



Australian Government

**BUILDING OUR FUTURE**



Transport for NSW

# Great Western Highway Upgrade Program

Little Hartley to Lithgow (West Section)

Review of Environmental Factors – Frequently Asked Questions

November 2021

## How will the upgrade improve road safety?

The proposed Little Hartley to Lithgow upgrade would use modern design standards to improve safety by separating carriageways, reducing gradients and easing curves as much as possible. Two lanes in either direction will provide opportunities to overtake safely and allow us to install median treatments, which help prevent head on collisions. A third lane on River Lett Hill will provide opportunities to overtake slower vehicles safely.

Intersections with local roads will be upgraded to include deceleration and acceleration lanes for safer entry and exit from the highway. Additional local access and service roads will be provided, reducing the need for local traffic to travel along the highway.

Crash reduction analysis indicates the upgrade would reduce the number of crashes on the Great Western Highway by 57 per cent within the project length.

## Will the upgrade improve access for emergency services?

Providing a more reliable connection for emergency services has been a key consideration as we plan for the upgrade. Upgraded intersections will provide safer and faster access to the highway. Dual carriageways with median crossovers will allow us to set up contraflow provisions when lanes are blocked as a result of traffic incidents. This will give emergency vehicles better access to attend highway incidents and to move around congestion.

## How will the upgrade promote travel time savings?

The performance of the Great Western Highway is expected to deteriorate and approach operational capacity within the next fifteen years. Drivers would face congestion along the highway and delays at intersections, with few opportunities to overtake slower vehicles.

Providing a four lane divided carriageway between Little Hartley and Lithgow, and an extra westbound lane on River Lett Hill would increase the capacity of the highway, providing safe opportunities to pass slower vehicles. Delays at intersections and junctions would be reduced by the provision of deceleration and acceleration lanes, which separate turning vehicles from the flow of traffic

## How did you get to the current design for the upgrade?

The original concept design for Mount Victoria to Lithgow was developed with extensive community consultation and feedback between 2008 and 2013. Consultation began again in 2019, and the design has been refined as a result of consultation and design workshops over the course of 2020/21.

We welcome community feedback on how the design can be further developed and improved to deliver the best upgrade possible between Little Hartley and Lithgow.

## **What is going to happen to the recent works at Forty Bends?**

We were pleased to be able to deliver safety upgrades through the Hartley Valley as part of the jointly funded \$250 million Great Western Highway Safety upgrade between Katoomba and Lithgow, which have been delivering safety benefits to the residents of the valley since they were finished in 2017.

The recent Forty Bends work will be retained. We will build upon these works by providing an additional westbound lane in the existing verge and an additional eastbound lane in the existing median, allowing four lanes from Forty Bends to Lithgow.

## **Is my property going to be impacted by acquisition?**

We have been talking to affected owners about impacts to their property and the acquisition process. If the project team has not been in contact with you, the project does not have a direct boundary impact on your property.

## **Why do you need a road bridge at Jenolan Caves Road intersection?**

The bridge at Jenolan Caves Road will reduce the length of the steeper grade on River Lett Hill. This will reduce the amount of climbing vehicles will have to do and, as a result, reduce vehicle emissions. It will also allow traffic to join and leave the Great Western Highway via safer on and off ramps. We will use urban design to minimise the visual impacts of the bridge as much as possible.

## **What would the speed limit be?**

The posted speed limit would be 100 km/hr from Little Hartley to Forty Bends, 90 km/hr from Forty Bends to McKanes Falls Road, and 80 km/hr from McKanes Falls Road to Lithgow.

In contrast to the more heavily populated townships in the Blue Mountains, which include developed urban centres, traffic lights and school zones, the more rural environment of the Hartley Valley allows us to safely design a road with a speed limit of up to 100km/hour.

## **How can drivers safely access the highway with a higher speed limit?**

The upgrade is being designed to provide controlled access to the highway. The busiest intersections will be grade separated (using underpasses and overpasses) allowing vehicles to merge into traffic rather than join the highway at a signalised intersection. Some local roads will no longer have direct access to the highway, but will be connected by service roads to the improved intersections. We are interested in your feedback on how to make these intersections safer for local road users.

## **Why are there rest areas in the concept design?**

The Great Western Highway Upgrade Program aims to increase safety for all road users. This includes making sure that drivers of heavy vehicles have appropriate opportunities to rest so that they can avoid driver fatigue. The proposed rest areas would also cater for light and recreational vehicles, with the addition of facilities like picnic tables, toilets and information boards to showcase the local area.

We have listened to community concerns about the rest areas and the new design has been set lower into the landscape to reduce visual impact, with urban design and landscaping to be used to further blend the rest areas into their surroundings.

## **How will residents and landowners access local roads and properties?**

Where the alignment of the proposed upgrade departs from the existing highway, the existing road would be kept as a service road for the local community and to provide property access. Service roads will connect to upgraded intersections, allowing residents to move around the valley.

## **How will the project minimise visual impacts in the Valley?**

We recognise that the Hartley Valley has unique natural and cultural scenic qualities. As part of the design process we have carried out an extensive assessment of the potential impacts of the upgrade on the character of the landscape and visual amenity.

The proposal uses landscape and urban design to minimise visual impacts and to allow the upgrade to respond to the existing landscape, vegetation and heritage features. We welcome further suggestions to help us integrate the design into its surroundings and minimise impacts on heritage and cultural values.

## **What impact will the upgrade have on Hartley Historic Village?**

We are aware of the significance of the Hartley Historic Village, and know how important it is to the community to protect it and its heritage buildings. The upgrade proposes use of 2.5 hectares of national park land at Hartley Historic Site to keep the upgraded highway away from the village and avoid impacts on heritage buildings. We are working closely with National Parks and Wildlife Services on this revocation process.

## **How will you protect Aboriginal cultural heritage?**

We have been working with the local Aboriginal community to identify and protect Aboriginal cultural heritage in the proposal area. 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). Procedure for Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Consultation and Investigation (PACHCI).

An Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment Report (ACHAR) has been prepared which assesses Aboriginal cultural values potentially impacted by the project. We are consulting with, and will be led by, registered Aboriginal parties 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 will include protection and salvage measures.

## **How will you reduce impacts on the natural environment?**

Transport is committed to minimising impacts to the natural environment. We have carried out extensive biodiversity studies along the upgrade corridor, and our investigations are continuing to make sure we fully understand the flora and fauna in the area.

The upgrade will use Transport-owned land and as much of the existing road corridor as possible, to minimise the clearing of native vegetation and the impacts on habitat. A Flora and Fauna Management Plan will be prepared and the detailed design for the road will minimise native vegetation and habitat removal, particularly around habitat for the Purple Copper Butterfly. The landscape design will include using both native and exotic species to vegetate disturbed areas in a way that compliments the character of the local environment.

## **What provisions will be made for fauna/wildlife crossings?**

We will build three new fauna underpasses beneath the highway to help local fauna move safely across the road corridor, and provide fauna exclusion fencing that will help lead fauna to the new underpasses.

We will extend the two existing large culverts at Boxes Creek and Butlers Creek to include fauna-friendly design elements to encourage fauna crossing. The existing combined drainage culvert and fauna underpass at Whites Creek will remain, along with the existing three fauna rope bridges.

## **Will pedestrians and cyclists benefit from the upgrade?**

We want to make sure that all road users benefit from the upgrade. There are currently narrow shoulders and a lack of dedicated cycle paths along the highway between Little Hartley and Lithgow. The proposal would improve conditions for on-road cyclists by providing a 2.5 metre sealed shoulder on both sides of the highway and a two metre sealed shoulder on Coxs River Road and several of the service roads. The realignment around Little Hartley will separate pedestrians from highway traffic.

We are also developing an active transport strategy to promote better pedestrian and cycling connections and we invite community feedback on how you think we could make walking and cycling in the valley easier for everyone.

## How will future subdivisions access the highway?

We realise that the Hartley Valley is a growing area undergoing a lot of subdivision and development, and we have considered this in the design. The upgrade is being designed to provide controlled access to the highway. This means that any new sub-divisions will need to connect to the highway via existing local roads and the new service roads. These connect to the upgraded intersections which include grade separation and on and off ramps to safely access the highway.

## Is the Newnes Plateau route an option?

Following community suggestions, the Newnes Plateau route was investigated in the development of the Mount Victoria to Lithgow concept design. This route cannot be used as it would require land needed by the Department of Defence at Marangaroo.

## Why aren't you fixing the pinchpoint at Blackheath first?

The Blackheath to Little Hartley section of the Great Western Highway upgrade design is now progressing with tunnel investigations. These include geotechnical, hydrogeological and biodiversity investigations, air quality monitoring, traffic and noise studies, Aboriginal and cultural heritage studies, and land surveys. Environmental assessment of the Blackheath to Little Hartley section is due to be completed late in 2022.

Environmental assessment and designs for the surface road upgrade between Little Hartley and Lithgow are much further advanced and we can start delivering benefits to these road users while we continue to investigate and build the tunnel bypass of Blackheath. While we progress tunnelling plans, options for improving mobility at Blackheath will also be investigated and consulted on with the community.

## Contact us

Sign up for our eNewsletter online at [nswroads.work/gwhd](https://nswroads.work/gwhd) and you'll never miss a project update.



[nswroads.work/gwhd](https://nswroads.work/gwhd)



[gwhd@transport.nsw.gov.au](mailto:gwhd@transport.nsw.gov.au)



1800 953 777



Great Western Highway Upgrade Program  
PO Box 334, Parkes NSW 2870



131 450

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.

TfNSW 21.293

**Privacy Transport for NSW ("TfNSW")** is subject to the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 ("PPIP Act") which requires that we comply with the Information Privacy Principles set out in the PPIP Act. All information in correspondence is collected for the sole purpose of assisting in the delivery of 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 TfNSW will only disclose your personal information, without your consent, if authorised by the law. Your personal information will be held by TfNSW at 51-55 Currajong Street Parkes NSW 2870. You have the right to access and correct the information if you believe that it is incorrect.