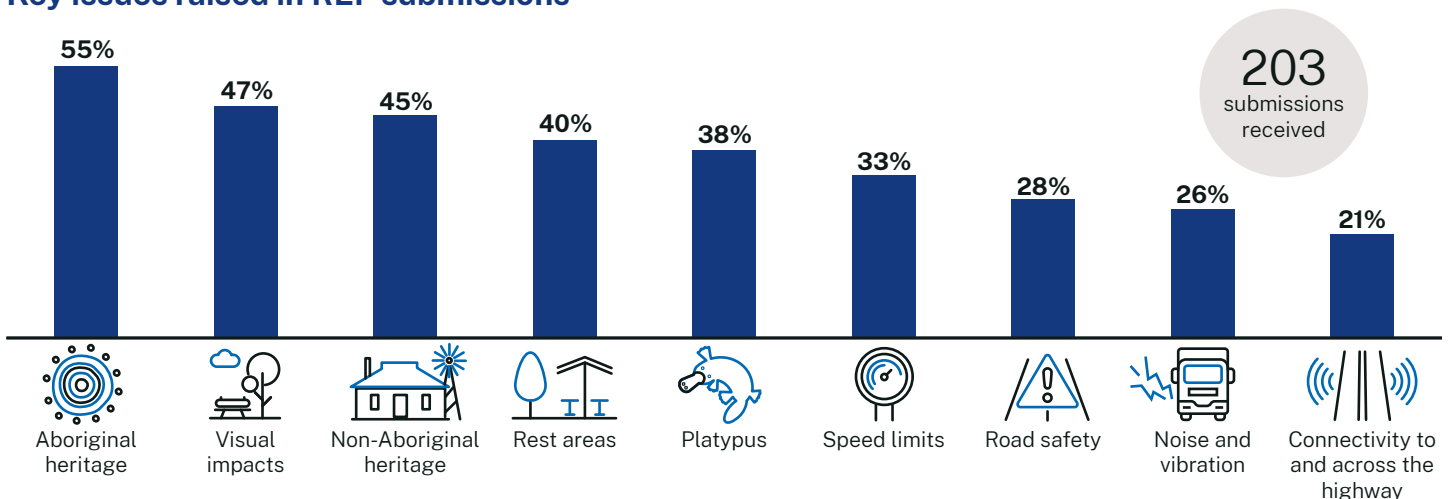
Please contact the project team if you would like a hard copy of either report posted to you in the mail.



203

formal submissions from 188 members of the community and stakeholders

Key issues raised in REF submissions



Hartley Valley rest areas

Transport's first priority for our road projects is the safety of all road users. It is vital to make sure that drivers of heavy vehicles have appropriate opportunities to rest so that they can avoid driver fatigue.

We understand that the local community would prefer not to see rest areas in the Hartley Valley, however they are a crucial road safety measure, and must remain in the upgrade design.

We looked at several potential sites for the rest areas. These sites in the Hartley Valley were chosen due to their distance from other heavy vehicle rest areas, the availability of suitable land and the lack of locations in the built-up area of the Blue Mountains.

While we are not moving the rest areas for these reasons, we appreciate the community's concerns and we are continuing to look at improvements to the design to reduce the visual and noise impacts. We have also added facilities for light and recreational vehicles so the rest areas can benefit all road users.

The new design has been set lower into the landscape and we are developing the urban design further to include:

- Picnic table shelters, lawns and native tree plantings to provide a park-like atmosphere
- Paths linking the parking areas with the picnic shelters and toilet block

- Tree planting in the carpark to provide shade for motorists
- Plantings to mark the entry to the rest area
- Information boards to showcase the unique heritage of the Hartley Valley.

Emergency services have provided feedback around using the rest areas as staging areas during national disasters and other emergency incident management.

We will continue to explore additional ways the rest areas can benefit the local community.

Road safety and speed limits

Transport appreciates that the Little Hartley to Lithgow upgrade will change the way that the local community will interact with the highway.

We have aimed to separate through traffic from local traffic as much as possible in the design of the upgrade.

By incorporating parts of the existing highway as local service roads, we have safely designed a highway with a speed limit of 100km/hr for through traffic and heavy vehicles, largely separated from local traffic.

Local traffic will be able to safely access the service roads where the speed limit will be 60km/hr, get on and off the highway more safely by using acceleration and deceleration lanes at upgraded intersections, or avoid the highway for much of its length.



Artist's representation of Old Bathurst Road, Hartley Historic Village, next to the Hartley Courthouse building, looking north-east (indicative only, final layout to be determined through detailed design)

Landscape character and visual impacts

We have listened to the community's concerns about landscape character and visual impacts of the upgrade.

We are committed to minimising these impacts by developing an urban design that fits with the existing high visual qualities, ecology and character of the Hartley Valley and its setting.

In our detailed design we will consider opportunities to reduce the construction footprint, maximise vegetation and planting opportunities, reduce the bulk of structures, integrate bridges and retaining walls into their surroundings, and blend cuttings and embankments into the surrounding terrain.

We will collect seeds from the local area to propagate and use in plantings. We will consider planting more mature sized shrubs and trees where greater visual impacts have been identified.

We will work closely with Lithgow City Council and the community on active transport links and cultural interpretation planning to improve the amenity of the towns and villages along the highway and provide opportunities to celebrate the unique history of the area.



Platypus and platypus burrow observed at the River Lett during additional biodiversity studies



Aboriginal cultural heritage

Transport takes its responsibility to protect Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultural heritage very seriously.

We have been working with the local Aboriginal community and specialist archaeologists to identify and protect Aboriginal cultural heritage. This has included extensive Aboriginal cultural heritage investigations along the entire proposed Great Western Highway Upgrade Program corridor, following Transport's Procedure for Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Consultation and Investigation (PACHCI).

We have also undertaken targeted consultation as part of the Little Hartley to Lithgow REF display. We acknowledge the high cultural significance of Aboriginal sites in the project area.

We will continue to consult with, and will be led by, local knowledge holders in the Aboriginal community to help develop measures to avoid impacts to Aboriginal cultural heritage sites and items where possible, or mitigate impacts if we cannot avoid them. This would include protection and salvage measures, and curation of any artefacts.

We are also working with Aboriginal design agency Balarinji to identify appropriate Aboriginal history to celebrate in the urban design and cultural interpretation sites being delivered as part of the upgrade.

Protecting the platypus

We would like to thank the community members who shared the recent sightings of platypus in the River Lett and helped our project team to find the platypus population.

This input allowed our ecologists to carry out targeted surveys and habitat assessments and to observe platypus in the river.

Transport greatly values the biodiversity of the Hartley Valley and our ecologists have now developed specific measures to minimise impacts to the River Lett platypus population.

Before construction starts, we will carry out further investigations to identify burrows and will establish no-go zones around them. We will minimise work along the banks of the river during both the platypus breeding season and their active hours of 6pm to 5am.

The planned drainage design and water quality measures for the project will also protect platypus habitat. Water quality in the River Lett will improve compared to existing conditions when sedimentation basins are in place.

You can read more about how we will manage impacts to the platypus and the investigations we carried out in the biodiversity addendum report attached to the Submissions Report.

Active transport gaining pace

Transport wants to make it easier for people to choose active transport options – both to allow us all to live more healthy lifestyles, and to increase recreation and tourism opportunities.

The upgrade will improve active transport connections in the Hartley Valley, with 2.5m sealed shoulders on the highway between Little Hartley and Lithgow and two-metre sealed shoulders on three local service roads.

The REF also proposed development of a shared path for pedestrians and cyclists. This prompted valuable feedback around walking and cycling connections to promote ‘slow tourism’ in the beautiful Hartley Valley.

The project team will continue to engage with Lithgow City Council to identify opportunities to build upon their existing active transport strategies and improve the connections between different modes of transport.

We look forward to consulting with the wider community on active transport links as we progress the detailed design phase of the Little Hartley to Lithgow project.



Archaeological pit from Aboriginal cultural heritage investigations

Cultural interpretation to celebrate place

To celebrate the rich Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal heritage in the Hartley Valley, we are consulting with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal stakeholders who know the history of the area to understand cultural heritage themes and discover the stories they would like shared.

We will then collaborate more widely to explore how themes and stories might be represented in a way that fits with the character of the places along the highway.

The cultural interpretation planning will feed into our wider strategic urban design framework, to ensure consistency of design treatments between Katoomba and Lithgow.



Hartley Historic Village

Great Western Highway Upgrade Program

Next steps

The insights and feedback provided during the REF display period and through our active transport and cultural interpretation consultation will all be used to improve the final design of the Little Hartley to Lithgow upgrade.

A construction contract for the initial stage of works at Coxs River Road is expected to be awarded in late 2022.

An early works program will involve relocation of utility services at Coxs River Road prior to construction commencing.

We will continue to update you as the project progresses in the coming months. We encourage you to reach out to the project team with any questions you may have.

We are committed to working with and for the community to deliver the best upgrade possible between Little Hartley and Lithgow.

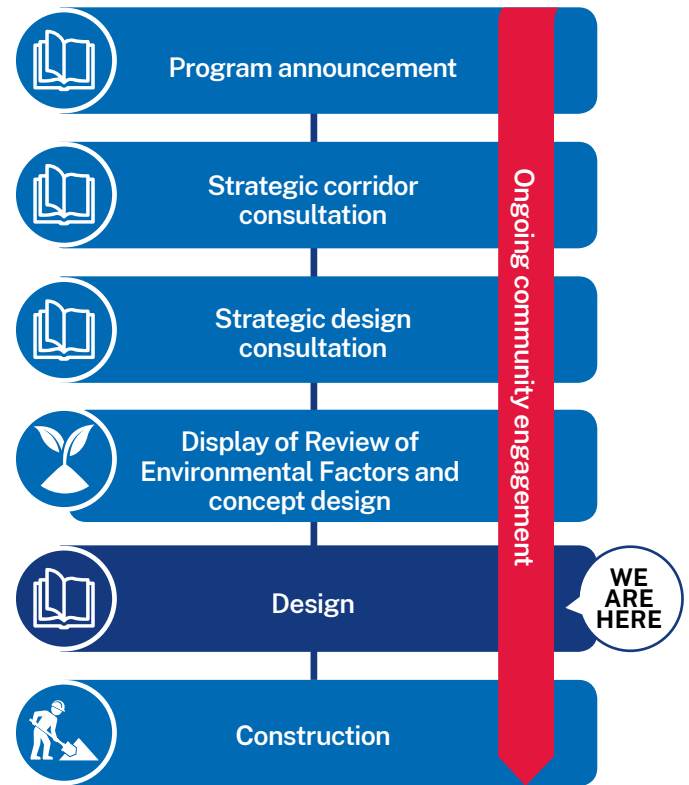


Transport is committed to minimising impacts of the Little Hartley to Lithgow upgrade

June 2022
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Program update




Contact us

Sign up for our eNewsletter online at nswroads.work/gwhd and you'll never miss a project update.

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