

# Summerland Way – Additional Crossing of the Clarence River at Grafton

## Route Selection

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### COMMUNITY FOCUS GROUP MEETING

Tuesday 14 October 2003

5.00pm – 7.00pm

Grafton Community Centre, Duke Street Grafton

## Minutes

### Attendees:

Peter Black	RTA Project Manager
Peter Collins	RTA Regional Manager
Sonia Williamson	RTA Project Team
Robert Davis	RTA Project Team
Simone Garwood	RTA Project Team
Liz Warren	RTA Project Team
Donna Martin	RTA Project Team
Brian Kerwick	RTA Project Team
Vicki St Lawrence	Community Participation Coordinator
Cr Shirley Adams	Grafton City Council
Cr Max Murray	Grafton City Council
Cr Neil Payne	Copmanhurst Shire Council
Cr Cecil Hyde	Pristine Waters Council
Ron Bell	Grafton Chamber of Commerce
Robert Blanchard	Road Transport Sector
Paul Covington	Kent Street Action Committee
Frank Falkenstein	Clarence Environment Centre Inc
Scott Flynn	Susan & Elizabeth Islands Trust
Greg Hayes	Grafton Shopping World
Kel Kearns	South Grafton Traders Association
Laurie Marchant	South Grafton Residents Progress Association Inc
Peter Morgan	National Parks Association
Bill Noonan	Clarence Valley Conservation Coalition Inc
Gordon Poynter	Clarenza Community
Heather Roland	Riverside, Bent and Through St Precinct
Brian Scrivener	Waterview Community
Amanda Steiner	Fitzroy St Precinct
Karen Thompson	Greaves St Precinct
Mary Watson	Schools
Chris Wheelahan	McHugh Precinct
Don McLeod	Clarence River Yacht Club

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## Route Selection

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### 1.0 Introduction and Purpose of meeting

- The purpose of the 1<sup>st</sup> CFG is to provide initial information about how the project will be conducted; to clarify the role of CFG members; and provide an opportunity for members to flag issues at this early stage
- A Community Participation Plan sets out the commitment by the RTA to involve the community and the methods used to achieve this. A copy was provided to each member prior to the meeting.
- Monitoring of Community Participation will occur throughout the Project and adjustments will be made to the CPP if required. An evaluation sheet relating to the CFG was provided at the meeting.

### 2.0 Role and Commitment of CFG members

- CFG members were introduced to the project process.
- Contact list was distributed. All CFG members agreed to have contact details released to the public.
- Purpose of the CFG members is to collect and share information between the community and the RTA project team.
- To ensure each participant is able to put their concerns & issues to the group. Members were requested to observe basic rules of allowing each to have the opportunity to participate.
- Report concerns & issues to the RTA via phone, email or submissions.

### 3.0 Project Information

#### ➤ RTA's Approach

Regional Manager Peter Collins presented the RTA's approach to the project

- Why are we looking at an additional crossing of the Clarence River?
  - Community concern about delay, emergency access, development of Grafton & Clarence Valley.
  - Another crossing has been discussed since the 1960's.
  - Existing bridge has served us well.
  - Time is right to determine the best site for a crossing because of
    - o increasing delays
    - o level of service of the existing bridge
    - o expansion of settlement either side of the Clarence River
  - NSW State Government is committed to build the crossing.

# Summerland Way – Additional Crossing of the Clarence River at Grafton

## Route Selection

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- How do we go about this?
  - Detailed process of community consultation.
  - Marriage of technical feasibility with community desires and this will require compromises.
  - First stage of the project is to select a preferred route.
- Expectations
  - CFG members will have an opinion but also need to listen to others.
  - CFG members are not the spokesperson for the project. The RTA will release information to the community at various stages in the project.

### ➤ **Background**

The Feasibility Study was completed in March 2003. The area of investigation was from Seelands to Maclean. The conclusion was that a location in the Grafton area between Susan Island and Elizabeth Island was the most feasible location. Some of the facts from the feasibility study were;

24,400 vehicles per day cross the Grafton bridge (annual average daily traffic)

Heavy vehicles are 5% of total volume

63% of vehicles are single occupants

8:15 to 9:00 am morning peak/3:30 to 5:15 pm peak in 2001 – peaking at 1,400 vph (one lane)

8:15 to 9:00 am morning peak/3:30 to 5:15 pm peak in 2011 – 1,400 vph for the 2.5 hours

Susan Island forms key habitat for the threatened Grey-headed Flying Fox.

Susan Island Nature Reserve currently protects a small remnant of the subtropical rainforest

Susan Island is a very significant site for the local Aboriginal people

### ➤ **Project Purpose**

Provide an additional crossing of the Clarence River in order to improve road safety and reduce traffic delays

# Summerland Way – Additional Crossing of the Clarence River at Grafton

## Route Selection

---

### ➤ **Broad Project Objectives**

Significantly improve traffic flows

Reduce road accidents and injuries

Be socially acceptable to the local community

Support economic development

Consider the environment

Value for money

Involve the community

### ➤ **Project Schedule & Activities**

The project is at the Development Phase. This will involve investigating options and selecting a preferred option. Activities that are to be undertaken in the coming months are;

- Geotechnical Investigations – to determine the geology of the study area
- Flooding – What would be the flooding impacts on an additional crossing
- Ecology – Assessment of animal and birdlife in the study area
- Noise – Noise monitors have been placed on the northern and southern approach for seven days to determine the existing road traffic noise
- Traffic – Traffic counts and an origin and destination survey had been undertaken in August. Preliminary results indicate that approximately 5% of the total traffic crossing the bridge were through vehicles. 3% of through vehicles were heavy vehicles.
- Traffic counts were undertaken in Oliver Street near the Grafton High School. On the highest day during the weekly counting period, a Wednesday, 1,860 vehicles were counted in the 24 hour period. This included 136 light trucks and buses and 6 heavy trucks.
- Social Impacts – to investigate the types of social impact an additional crossing would have on the community. This will include interviews with residents.
- Heritage – Identify indigenous and non-indigenous heritage areas.

# Summerland Way – Additional Crossing of the Clarence River at Grafton

## Route Selection

---

### 4.0 Discussion of Issues

- Q Will CFG members be required to give information back to the community?  
A CFG members are to gather issues and concerns from their area of interest and forward to the RTA. Also any information from the CFG meetings should be given to your community of interest. CFG members are community representatives for the area that they represent.
- Q How did the RTA determine the assumption of 1% traffic growth?  
A The 1% traffic growth was based on estimated population growth in the area. Generally population growth and traffic growth closely align.
- Q In regards to improving safety do the RTA only look at the bridge area?  
A No. The traffic analysis would also look at the road approaches, the connections to intersections and the change in traffic behaviour as a result of an additional crossing.
- Q Where do we go if there is no preferred option between the two islands?  
A The RTA will undertake the environmental impact assessment and mitigate the impacts to ensure we have a result. In the situation of a route not being selected the project may need to be reconsidered.
- Q Is the study area between the islands.  
A Yes, the study area is between the two islands and includes the Grafton and South Grafton areas.
- Q Will members be informed of results of the analysis and information?  
A Yes, project information will be made available to CFG members during the project.
- Q If there are 5 – 6 options is it up to this group to make the decision.  
A No but this group will have input to the decision making. Following the public display of options early next year a Route Evaluation Workshop will be held. This will include representation from the CFG, Government agencies and the RTA project team. It will be an intense 2 day workshop that will conclude with a recommendation to the RTA of a specific location to be further investigated. Further issues raised at this workshop would need to be determined before the formal announcement of a preferred route.
- Q RTA mentioned options to be considered between the two islands, does this mean you wouldn't use the islands.  
A The study area includes Susan and Elizabeth islands.

## Summerland Way – Additional Crossing of the Clarence River at Grafton

### Route Selection

---

Q Do you have anticipated growth of heavy vehicles?

A The current percentage of heavy vehicles is 4 to 6% of total volumes. The prediction of future volumes of heavy vehicles would continue to be within these percentages.

Q With local traffic are you talking about Clarenza area?

A The study has been based on traffic data within the study area and the surrounding areas, including the future development of Clarenza.

Q Surprised to hear the results of traffic analysis of Oliver Street as residents have complained about the heavy vehicles that use this street.

A The traffic results were taken from counters placed in Oliver Street for a 7-day period. This was done as a result of feedback from the community during the feasibility study that there was heavy vehicles using Oliver Street to access Turf Street.

Q The existing bridge was built in 1932 and type of traffic that uses it today is a concern particularly with trucks that could roll over on the bridge.

A The design of the existing bridge caters sufficiently for the loads of heavy vehicles currently using the structure.

Q Older residents will driver a longer distance to travel over a better bridge.

A Yes, a lot of older residents avoid the bridge, as they perceive it as unsafe.

Q Feasibility Study states in 2001 traffic study that 15% traffic from Cowper and 5% from Clarenza. Why wouldn't this traffic use a new bridge if it were near Elizabeth Island?

A It could be assumed that a great proportion of this traffic would use a downstream option and this will be considered in the route selection traffic analysis.

Q Is this study going to take into account the future development of Clarenza?

A Yes. The previous feasibility study and this route selection study will include future development at Clarenza. Information has been sourced from the Clarence Valley Settlement Strategy (1999).

Q Has the impact of heavy vehicles slowing down the traffic flows, kinks etc been accounted for in the traffic studies.

A Yes, in particular the extended delays resulting from traffic stopping at the kinks to allow a heavy vehicle pass.

Q Clarence Street is not identified in the Feasibility Study traffic count - Page 17

## Summerland Way – Additional Crossing of the Clarence River at Grafton

### Route Selection

---

- A No previous data was available for Clarence Street but a 7 day traffic count was undertaken in Clarence Street in August this year.
- Q In the situation of a southbound truck that allows a car to enter from Clarence Street – by the time a truck gets going again the cars are up onto the bridge.
- A Yes, and this can cause delays to occur.
- Q Page 41 of Feasibility Study under Assumptions and Impacts for each location states – Improving the kinks. How can this be done when the kinks are heritage listed?
- A This is one of the project risks that has been identified by the RTA. The removal of the kinks will be reliant on a structural assessment and close consultation with the Heritage Agencies and the railways. The bridge designer will visit the site next week to commence the design investigations. The approaches are included as an integral part of the heritage significance of the bridge
- Q Existing roundabouts don't accommodate for current traffic.
- A The existing roundabouts accommodate for current traffic and are operating below the level that queuing would occur. The queuing occurs as a result of the delays from the bridge not from the capacity of the roundabouts.
- Q Putting a new bridge next to existing will spoil the look for Grafton
- A This is an issue that the RTA will be considering and has engaged urban designers to provide input on types of structures that would compliment the existing bridge and urban landscape.
- Q Has the new bridge been considered to link up to Summerland Way.
- A The options upstream and downstream would provide a direct link to the Summerland Way. The route selection for the project will consider not only the river crossing but also the road approaches and the connections to existing major roads.
- Q There are concerns with height restrictions at the viaducts and this requires trucks to use the central lane at the viaduct to maximise the height available.
- A Yes the height restrictions are recognised by the RTA and will be one of the considerations in selection of a preferred route.
- Q Has it been looked at to have the new bridge outside the two islands?
- A Locations outside the two islands has previously been considered in the feasibility study and were determined as not being feasible. The main issue was that these locations would not attract sufficient traffic to reduce the congestion on the existing bridge.

## Summerland Way – Additional Crossing of the Clarence River at Grafton

### Route Selection

---

- Comment - Linking to Summerland Way is good but need to consider the local residents also. RTA response. This is why the project objectives were tabled so that the group appreciates that the decision on a location will be a compromise between a number of objectives not one issue alone.
- Q Concern if the new bridge is next to the existing, trucks will still have to deal with difficult kinks and corners.
- A As discussed previously the removal of the kinks is being addressed by the RTA.
- Q There have been complaints about heavy vehicles using Arthur Street.
- A The route for over dimensioned trucks is Arthur St, Mary St, Fitzroy St and over bridge. Road transport is going to increase substantially in the next 10 to 15 years. Most heavy traffic movements are not through traffic as they are going to a destination within the city.
- Q What information from this CFG meeting gets handed down to Community Workshops?
- A The concerns and issues from the CFG meeting will be conveyed to Community Workshop attendees. The CFG members will also receive a copy of the minutes of the Community Workshop meetings.
- Q I take it there will be a more detailed traffic study carried out.
- A Traffic counts and origin destination surveys have been carried out to supplement the existing traffic studies undertaken recently. The traffic analysis of options will be more detailed than those undertaken for the feasibility study.
- Q Can CFG members have traffic data sent to them before next meeting?
- A Background information can be sent to CFG members prior to the next meeting.
- Q Can we trial having no through traffic from Clarence Street – only use for Emergency Vehicles.
- A No, however the traffic counts undertaken in Clarence Street will allow the RTA to examine various scenarios regarding the traffic in Clarence Street.



# Summerland Way – Additional Crossing of the Clarence River at Grafton

## Route Selection

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### 5.0 Summary of Discussion Issues

- Future volume of heavy vehicles / logging vehicles
- Height restrictions at the viaducts
- Safety on bridge and connecting roads
- Assumptions in distribution of traffic from the feasibility study for upstream/downstream options
- Effect of heavy vehicles on delays
- Clarence Street – traffic volumes and impact on flow
- Existing bridge- heritage / modification to 'kinks'
- Roads connecting existing bridge – have limitations
- New bridge near existing – Aesthetics is an issue
- Linking Summerland Way directly to remove through traffic from the existing
- Future planning and heavy vehicle projections
- Emergency services – access across bridge and alternative access
- Use of the two islands has environmental constraints

### 6.0 Next Meeting

***Note: The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 10 December 2003 at the Grafton Community Centre from 5pm to 7.30pm. An agenda and background information will be issued prior to the meeting.***