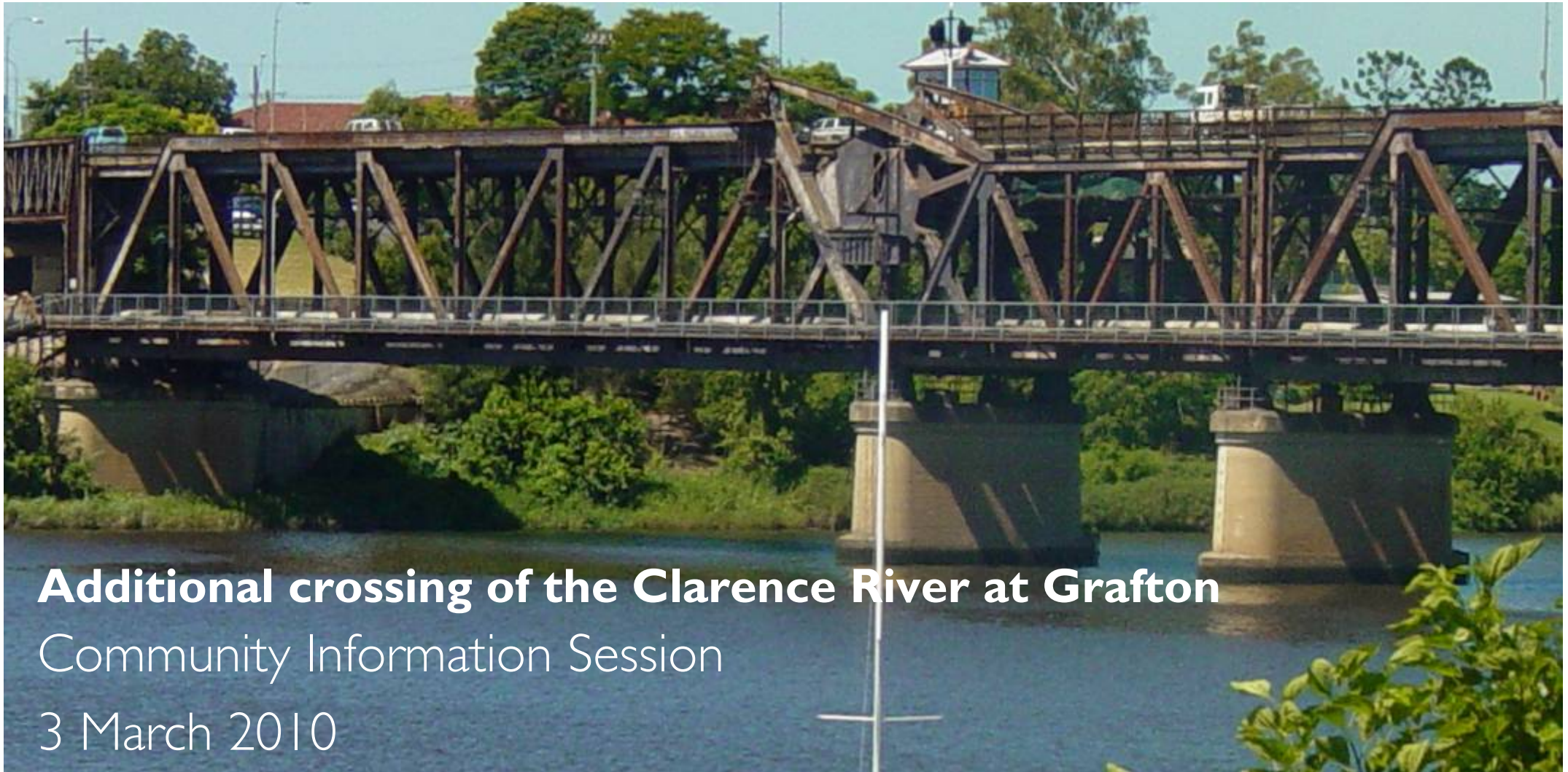


ADDITIONAL CROSSING OF THE CLARENCE RIVER AT GRAFTON

The first community information sessions on the preliminary route options for an additional crossing over the Clarence River at Grafton were held on Wednesday 3 March 2010 at the Grafton Community Centre, Duke Street Grafton. Attendance was open to any interested community member. Around 80 community residents and interested community members attended the day session (10.00am-12.00pm) and approximately 40 community members attended the evening session (6.30pm-8.30pm). RTA representative, Rob Van Iersel, facilitated the meeting. RTA Northern Region, Communications Manager Sonia George provided some background and current status of the project, and details on the recent traffic data and route options was presented by RTA Project Manager, Stephen Williamson. Also in attendance from the project team were:

Damien Sartori	RTA Senior Project Manager
Jodi Austin	RTA Communications Officer
Amanda Leonard	RTA Project Officer

Following is the powerpoint presentation that was shown at the meeting followed by questions and comments raised by community members.



Additional crossing of the Clarence River at Grafton

Community Information Session

3 March 2010



Information session agenda

Introductions

Project overview

Traffic studies

Route options process

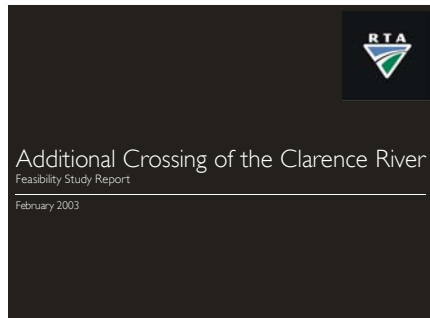
Where to from here?

Question time

Project overview - background

2001 - RTA commenced investigations.

2002/2003 – Feasibility study.



Project overview – background

2004 - a Value Management workshop recommended the bridge location directly downstream of existing bridge.

2005 – Project deferred.

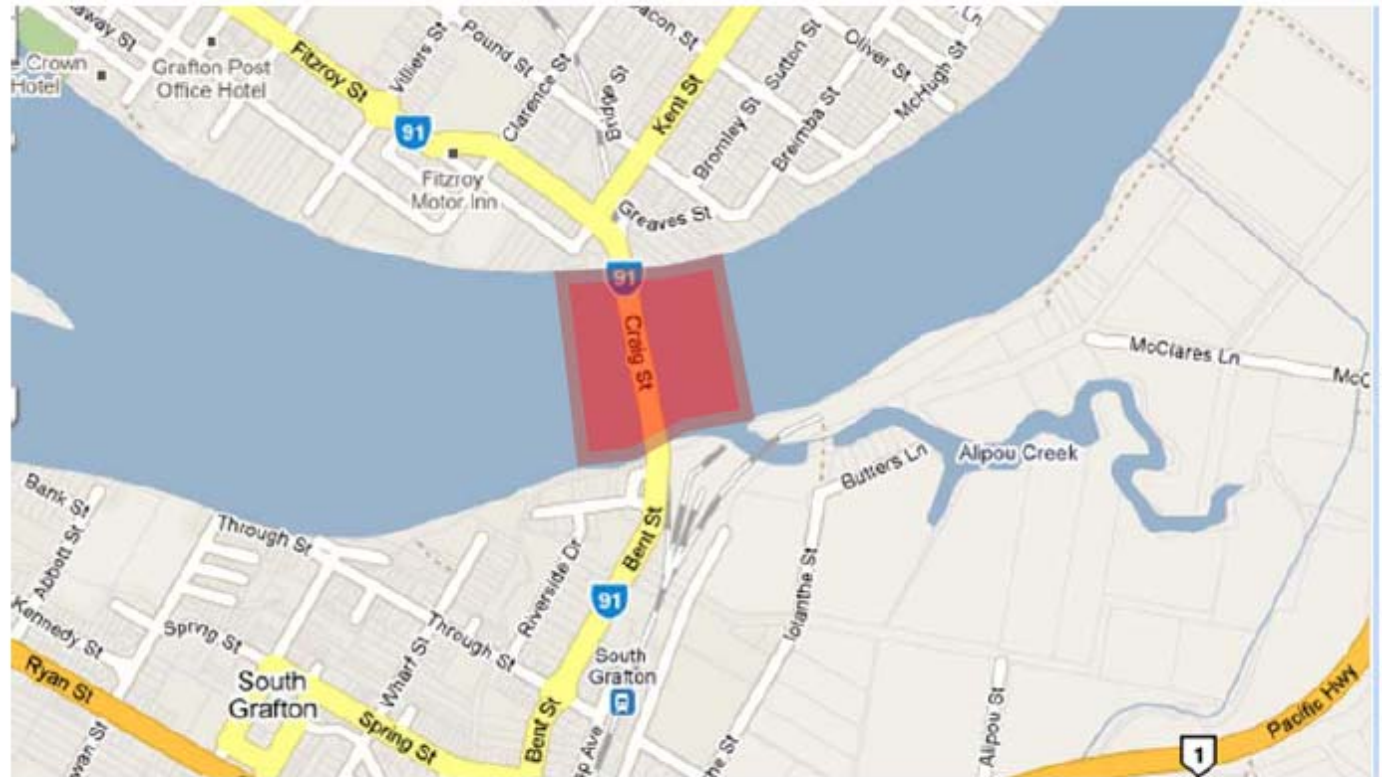


Additional Crossing of the Clarence River

- Improve traffic efficiency between and within Grafton and South Grafton.
- Enhance safety for all road users over the length of the project.
- Support regional and local economic development.
- Involve all stakeholders and consider their interests.
- Provide value for money.
- Minimise impacts on the environment.

Project overview- Traffic Study 2009

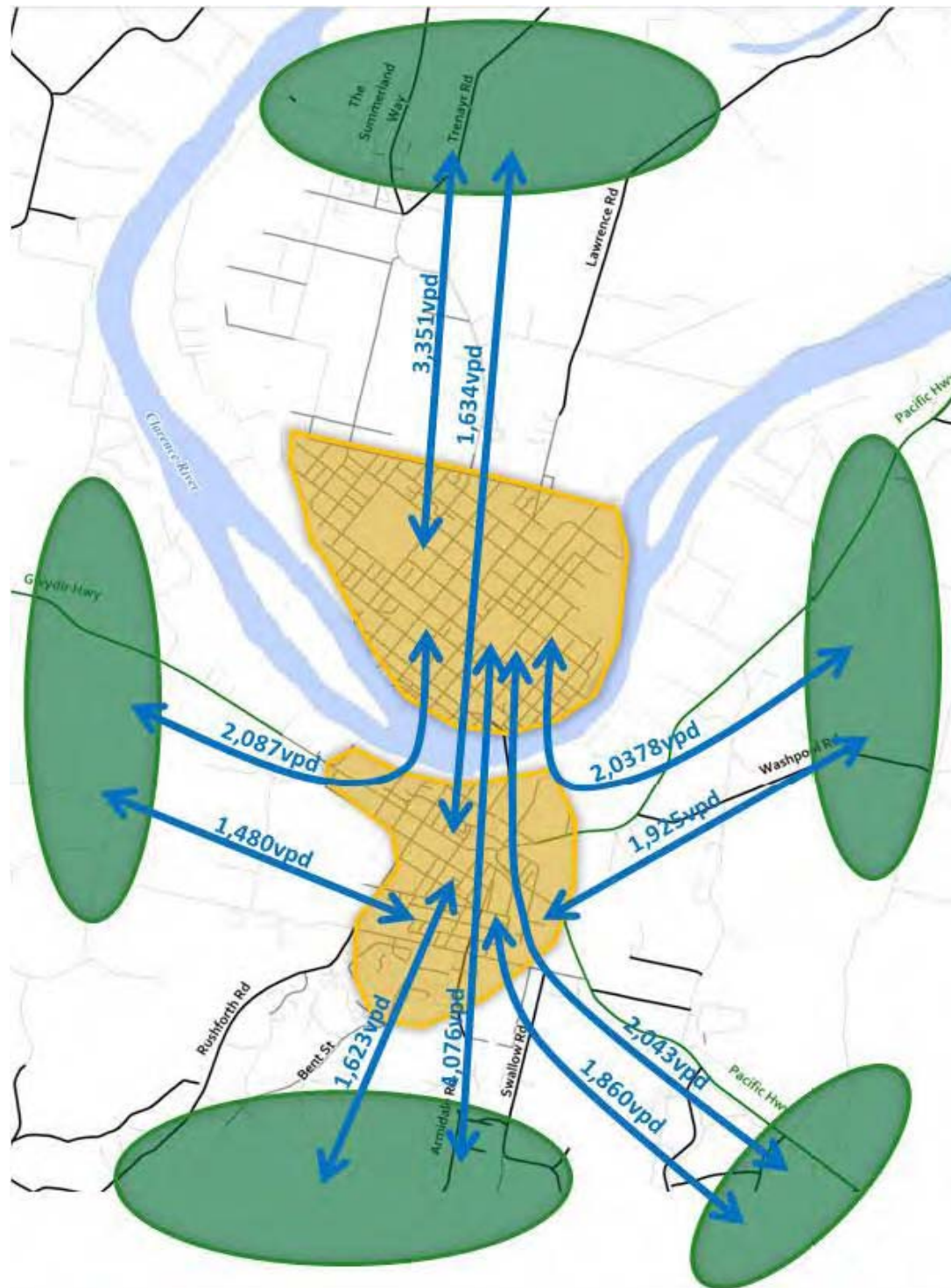
December 2009 Traffic Study Report of data and future traffic predictions



(Source: google.com.au)

External to Internal Traffic

Total = 12,219
vehicles per day
(53%)



Grafton

South Grafton

Internal to Internal Traffic

Total = 10,462
vehicles per day (45%)



Traffic – Heavy vehicle movements

Grafton

South Grafton



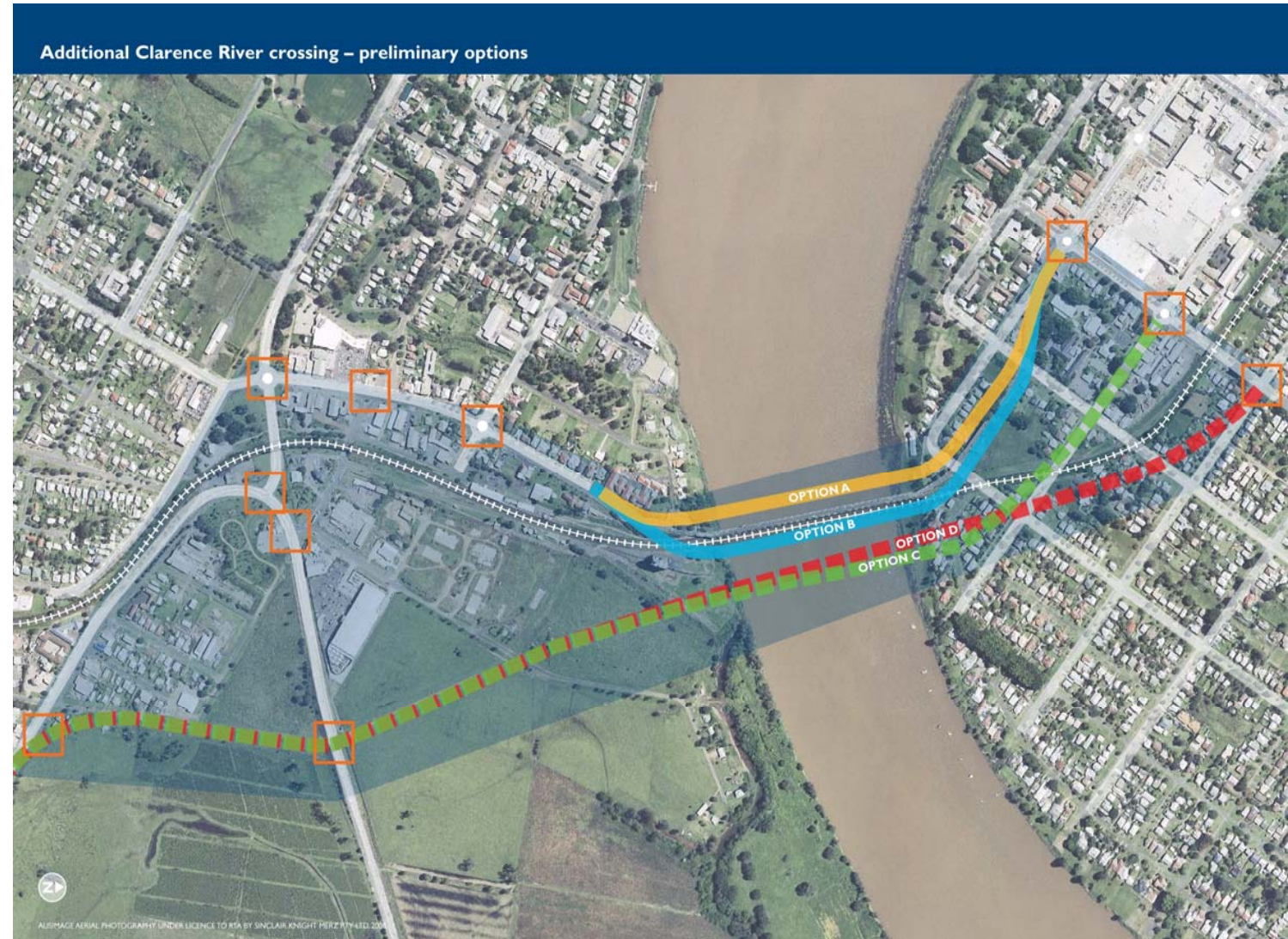
Traffic summary- 2009

- Current traffic flow- between South Grafton and Grafton
 - Future traffic flow- between South Grafton and Grafton
 - Future traffic growth predicted to double approximately 50,000 vpd
 - Congestion to increase in Bent Street and Fitzroy Street
 - Heavy vehicles need to access the town
 - Further from the current crossing the less benefit to all users
 - The network is currently constrained and operating beyond capacity in peak times
-

Project overview



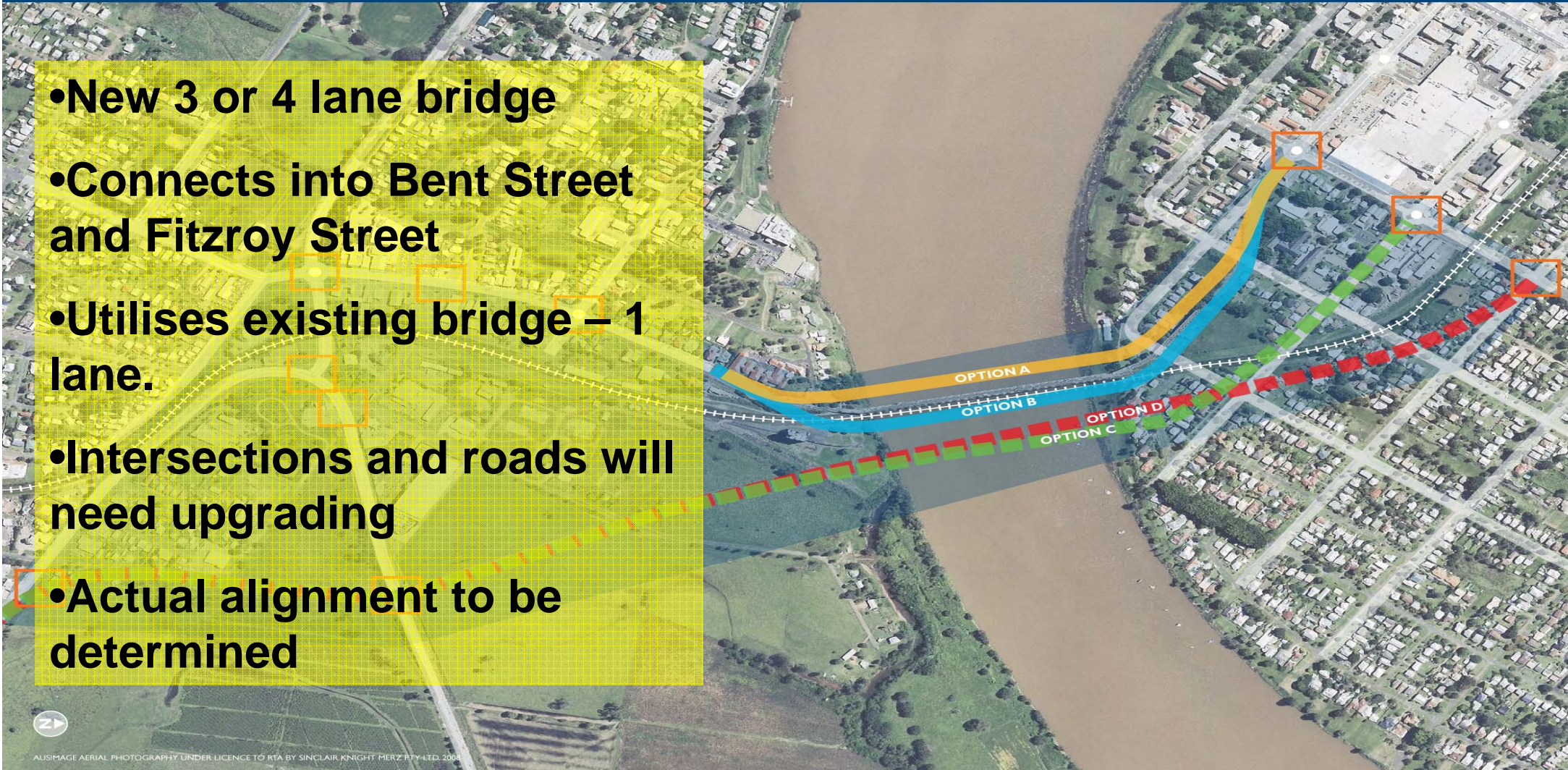
February 2010
Traffic study for preliminary options released.



Preliminary options – Option A and B

Additional Clarence River crossing – preliminary options

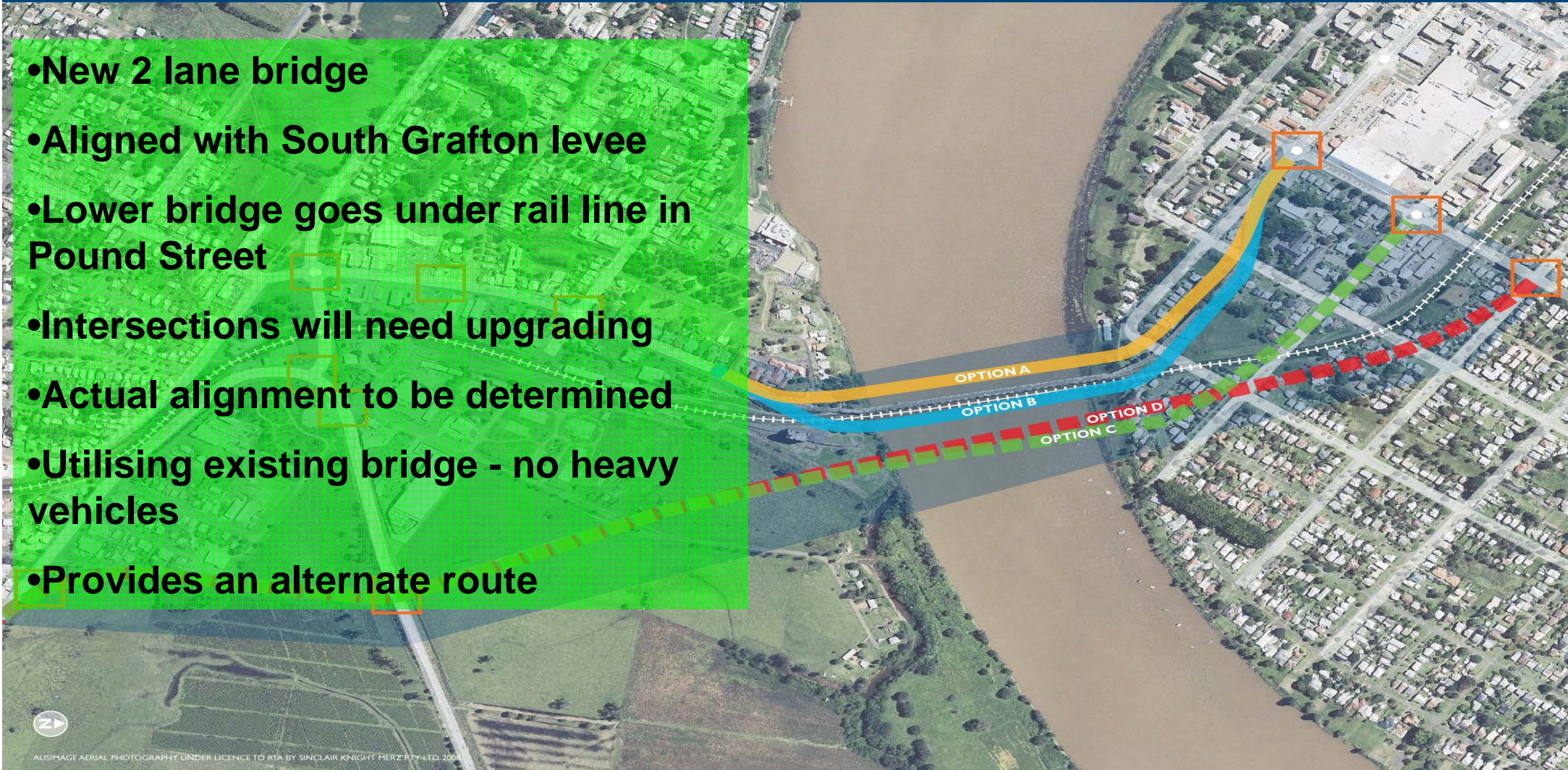
- New 3 or 4 lane bridge
- Connects into Bent Street and Fitzroy Street
- Utilises existing bridge – 1 lane.
- Intersections and roads will need upgrading
- Actual alignment to be determined



Preliminary options – Option C

Additional Clarence River crossing – preliminary options

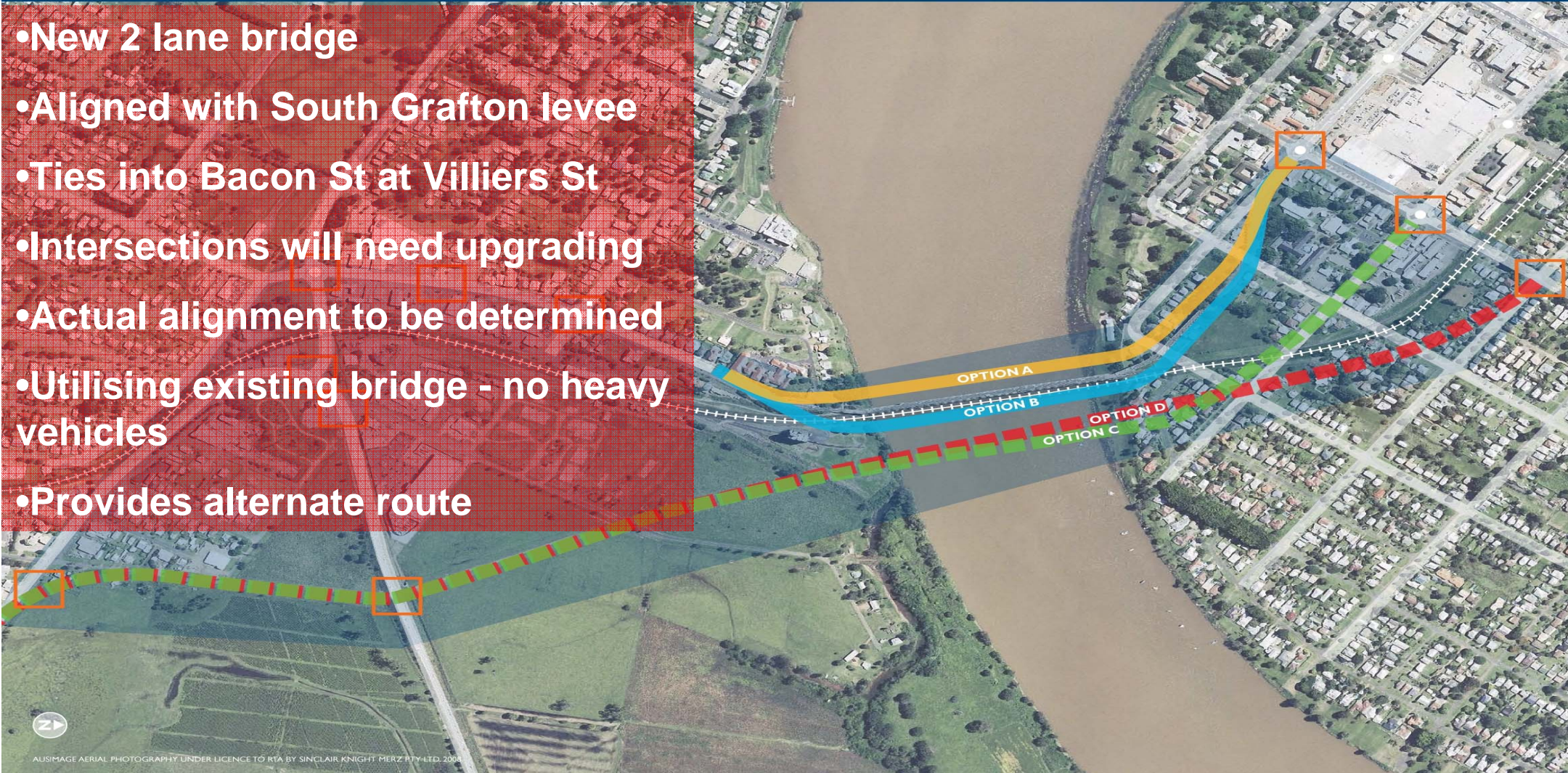
- New 2 lane bridge
- Aligned with South Grafton levee
- Lower bridge goes under rail line in Pound Street
- Intersections will need upgrading
- Actual alignment to be determined
- Utilising existing bridge - no heavy vehicles
- Provides an alternate route



Preliminary options – Option D

Additional Clarence River crossing – preliminary options

- New 2 lane bridge
- Aligned with South Grafton levee
- Ties into Bacon St at Villiers St
- Intersections will need upgrading
- Actual alignment to be determined
- Utilising existing bridge - no heavy vehicles
- Provides alternate route



The process



RELEASE TRAFFIC STUDY REPORT (2009)

PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION
Additional traffic studies
and development of four preliminary options

WE
ARE
HERE

PUBLIC COMMENT ON THESE
PRELIMINARY OPTIONS AND OTHERS

PRELIMINARY ENVIRONMENTAL INVESTIGATIONS
Engineering and social options including considerations
of community comments and refinement inputs/
adjustment of the preliminary options

DISPLAY CONCEPT ROUTE OPTIONS
Community feedback invited on development route options

PUBLIC
SUBMISSIONS

REPORT ON FIELD
INVESTIGATIONS

VALUE
MANAGEMENT
WORKSHOP

RTA PREFERRED ROUTE SELECTION PROCESS

CONSIDERATION AND DECISION BY THE RTA
AND THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT AND ROADS
ON THE PREFERRED ROUTE

Community workshops

Grafton Community Centre

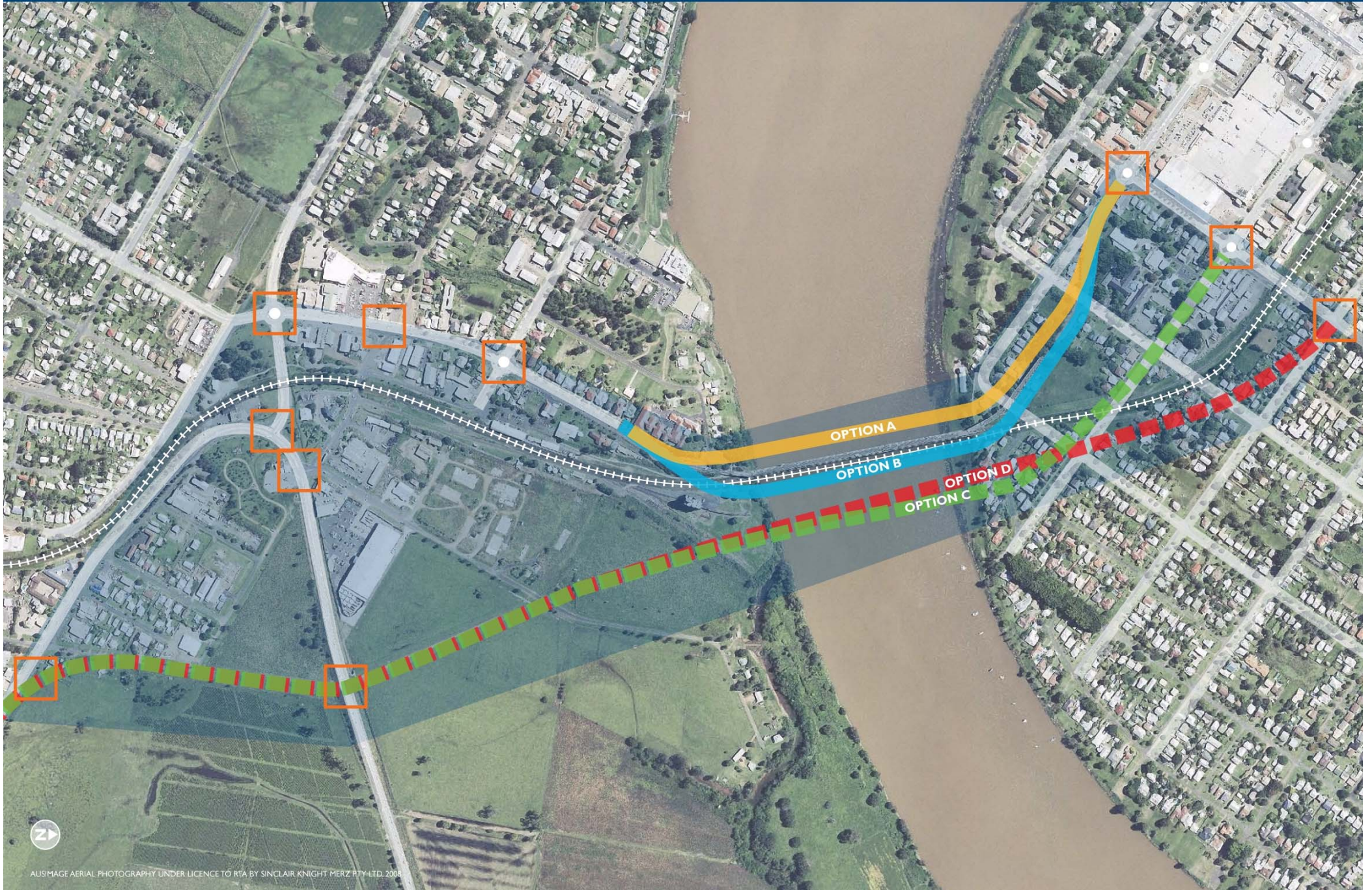
59 Duke Street, Grafton

Thursday 11 March 2010

From 10am to noon or 6.30pm to 8.30pm

To attend the workshops please register by calling **1800 633 332** prior to the day, so that we can cater for the workshops.

Additional Clarence River crossing – preliminary options



QUESTION TIME:

Question / Comment	Response
Funding and Costs	
Why talk about this now, when there is no funding? Why the rush?	This is just the start of the process. The RTA wants to give the community the best opportunity to comment and ensure that everyone is aware of what is happening with the development. The community have the opportunity to comment and provide submissions on these options or any alternatives within the study area until the 31 March 2010.
Has the RTA costed each of the 4 options?	Preliminary estimates for each of the options will be included in the planning studies, during the next step in the project.
Heritage	
Will there be a heritage study as part of the route selection process?	Yes, heritage aspects will be investigated and considered in the next phase of the planning process, which involve environmental investigations.

Property & Acquisition	
Concern regarding the number of houses lost if option D is selected.	The RTA do not know exactly where the preferred route will go at this stage. The RTA is targeting the end of the year to select a preferred route. The RTA understands the uncertainty with property within the study area and will work through the planning process in a satisfactory time with the community to come up with one option. There are legislative processes for acquisition once a preferred option is determined. The RTA will generally not purchase property until it is needed for construction.
When will the bridge actually be built? Property prices will be impacted by the uncertainty.	At this stage there is no commitment to fund construction of a second crossing. The RTA understands the uncertainty regarding where the bridge will go and that is why the RTA is aiming to identify a preferred route by the end of the year.
What about compensation for those houses not demolished, but still impacted? Property value will be reduced.	Once a preferred route is known and funding has been provided for construction, the RTA will work through a legislative process for land acquisition required to accommodate a proposed corridor. For houses not directly impacted, they will not be acquired. However, the RTA will assess the indirect impact and consider appropriate mitigation treatments for those properties.
If property acquisition is based on market value, how is this calculated?	Property acquisition is based on current market value at the time the property is purchased and does not take into account that a road is going to be going through the property.

Property & Acquisition	
Once the decision is made for a route, what happens to affected houses until the funding becomes available for construction?	The RTA will not seek to acquire land until funding for construction becomes available. Under legislation the RTA can consider hardship acquisitions during the period between the identification of a preferred route and the release of construction funding.
Are there any RTA project team members who have houses in the study area? How would you feel about losing your home?	No. Project team members are empathetic for the residents potentially affected by the route development. Unfortunately any alignment in Grafton will impact on the community. The RTA will work through the process as quickly as possible to try and alleviate some of the anxiety being felt in the community.

Traffic	
Summerland Way bypass benefits may have been under-estimated. If there were a bypass, more people may choose to use it, than what the 2009 traffic modelling is showing.	The recent traffic modelling confirms the results of the previous traffic modelling, where it has been identified that most of the traffic crossing the bridge has an origin or destination at either South Grafton or Grafton. Hence the most viable option for the majority of people of Grafton is a second crossing somewhere in the locality of the existing bridge.
Previous consultation presented 4 options, and these 4 options all still result in a 'bottleneck'.	Options C and D present options to split the traffic flow, using different approach roads and connections to options A and B. The 2009 traffic modelling is showing that option C and D has the potential to allow for future traffic growth.
Will these options actually alleviate timeframes for crossing from Grafton to South Grafton?	The current traffic modelling is indicating that traffic times will be reduced for all options in the short-term. However, options C and D have better longer term performance. It is an objective of the project that the route provides efficiency for users.
Are you looking at building the bridge just to relieve the 20 minute delay for residents rather than getting the trucks out of the CBD?	The actual delay currently is approximately 7-9 minutes and this is predicted to increase substantially within the next 10 years if nothing is done. Trucks make up a very small percentage of the overall vehicles using the bridge and many trucks that use the bridge have an origin or destination point somewhere in Grafton or South Grafton.
The Pacific Highway upgrades will alleviate the truck traffic through Grafton; therefore it is good that the four options address locals, rather than regional truck traffic issues.	
Feeding traffic into the CBD of Grafton and South Grafton will create congestion, therefore a new bridge should be built outside of the CBD areas.	Previous studies have discounted options outside the locality of the existing bridge. Majority of traffic crossing the bridge want to get into or out of Grafton or South Grafton, less people will use a bridge further upstream or downstream of Grafton.
Has the RTA considered modelling traffic where the existing bridge is not used?	No, the bridge is heritage listed and as part of this listing the bridge must be maintained and used as it is intended. Therefore, provided the bridge is safe for vehicles; traffic will be allowed to use the bridge.

Traffic	
<p>If you build a road then people will use it. Therefore building a new bridge outside of the CBD will be successful despite what the traffic model is indicating.</p> <p>If traffic is going to double, wouldn't it be better to take the traffic out of town and move the bridge away?</p> <p>A bridge in the study area would make Grafton CBD busier, compounding the issue. An alternative bridge might promote growth in another area. If a new bridge was built near Clarenza people would use it. If you build a road then people will use it. Therefore building a new bridge outside of the CBD will be successful despite what the traffic model is indicating.</p> <p>If traffic is going to double, wouldn't it be better to take the traffic out of town and move the bridge away?</p> <p>A bridge in the study area would make Grafton CBD busier, compounding the issue. An alternative bridge might promote growth in another area. If a new bridge was built near Clarenza people would use it.</p>	<p>Based on previous (to 2005) studies other options were discounted as they were not viable. Localities between Susan and Elizabeth Islands were investigated. The further out of the CBD a bridge is built, the less people would use it. People will still need to get into Grafton and South Grafton CBD. If a bridge is located out of town it reduces the efficiency and increases the travel time for a majority of people wanting to go into Grafton and South Grafton.</p>
<p>Has the RTA considered the impact option C will have on Shopping World, particularly regarding traffic and access issues at the intersections?</p>	<p>No, the options presented, have only considered traffic predictions at this stage. The intersections and access issues along with other impacts will be considered and assessed as part of the preliminary planning studies to follow this consultation period.</p>
<p>Did the RTA take into account emergency vehicles when undertaking the traffic analysis?</p>	<p>Not specifically, but the objective to reduce delays is all about getting people across the river as efficiently as possible, including emergency vehicles.</p>
<p>What are the vehicles per hour (VPH) for the existing bridge? What will be the VPH for the two bridges (incl. new bridge)? Will the two bridges create sufficient capacity based on projected growth?</p>	<p>The current average weekday traffic is approximately 27,000 vehicles. The traffic growth has been modelled on 1.9% and a sensitivity analysis on growth has been undertaken based on 0.9%, 1.9% and 2.9% growth.</p>
<p>Won't option D create a greater spread of congestion?</p>	<p>Options C and D create an alternative option for commuters and give more option for people wanting to access Grafton and South Grafton.</p>
<p>For options C and D, can the traffic be split into 3 ways at the intersection of Pound and Kent Streets?</p>	<p>Next phase of investigations will look at the intersections and how they could work. These suggested preliminary options or any derivative of these will undergo significant examination.</p>
<p>The RTA need to look at the approaches on either side of the existing bridge as this is where the problem is, not the bridge.</p>	<p>The issue is that there are 4 lanes (two north bound and two south bound) either side of the bridge on Bent and Fitzroy Streets, leading into two (one lane each way) on the bridge. Therefore it is the bridge that requires the greater capacity, and an ability to allow free flow traffic.</p>

Traffic	
How would the bridges work if one was temporarily closed down, for whatever reason?	With options C and D, traffic can be diverted onto the alternative route. Options A and B need further work as there are constraints with the approach roads.
It seems the figures on vehicles quoted from the RTA have changed with each new planning period, why is that?	The traffic modelling data is thorough and has built on the previous traffic studies undertaken.

Flooding	
Has the flood mitigation authority been consulted? There is concern about the safety of a bridge in this location.	No, flood mitigation has not been consulted as yet, but the hydrology/flooding impacts of these options or any derivative of these will be assessed in detail in consultation with relevant authorities and experts during the preliminary environmental investigations.
Construction techniques have become very good and it is relatively cheap to construct in fill, why haven't the RTA considered building across floodplain?	Building across floodplain poses many problems, particularly during construction. It would also mean that flood patterns could change and cause further problems in the future.
Option C has constraints due to flooding around the viaduct, and could potentially cause safety problems for trucks.	Flooding, due to having to get under the rail line as option C shows is a known constraint of the options and will need to be considered further in the following planning studies and preliminary environmental investigations.

Public Transport	
Definitely need a new bridge, for the future. Has the RTA considered public transport options? Bigger picture thinking on alternative means of transport to private vehicle need to be considered.	The RTA will take into account all transport considerations including public transport. However the brief given to the RTA is to look at how to get traffic across the Clarence River in the most feasible way, in line with the project objectives.

Other Options	
What about going across Susan Island?	As mentioned in the presentation, the RTA previously considered several localities for a second crossing, both upstream and downstream of the existing bridge. One of the options was to go across Susan Island at the end of Turf Street. However this was discounted at the Value Management Workshop, and is not being pursued further. Current traffic modelling data is confirming previous traffic data, which indicates that most people want to get into the Grafton and South Grafton areas and the further out the crossing is located, the less people will use it, therefore it will not be a viable option.

Other Options	
Has the RTA considered moving the rail from underneath the existing bridge, so traffic can go to South Grafton underneath and go to Grafton on top? Then build a new rail bridge?	Yes, the RTA has looked at this option. However, there are numerous constraints with the narrow width of the top and lower decks, also issues with the steel trusses.
Investigation is very limited (short-sighted) and other options may need to be considered, need to look at the Summerland Way. Particularly with freight growth from South-East Qld.	The Pacific Highway upgrade and the eventual bypass of Grafton will also need to be considered with respect to freight growth and likely freight movements in and around Grafton. These growth areas, including development around South-East Qld will be factored in to a preferred option. Current studies show that approximately 2% of traffic (including heavy vehicles) are through traffic, the rest is either originating or has a destination at either Grafton or South Grafton.
Why have other options both upstream and downstream been discounted when they were considered previously? Especially options at Dobie Street, Turf Street or North Streets. Why have other options both upstream and downstream been discounted when they were considered previously? Especially options at Dobie Street, Turf Street or North Streets.	Other options considered previously were discounted. The RTA is not looking to revisit these discounted options, rather the RTA is moving forward and building on the previous studies and information undertaken that reconfirms a new bridge in the vicinity of the existing bridge is the best location.
Previous recommended preferred option was B, why isn't the RTA now saying that option B is preferred?	In 2004 option 2B was a recommended option only from the Value Management Workshop. It was never announced as the preferred route. Since then there has been a lot of development changes that have occurred, including the upgrade of the Pacific Highway, Shopping World Redevelopment, Clarenza, Industrial / Commercial development at South Grafton, which meant the RTA have had to revisit the traffic studies based on these changes.

General	
How wide will the bridge be and how wide will the approach lanes be? How wide is a 4-lane road?	The video is purely to show the traffic simulation. The bridge would not be built above the houses as shown in the video. The RTA is unsure how the corridor would look this early in the planning process. It may look similar to Fitzroy/Bent Streets depending on the route and how much mitigation is required.
A not-for-profit community based pre-school is located within the alignments of C & D – this should be considered.	It is noted.
Has the RTA already selected an option? Therefore, making the community input a waste of time?	No, the RTA is trying to provide the community with the maximum amount of input. Submissions can be made up until the 31 March on the preliminary options. All submissions will be forwarded to the planning consultant to be considered during the development of the route options that will be displayed later this year.

Community input, planning, and future studies	
How closely will the RTA work with the town planner and the planning department of Clarence Valley Council to look at the future growth areas that might impact on the route selection?	The RTA will work with Council to work through the local traffic management issues. The traffic congestion is a local problem, and the traffic analysis takes into account the growth areas on the periphery of Grafton and South Grafton.
Consider that council review it's zoning and planning policies and make school children go to school within their respective zones; i.e. those that live in South Grafton go to South Grafton schools and the same for Grafton school children. This would reduce number of vehicles wanting to cross the bridge in peak hours.	That is something Council would have to consider. The RTA will liaise closely with council throughout the planning process.
Has the RTA considered the impact to the Aged Care Facility on Bent Street?	Option C or D will not have an impact on the nursing home, and it considered that options A or B could have minimal impact. The next phase of the planning process will look at constructability aspects of the options or any other options but at this stage the RTA do not perceive any major impact to the nursing home.
The majority of people want an alternative to what's proposed in the study area. Can the community have an impact and a say? Can the community make a difference? The RTA seems set on a bridge within the study area, so what's the point of the community workshops and consultation in general?	The RTA is only looking at options within the grey shaded study area and will consider alternative options within this area. The RTA wants the community to consider alternatives within the study area, based on local knowledge of the area. The current route options are not firm; however the study area is the only parameter.

Timing	
Is there a ghost timeline for construction of the bridge?	No
What sort of timeframe can the community expect to wait for a bridge? It's having a large impact on property values due to the uncertainty. What's the timeframe for constructing the bridge?	There is currently no funding available for construction. However, identifying a preferred route will allow certainty for residents and will allow the council to plan for the future better for transport and development.

Study Area	
Grey study area is flawed. Need to consider an option outside of the study area. Are the preliminary traffic studies sufficient and does another study needs to be done?	The RTA is building on previous studies as current studies are confirming previously undertaken studies on traffic movements. The studies are thorough and although some assumptions (such as development areas within Grafton and South Grafton) have changed from the previous studies, there is no need at this stage to undertake another traffic study.
Lots of community concern about the grey study area and uncertainty for people who want to sell their properties.	The next phase of planning investigations will look to reduce the study area, as the options are refined. The RTA are trying to move through the planning phase relatively quickly to help limit the uncertainty for the community.

The project team remained to answer individual questions.

CONTACT INFORMATION / DETAILS

Community phone number for the project is **1800 633 332**.

Information is also available on the RTA website - follow the links to regional projects/northcoast

<http://rta.nsw.gov.au/constructionmaintenance/majorconstructionprojectsregional/northcoast/grafonbridge.html>