Route Selection

COMMUNITY FOCUS GROUP MEETING Wednesday 4 February 2004 5.00pm - 7.30pm

Grafton Community Centre, Duke Street Grafton

Minutes

Attendees:

Peter Black RTA Project Manager Sonia Williamson RTA Project Team Brian Kerwick RTA Project Team Carole Donohoe RTA Project Team

Vicki St Lawrence Community Participation Coordinator

Cr Shirley Adams Grafton City Council
Cr Max Murray Grafton City Council

Ron Bell Grafton Chamber of Commerce

Robert Blanchard Road Transport Sector

Paul Covington Kent Street Action Committee
Scott Flynn Susan & Elizabeth Islands Trust
Greg Hayes Grafton Shopping World

Laurie Marchant South Grafton Residents Progress Association Inc

Bill Noonan Clarence Valley Conservation Coalition Inc

Brian Scrivener Waterview Community
Amanda Steiner Fitzroy St Precinct
Karen Thompson Greaves St Precinct

Mary Watson Schools

Peter Morgan National Parks Association

Merv Smidt Riverside, Bent and Through St Precinct

Gordon Poynter Clarenza Community
Greg Hayes Grafton Shopping World
Paul Covington Kent Street Action Committee

Apologies:

Peter Collins RTA Regional Manager

Heather Roland Riverside, Bent and Through St Precinct

Chris Wheelahan McHugh St Precinct

1.0 Welcome and Purpose of meeting

Sonia Williamson introduced the meeting on behalf of the Regional Manager Peter Collins.

2.0 Community Feedback

Vicki St Lawrence provided information on the community feedback since the previous Community Focus Group meeting. Attached is a summary of the feedback.

Brian Scrivener had a strong view on the Turf Street option. He was concerned that the view of his community may be lost in the group discussion. It was agreed that this approach might not reflect all of the group's comments.

Peter Black provided information on face to face interviews with residents in Locality 2 and Locality 3. Interviews were held with residents from Abbott Street, Villiers Street, Fitzroy Street, Kent Street, Greaves Street, Bent Street and Riverside Drive. Comments ranged from accepting the RTA's investigations, concerns about noise and safety, change of amenity of the area, do not want to be affected by a new bridge, heavy vehicles and a locality should be selected away from the existing bridge.

The residents in Locality 2 and Locality 3 appreciated the RTA initiating face to face meetings.

3.0 Project Information

Peter Black gave a presentation on project information. A copy of the slides is attached. The presentation was focused around the main issues that have been raised by the community, ie, remove the heavy vehicles from the CBD, and therefore consideration of options away from the existing bridge. Following is a summary of the presentation.

Traffic volumes on the Summerland Way have had a minimal increase over the past 20 years. Annual Average Daily Traffic (ie, the total traffic volume for the year divided by 365 days) for the Summerland Way was 1,350 in 1982 and 1,432 in 2001. AADT north of lunction Hill has increased from 1,807 in 1982 to 3,217 in 2001.

Slide 5 of the attached presentation shows the daily light and heavy traffic that would be attracted to Locality 2, Locality 3 and Locality 7 to give an indication of how effectively these Localities would remove heavy vehicles from the CBD. The slide also showed the breakdown of light and heavy vehicles attracted to each of the Localities during the morning peak hour.

In summary Locality 7, which would also act as a bypass of Grafton, attracts 300 heavy vehicles from the existing bridge leaving 1,200 heavy vehicles on the existing bridge. This Locality would be ineffective in meeting the criteria of taking heavy vehicles away from the CBD. Delays on the existing bridge would be reduced in the short term but would return under normal traffic growth.

In the morning peak hour, Locality 7 would take only 30 of the 180 heavy vehicles from the existing bridge and would not take sufficient traffic away from the existing bridge to significantly reduce the delays in the peak hour.

Locality 2 would take a higher percentage of traffic away from the existing bridge and reduce the delays on the existing bridge in the short term. Locality 2 is more effective than Locality 7 in taking heavy vehicles away from the existing bridge. Locality 3 is the

most effective at reducing delays on the existing bridge in the long term (30 years). Locality 2 and 3 do not take heavy vehicles away from the CBD. The roundabouts on the northern and southern approach would cater for the current traffic growth for the next 20 to 30 years before upgrades would be needed.

Contact was made with the timber mills north of Junction Hill to determine the number of log trucks that would turn off the Summerland Way at Junction Hill and would not have been counted as through vehicles. There would be an average of 22 log trucks per working day that would use this turning movement. The origin and destination survey identified that during the period from 7am to 7pm, 30 articulated vehicles out of a total of 300 (10%) were through vehicles. If the additional log trucks were considered this would raise the total to 52 (17%).

Interviews were held with 12 businesses in Grafton and South Grafton to determine the number of heavy vehicles that arrived at departed at these businesses and their origin and destination. The results confirmed that Grafton is a destination for the majority of heavy vehicles. The interviews also confirmed that the allocation of heavy traffic from the existing bridge to alternative Localities in the traffic model, particularly downstream, was valid.

- Q Can designated heavy vehicles be restricted in their use of the existing bridge?
- A heavy vehicle restriction is usually placed on bridges that for structural reasons cannot take the heavy vehicle loads. As the majority of heavy vehicles use the bridge to travel from/to Grafton and South Grafton a heavy vehicle restriction would impact on these movements.
- Q More vehicles would use a Turf Street option.
- A From the traffic model it is determined that up to 9,000 vehicles per day (vpd) would use the Turf Street option which would leave 17,000 vpd on the existing bridge.
- Q Where at Junction Hill was the origin and destination traffic count established?
- A North of Junction Hill at the 60/100kph sign
- Q There would be extra disruption at existing roundabout if Locality 2 option was decided upon.
- A An additional lane on the southern approach to the Villiers Street roundabout would be required. The roundabout would still have enough capacity for the next 20 to 30 years.
- Q I question the capacity of the existing bridge compared to duplication upstream or downstream. The existing bridge with modified kinks would not have the same capacity as a new straighter bridge.
- A Yes, you are correct. Slide 6 of the presentation should be amended to be read 'duplication provides 4 lanes (2 lanes in each direction) with capacity up to 6,600 vehicles per hour. Under the assumption that peak hour is generally 10% of daily volumes this would provide capacity for up to 66,000 vpd if there was no restrictions at the approach roads'
- Q How will the kinks be modified?

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- A The kinks will involve widening to allow two heavy vehicles to travel together in the one direction up to 50 km/hr. Concept designs are being investigated, however, these designs would need to balance safety, structural requirements and heritage.
- Q Would it allow trucks to stay in one lane?
- A The design criteria would be to provide lane widths to cater for heavy vehicles but this would need to be balanced against the heritage and structural requirements.
- Q What if Heritage Council says no to the bridge work?
- A The Heritage Councils requirements would be incorporated in the concept design of the modification of the kinks. If approval was not given from the Heritage Council then this would place a significant constraint on the options adjacent to the existing bridge.

4.0 Turf Street Locality

Discussion then took place on the Turf Street locality. A plan showing the Locality and the assessment was distributed to CFG members prior to the meeting and a copy is attached. Comments are summarised below;

Waterview/Eatonsville/Seelands community comment on Turf Street locality;

- Feels there is a blatant bias towards Locality 3 and they favour Turf St.
- This would be an opportunity to create a new entry to Gwydir Highway.
- If you take the kinks out of bridge for Locality 3 why not do it for all options.
- Waterview group doesn't feel it would affect Village Green and Boral but did not consider Ken Casson Motors. Access to businesses could be under the bridge and between the pylons
- Access to CBD would be via Bacon or Oliver Sts.
- Turf Street locality should get a big tick for taking heavy vehicles away from CBD.
- Doubts about the Turf St noise assessment and it would be the same as Locality 3.
- No proper investigation has been on heritage impact of the Turf Street locality
- Locality at Turf St takes all through traffic out of CBD benefits would be significant in 30 years
- Turf St should have been considered as an option.
- Susan Island heritage is not really a constraint, as pylons would not need to be on the island and there are no proven ecological studies undertaken.

CFG members' comments;

- There will be impacts on the viability of 3 major businesses.
- The visual impact would be enormous and this should be a major consideration for not only Turf Street but also all locations.
- The flood mitigation would be less than Locality 3.

- DEC (NPWS) propose to revegetate Susan Island
- A bridge at Turf St would be visually unacceptable, would disadvantage the valley and take away the magnificent river view

5.0 Where to from Here

A Public Display of crossing options is proposed for late March early April with the Option Evaluation Workshop in the week commencing 19 April 2004, subject to confirmation with other CFG members and their availability. The workshop will be held over two working days and requires a commitment from all participants to be available for both days. If there is to be a replacement for a CFG member, that person should have attended the community workshops and be well informed regarding the project. Answers to questions regarding the workshop are summarised below;

- The workshop will be held during the week
- Background information will be provided prior to the workshop
- Representatives from Government Agencies will be invited including Waterways, CRCC and NSW Heritage Office.
- Council elections may preclude some people, as they may not be in the role of elected representatives.
- The NSW Heritage Council representative will have equal opportunity to comment on likely outcome.
- There will be approximately 30 people involved in the workshop and approximately 12 will be CFG members with a cross section of representation.

Nominations were then requested from those at the meeting for the expression of interest for the Options Evaluation Workshop.

Scott Flynn, Laurie Marchant, Peter Morgan, Bill Noonan (as backup), Amanda Steiner, Karen Thompson, Ron Bell, Gordon Poynter, Greg Hayes, Shirley Adams.

Members who were not at the meeting were to be contacted on their availability and suitability of the dates.

Members then decided on all group discussion on further project issues rather than individual small groups.

- Mary Watson presented a written submission from Clarence Valley Conservatorium Incregarding Locality 2 option.
- The principal of the Cathedral School has verbally commented on Locality 2. He raised concerns of safety particularly the movements across Villiers Street to Catherine McCauley College.
- It seems there is not a lot of support for Locality 2.
- Appears the 2 preferred localities are the only viable options

- Initial community meeting held in May 2002 was concern about delays on the Grafton Bridge and this is main criteria that needs to be addressed
- If local community were made aware of traffic impact there may be more acceptance of options.
- The future development of Grafton is not being considered by State Govt but considering dollars only.
- Heavy vehicles are only a minor percentage of the total volumes. Heavy vehicles will take the most direct route
- Need proper access from side roads for the localities.
- Heavy vehicles seem to be concerned about roundabouts.
- Coastal traffic is going to get heavier. Will it divert to the Summerland Way?
- Visual impact should be of main concern of any upstream options still under consideration.
- Scouring of piers of existing bridge if necessary look at foundations of bridge in conjunction with straightening of kinks.
- There should be a Social Impact Study for Locality 3
- Heavy vehicles may be diverted to Villiers St if Shoppingworld expansion through Duke St is approved. Shoppingworld would be required to increase the clearance at the Villiers St viaducts.

CFG members concluded with their assessment of the Turf Street locality.

Brian Scrivener: Reassess Turf St to prove why we shouldn't consider it as an option

Ron Bell: From a Chamber of Commerce viewpoint the option would be detrimental

to businesses.

Robert Blanchard: Heavy vehicles diverted too far from the existing will impact financially on

community. Still worth considering Turf St but will accept the RTA

decision.

Gordon Poynter: Agree with RTA considerations.

Peter Morgan: Eliminate Turf St. Environmental impact on Susan Island.

Max Murray: Prefers Turf St option.

Amanda Steiner: Should be considered even using part of See Park to minimise the impact on

the businesses.

Bill Noonan: Visually unacceptable. Would need to consider the extraction of gravel and

extent of scouring.

Greg Hayes: Not value for money and detrimental to the businesses.

Mary Watson: Accepts that the Turf Street locality is not an option.

Karen Thompson: Should be included as an option. Questions the traffic assessment.

Laurie Marchant: Should investigate the option as it would distribute traffic.

Merv Smidt: Flood waters would be held west of the bridge and this option would be

affected dramatically.

Shirley Adams: Supports the Turf Street locality but the design needs to be reconsidered

such as an underpass. Concerns about using See Park.

6.0 Next meeting

Next meeting will be prior to the public display in late March early April.

ATTACHMENT

SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK (extract from Community Participation Report)

2.5 Free-call Hotline

The free call hotline was established in July 2003. Analysis of the calls indicates:

- Fifteen calls were received between 26 August & 16 September 2003 requesting information or nomination forms to join the CFG & Community Workshops.
- All responded to within 24 hours.
- Ninety-seven calls were received between 25 September & 11
 December 2003. These were general enquiries or administrative
 matters such as RSVP for the CFG & Community Workshop meetings.
- Eighteen calls were received between 16 to 22 December 2003, in response to Daily Examiner article on the short-listed localities. Thirteen were referred to the RTA Project Manager for additional information.
- Seventeen of the 18 calls (94.4%) were against the Villiers St option & the 18th call wanted more information about it before deciding.
- Seven calls (38.9%) supported a crossing at the existing site.
- Four (22.2%) preferred a site near Elizabeth Island.
- Two (11.1%) preferred a site across Susan Island & linking into Turf Street.
- Two (11.1%) did not want either Villiers St or existing site but did not have a preference for a site.
- Comments recorded were:
 - o Put the bridge on eastern side of the existing one & link it into existing roadwork of Bent St & Craig St. (2 similar comments).
 - o Put the bridge next to the existing one on down-river side but turn it up McHugh St & then Dobie St to keep traffic out of CBD.
 - Neither site is suitable in long-term due to upgrading of Summerland Way & future of Pacific Highway. Don't want traffic in residential areas, but down-river side of bridge is best of the 2 options. Sure RTA will make best decision.
 - Don't put at Villiers St due to conservation area & impact on narrow Victoria St.
 - Need more information about the impact of the bridge at Villiers Street.
 - o Submarine cables run across river near Villiers St.
 - o Alarmed about Villiers St option. Make a duplication of existing bridge.
 - o Doesn't want Villiers St. Duplicate existing bridge but join it from the Pacific Highway using Heber St levy. This will avoid the congestion of traffic at the South Grafton crossroads.
 - o Doesn't want Villiers St, prefers location 3 next to existing bridge. However overall prefer it to be near Elizabeth Island to keep trucks out of town.

- o The Villiers St option is an eyesore. Put the bridge near Elizabeth Island & join up to North St & then Prince St to give 2 entrances to the town. Will allow trucks to be diverted.
- It would be an eyesore to place a bridge at Villiers St & it would impact on the Fig tree. Put a bridge down river near Elizabeth Island.
- Both options wrong. Put it near Elizabeth Island to divert trucks.
 Sure there is more truck traffic than stats show. (2 similar comments).
- Put it across Susan Island & into Turf St to take trucks out of CBD.
 Congestion on bridge is due to the 2 lanes converging into 1.
 Take it back to what it was. It's ugly to put another bridge next to the existing one. (3 similar comments).

2.12 Written Submissions

Fourteen written submissions from seven people have been received by the RTA Project Team to date. All have been acknowledged and responded to by the RTA.

The submissions covered the following range of issues:

- Concern about the impact of a new bridge on the submitter's living conditions.
- Environmental & heritage issues.
- Querying the validity & source of technical data.
- Need for heavy transport by-pass.
- Concern the RTA has already determined site and community participation is tokenism.
- Request for information re number of RTA staff directly affected by the study area.
- Needs of river users to be taken into account.
- Bridge design issues

2.13 Evaluation of CFG & Community Workshop Meetings

Evaluation forms were provided at each CFG and Workshop. A summary of the responses is below.

Table 2 Analysis of Evaluation Data – October 2003 CFG & Workshops

Statement	CFG – Number of Responses	Workshops- Number of Responses
	(20 forms returned from 22 participants)	(7 forms from 10am w/shop — 7 attendees
		8 forms from 2pm w/shop – 9 attendees
		9 forms from 5pm w/shop — 12 attendees)
1. The structure of the meeting	Yes - 19	1 Agree 20

Statement	CFG – Number of Responses	Workshops- Number of Responses
	(20 forms returned from 22	(7 forms from 10am w/shop - 7
	participants)	attendees
		8 forms from 2pm w/shop — 9 attendees
		9 forms from 5pm w/shop – 12 attendees)
allowed for adequate exchange of inform (CFG	No - 1	2 3
evaluation sheet)		3 1 .
1. Workshop participants were		4 0
allocated enough time to discuss issues and ask questions (Workshop evaluation sheet)		5 Disagree 0
Comments	2 wanted more time; 4	. •
	stated it was a good meeting	independent facilitator to make process transparent; good
		facilitation, explanation & participation.
2. The information provided at	1 Agree 8	1 Agree 15
the CFG meeting allowed me to understand how the route	2 4	2 9
selection will occur	3 5	3 0
	4 2	4 0
-	5 Disagree 0	5 Disagree 0
Comments	Four comments made relating to: more info needed; explanation of assumptions; how will issues be weighted; and feeling that site has already been selected by RTA – need independent study.	One comment: thorough information
3. The Community	1 Agree 9	1 Agree 14
Participation Plan indicates adequate opportunity for	2 5	2 4
participation by the	3 3	3 3
community in the selection of the route (CFG evaluation	4 1	4 1
sheet)	5 Disagree 0	5 Disagree 0
3. The Project has adequate opportunity for participation by the community in the selection of the route (Workshop evaluation sheet)		
Comments	One comment re unsure of the impact discussions will have on final outcome.	Three comments: adequate coverage in local media & letterbox drop. Workshops a great idea; yet to be discussed; seems so but will have

Statement	CFG – Number of Responses	Workshops – Number of Responses
,	(20 forms returned from 22 participants)	(7 forms from 10am w/shop — 7 attendees
		8 forms from 2pm w/shop – 9 aftendees
		9 forms from 5pm w/shop — 12 attendees)
		to wait to see if it is not just tokenism.
4. I believe the RTA will adhere to the commitment made in the Community Participation Plan	1 Agree 9 2 4 3 5 4 2 5 Disagree 0	1 Agree 14 2 5 3 4 4 0 5 Disagree 0
Comments	Three comments: feeling that "proposal" for existing site rather strong; will the RTA accept decision that doesn't fit their plans; & unsure of the impact meetings will have on decision.	Three comments: hope so-have yet to see plan; good form by RTA to date; this is fairly obvious.
5. CFG members were allocated enough time to discuss issues & ask questions	1 Agree 10 2 5 3 2 4 3 5 Disagree 0	Not applicable
Comments	Three comments: limited time; may need more time next meeting; & some people allowed too much time.	
General Comments	Seven comments: 2 indicated it was good meeting procedure to allow fair participation; too early to comment; planning should not be hijacked by minority groups; need to plan for whole of the region; need for independent studies; need to consider range of issues & info needed before meetings.	Nine comments: 3 indicated looking forward to continued involvement & opportunity to participate; well presented information; organisation is very impressive & appreciate opportunity to hear clear answers by experts; RTA is considering aspects of the community; working well at this stage; very important for Grafton & extend consultation for the best solutions; promote the CPP & protocol to participate – do another Update to all residents to stop flow of negativity & disinformation – strongly support bridge & Community Participation.

Table 3 Analysis of Evaluation Data – December 2003 CFG & Workshops

Statement	CEC Number of December 1	W. data and Market and Barrier
Sidiemeni	CFG – Number of Responses (13 forms returned from 20	Workshops—Number of Responses (5 forms from 10am w/shop – 8 attendees
	participants)	8 forms from 2pm w/shop – 11 attendees
		3 forms from 5pm w/shop – 6 attendees)
		3 totals from 3pm w/strop = 6 diferidees)
1. The small group workshop	1 Agree 5	1 Agree 7
provided an effective structure to express opinion & to identify	2 4	2 7
to the RTA important issues to	3 1	3 1
be taken into account	4 1	4 1
	5 Disagree 2	5 Disagree 0
Comments	Five comments: 4 indicated not enough time with I of these stating heavy vehicles are the main impediment; too many self interested people.	Five comments: 4 indicated not enough time; keep workshops small.
2. The short-listing exercise	1 Agree 1	1 Agree 5
undertaken by the RTA, as explained at today's meeting,	2 6	2 6
assisted the CFG in the	3 1	3 4
selection of the locality options to be further	4 2	4 1
investigated	5 Disagree 2	5 Disagree 0
Comments	Five comments: options already decided – no access to information/assumptions before the meeting; criteria needs independent assessment; no as options 2 & 3 only proposed – my community prefers variation of locality 1; all transport comes to Grafton – the motor traffic would not need another bridge; some routes not offered but 1 don't support those anyway.	Five comments: very informative but need greater depth of statistics; would like to question some of the assumptions put forward; some of the heavy transport data is grey; would have liked the information beforehand; a lot more should be considered from community input before scrapping options.
3.a To this stage of the Project the RTA has provided timely &	1 Agree 4	1 Agree 7
adequate information to the	2 3	2 4
community	3 1	3 2
	4 3	4 1
	5 Disagree 2	5 Disagree 2
3.b To this stage of the Project	1 Agree 5	1 Agree 6
the RTA has provided timely & adequate opportunity for the	2 2	2 5
community to contribute	3 0	3 0
information	4 4	4 3

Statement	CFG – Number of Responses (13 forms returned from 20	Workshops— Number of Responses (5 forms from 10am w/shop — 8 attendees
	participants)	8 forms from 2pm w/shop – 11 attendees
		3 forms from 5pm w/shop – 6 attendees)
	5 Disagree 1	5 Disagree 2
Comments	Six comments: 5 requesting info before meeting – not enough time to analyse during meeting & to discuss or ask questions; there has been a severe lack of publicity.	Four comments all relating to receiving information earlier so that informed discussion can be held. One suggested that workshop be broken into 2 sessions: 1st to receive info and 2nd the next day or so for feedback and discussion groups.
4. I believe the RTA is adhering	1 Agree 6	1 Agree 8
to the commitment made in the Community Participation	2 4	2 7
Plan	3 . 0	3 0 .
	4 2	4 0
	5 Disagree 1	5 Disagree 0
Comments	Three comments: community has no idea of how selections have been made; they appear to be sticking to the plan – no option for deviation or change in direction; appearance of consultation but decisions made already or information presented so options already selected.	One comment: Some of us thought the RTA already favours option 3.
General Comments	Eight comments: 2 suggested the "do nothing" option – or more time for discussion; little info on construction of the approaches – need more info about process & who are the outside consultants; need independent assessment; too much talk from members who have clear interest; more publicity for the general public; very good process; better than previous meeting.	Six comments: 2 thanking the opportunity to be involved & informed; project originated from business & residents to address traffic congestion – but crossing should be examined as national importance for highway travel; don't duplicate locality 3 due to long-term funnel effects of traffic movements; challenge popular assumption that time delays are the most compelling problem – getting the trucks out of the CBD & residential areas is the most important; maintain the present groups.

Comparison between October and December CFG Meetings:

The comparison between the results from the October and December CFG is between the 11 members who could be identified by name or handwriting.

 In response to the question "I believe the RTA is adhering to the commitment made in the Community Participation Plan (The RTA will

look to the community for participation in formulating solutions and will incorporate community comment in decisions to the maximum extent possible:"

- o 3 continued to respond to it at level 1 (agree)
- o 2 changed the response from 1 to 2
- o 1 changed the response from 2 to 1
- o 1 continued to respond to it at 2
- o 1 changed the response from 3 to 2
- 1 changed the response from 3 to 4
- 1 changed the response from 1 to 5 (disagree)
- o 1 continued to respond to it level 4

Comparison between October and December Community Workshops

The comparison between the results from the October and December Community Workshops is between the 6 attendees who could be identified by name or handwriting & attended both.

- In response to the question "I believe the RTA is adhering to the commitment made in the Community Participation Plan (The RTA will look to the community for participation in formulating solutions and will incorporate community comment in decisions to the maximum extent possible:"
 - o 4 continued to respond to it at level 1 (agree)
 - o 1 changed the response from 1 to 2
 - o 1 changed the response from 3 to 2

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