



Feasibility Study

Additional crossing of the Clarence River

The NSW State Government has allocated \$100,000 to investigate feasible locations for an additional crossing of the Clarence River to service Grafton and its surrounding communities. A report on the issue is now on display for public comment.

Background

In 2001 a community campaign for a new bridge at Grafton commenced. In May 2002 a public meeting was held regarding a second crossing of the Clarence River. Following this meeting the State Government allocated \$100,000 to a feasibility study for a second crossing of the Clarence River at Grafton. The investigations commenced in July 2002.

Since July the Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) has undertaken investigations and community consultation. The information gathered has formed the basis of a Feasibility Study Report.

The Feasibility Study highlights strategic options for a second crossing of the Clarence River to service Grafton and the surrounding communities.

Project update

A Community Focus Group (CFG) met on three occasions to discuss the development of the feasibility study. The CFG consisted of representatives from councils, business and community groups.

The RTA contacted a number of government agencies and community organisations seeking input into the feasibility study. A questionnaire was widely distributed in August to seek feedback from Clarence Valley residents.

More than 1,900 questionnaires were returned. Preliminary environmental and traffic investigations were also conducted. All of this information has now been incorporated into the Feasibility Study Report.

Feasible locations

The feasible locations for an additional crossing of the Clarence River are those that minimise the impact on the environment, reduce delays on the existing bridge, meet the needs of the State and local road network crossings and represent the best value for money.

The following six strategic locations were identified.

1. Upstream of the existing bridge
2. Within the vicinity of the existing Grafton bridge
3. Downstream of the existing Grafton bridge
4. At Ulmarra
5. At Cowper
6. At Lawrence

Location No.1: Upstream of the Existing Bridge

This option is from the existing Grafton bridge upstream to and including Susan Island.

This location would directly connect the business areas of Grafton and South Grafton. A number of local roads would need to be upgraded to cater for the additional light and heavy traffic.

Susan Island Nature Reserve (located at the upstream end of the island) comprises a remnant subtropical rainforest. Susan Island is a site of significant indigenous heritage value.

Property impacts would be minor depending on the location. The crossing would be above the 1 in 100 year flood level and would be approximately 750 metres in length.

An additional crossing at this location would attract around 7,500 vehicles per day from the existing bridge. 18,000 vehicles would still use the existing bridge.

Over 25% of the community responded to the questionnaire favouring this locality for an additional crossing of the Clarence River.

Location No.1 cost - \$35 million to \$40 million.

Location No.2: Vicinity of the Existing Bridge

This option is in close proximity to the existing Grafton bridge.

This location would continue to give direct access between the business communities of Grafton and South Grafton and utilise the existing Summerland Way. The recent upgrade works at Craig and Bent Street could be incorporated in the works.

Therefore, the amount of road construction would be reduced. This would minimise the effects on public utilities.

Property impacts would be minor to medium depending on the location. The crossing would be above the 1 in 100 year flood level and would be between 500 and 700 metres in length.

A crossing at this location would take 50% of the traffic from the existing bridge. Each crossing would provide two lanes in each direction. 12,800 vehicles per day would continue to use the existing bridge, with a similar number using the new crossing.

Over 15% of the community responded to the questionnaire favouring this locality for an additional crossing of the Clarence River.

Location No.2 cost - \$40 million to \$45 million.

Location No.3: Downstream of Existing Bridge

This option is from the existing Grafton bridge downstream to and including Elizabeth Island.

A crossing in the vicinity of Elizabeth Island would provide a more direct bypass of Grafton from the Pacific Highway to the Summerland Way.

There would be an impact on properties on the southern bridge approaches. These approaches would also need to consider flooding impacts.

This option provides access from the proposed Clarenza development to Grafton. It would also link the residential areas in Grafton directly to the Pacific Highway.

The length of the potential crossings would require a bridge of approximately 400 to 750 metres.

There would be potential for high social and property impact by moving traffic into residential streets on the northern side of the river. A percentage of this traffic would be heavy vehicles using the route as part of the Summerland Way.

Of the 25,500 vehicles using the current bridge, this location would attract 5,800 - 7,600 vehicles per day. This location would require major roadworks on local roads to connect to the Summerland Way.

This crossing would reduce the traffic volumes on the existing bridge to between 17,900 - 19,700 vehicles per day.

Noise impacts from increased traffic volumes on local residents would be high. This would require detailed studies in any future investigation.

Over 45% of the responses to the questionnaire favoured this locality for an additional crossing of the Clarence River.

Location No.3 cost - \$45 million to \$70 million.

Location No.4: Ulmarra

This option is at the existing Ulmarra ferry crossing.

Minor property acquisition would be required to accommodate the approach to an additional crossing. An 800 metre bridge would be required and the existing ferry crossing would be eliminated.

This option may also attract a small percentage of Pacific Highway traffic that would normally have travelled through Grafton and north onto the Summerland Way.

An additional crossing at this location would attract 1,900 vehicles per day leaving the existing Grafton bridge volumes at 23,600 vehicles per day, therefore reducing the traffic volumes on the Grafton bridge by only a small percentage.

Approximately 2% of the responses to the questionnaire favoured this locality.

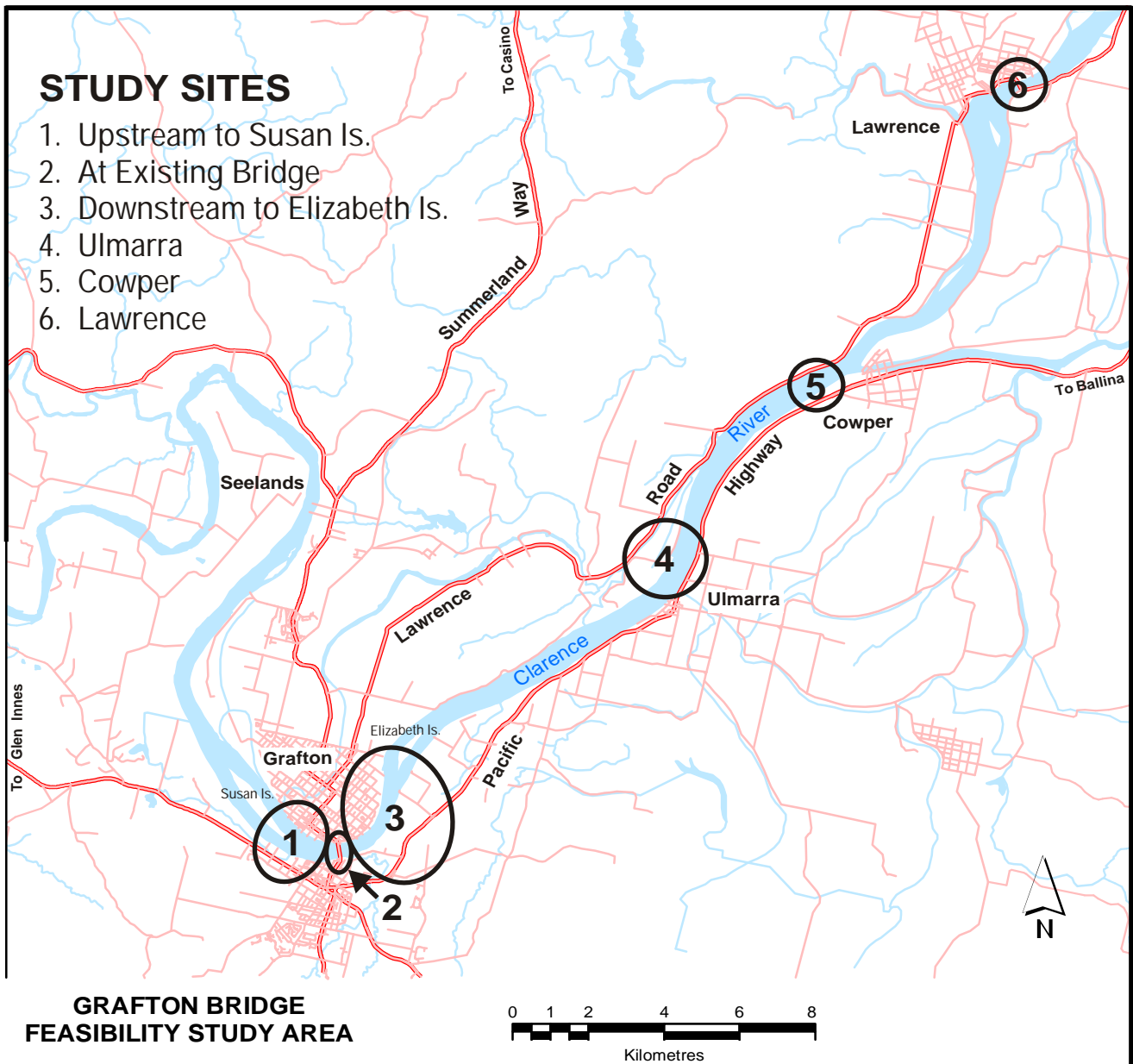
Location 4 Cost - \$40 million.

Location No.5: Cowper

Minor property acquisition would be required. A bridge length of 500 metres is required.

An additional crossing would attract 1,400 vehicles per day leaving the existing Grafton bridge at 24,100 vehicles per day, therefore reducing the traffic volumes on the existing bridge by a small percentage.

Approximately 2% of the responses to the questionnaire favoured this locality for an additional crossing of the Clarence River.



Location No.6: Lawrence

Minor property acquisition would be required. A bridge length of 380 metres is required and removes the existing Lawrence Ferry.

An additional crossing would attract 600 vehicles per day leaving the existing Grafton bridge at 24,900 vehicles per day. Therefore, reducing the traffic volumes on the existing bridge by a very small percentage.

Approximately 2% of the responses to the questionnaire favoured this locality for an additional crossing of the Clarence River.

Location 6 Cost - \$20 million.

Conclusion

The most feasible location appears to be in the vicinity of the existing bridge, in that it would maximise the reduction of delays on the existing bridge by transferring fifty per cent of the traffic onto an additional crossing. However, even though this location appears feasible an additional crossing would still have significant impacts on the community such as traffic, social, noise and aesthetics. The locations upstream and downstream of the existing bridge also appear feasible, as they would meet all the objectives of the project with the exception of economic comparisons of the benefits to cost. These options also have a number of adverse impacts particularly social and environmental impacts and traffic noise. However, they do have a number of benefits as detailed in the study report.

If the project were to proceed to the Development Phase further detailed traffic analysis, noise monitoring, environmental investigations and community consultation would be required to determine the viability of an additional crossing in these three locations.

The locations at Ulmarra, Cowper and Lawrence do not meet a number of objectives of the project and would not contribute greatly to reducing congestion or provide a significant improvement to safety at the existing Grafton bridge. Therefore, an additional crossing at these locations does not appear feasible with respect to this project.

Community Comment

The Feasibility Study Report is now available for the community to make comment until 3 February 2003. Following community input the Feasibility Report will then be finalised.

The report can be viewed on the RTA website (www.rta.nsw.gov.au) or at:

- * RTA Regional Office, Victoria Street, Grafton
- * RTA Motor Registry, King Street, Grafton
- * Copmanhurst Shire Council
- * Ulmarra Shire Council
- * Grafton City Council
- * Maclean Shire Council
- * Pristine Waters Council

Any person or organisation may, before the end of the display period, make written submissions in relation to any part of the Feasibility Study. Such submissions should be directed to:

Mr Peter Black
Roads and Traffic Authority
Project Management Services
PO Box 576
GRAFTON NSW 2460

All information received may be published in subsequent documents. Where the supplier indicates at the time of supply of information that it should be kept confidential, the RTA will attempt to keep it confidential but there may be legislative or legal justification for the release of the information, for example under the Freedom of Information Act 1989 or under subpoena or statutory instrument.



For further enquiries:



02 66401300
Peter Black, Project Manager, RTA Northern Regional Office



www.rta.nsw.gov.au



Peter_Black@rta.nsw.gov.au



PO Box 576, Grafton, NSW 2460