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Dongara-Geraldton-Northampton Route Road Planning Study

Community Consultation Report #2

December 2022

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Background

Planning study overview

Brand Highway and North West Coastal Highway currently form the coastal freight route between Perth and the North West of Western Australia, linking the major population centres of Perth, Geraldton, Carnarvon and Karratha.

As the Mid-West region and Geraldton grows, traffic volumes will increase, and safety will continue to be a focus for future roads. Already there are significant local concerns about:

- the mix of traffic and access requirements.
- road alignments passing through townsites.
- sections of poor horizontal and vertical geometry.
- flooding, environmental and heritage considerations.
- property and community impacts.

To address these issues, Main Roads is undertaking a road planning study to identify a broad corridor suitable for further investigation to accommodate a high standard, free-flowing route for regional and freight traffic that minimises conflict with local traffic in Geraldton city and other built-up areas. The route will also contribute to greater freight efficiency by supporting triple road trains to travel between Carnarvon and Muchea.

The planning study is in its earliest stage - Alignment Selection - in which Main Roads and other stakeholders confirm a broad road corridor for investigation. In the next stage of the planning study – known as Alignment Definition – more detailed investigations will be undertaken to determine where a road alignment could be located within this corridor. This will allow the land required to be protected and provide certainty for affected landowners.

The planning work is currently considering the corridor in three separate sections:

- the northern section (north of Geraldton to Northampton)
- the southern section (Dongara to Moonyoonooka)
- the central section (located within the previously identified Oakajee-Narngulu Infrastructure Corridor (ONIC), for which planning has been led by the former Department of Planning (now Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage) and Department of State Development (now Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation))

Planning study objectives

The DGN corridor must be capable of providing a safe, reliable and sustainable road-based transport system to a standard appropriate for inclusion on the national highway network. It will provide for a future high quality, safe and efficient road suitable for all road users, including the largest heavy vehicle combinations permitted on our roads, and is underpinned by Main Roads' aspiration "to provide world class outcomes for our customers".

The primary objectives for this route planning study are:

- **Safe Road & Reserve:** Plan for a safe, homogeneous road and surrounding environment that caters for current and future network demands through the application of consistent, relevant and appropriate design standards and safe system principles. Reduce conflict between regional and local traffic.
- **Route Efficiency:** Identify safety and efficiency improvements for all road users that contribute to, and/or will not prejudice, the ultimate freight network in the area. This will include providing a 110 km/hr design speed.
- **Freight Efficiency:** Facilitate optimal freight efficiency by supporting the proposed RAV 10 network from Muchea to Carnarvon and planning a future network that will provide:
 - roads capable of accommodating the largest heavy vehicle combinations supporting the future and oversize / overmass vehicles
 - separation of heavy/regional vehicles and local traffic from built up areas
 - appropriate access control
 - grade separated crossings
 - roads that are resilient to closure due to major fire / flood events.
- **Economic Development:** Facilitate economic development and growth of local and regional industries (including agriculture, commercial, mining and tourism) by providing appropriate levels of connectivity to the network, connecting Geraldton with its hinterland and other locations on the wider Perth-Pilbara routes. Provision should be made for multimodal hubs and integrated transport opportunities where appropriate, including connection to existing and future strategic development areas in the Shire of Dongara, Chapman Valley and Northampton and the City of Greater Geraldton.
- **Route Amenity:** Improve safety and amenity for all road users by considering provision of facilities to cater for fatigue and journey management.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Manage stakeholder involvement throughout the process to achieve an understanding of stakeholders' concerns; consensus on approach; and general support for recommendations where possible.
- **Natural, Cultural & Built Environment:** Protect and enhance natural and built environment throughout planning processes by identifying relevant constraints and opportunities and minimising impacts of road on the most valuable and/or sensitive assets.
- **Sustainability:** Embed sustainability principles throughout the project lifecycle to drive economic, social and environmental benefit.
- **Value for Money:** Consideration given to efficient use of resources through whole cycle of planning, design, construction and maintenance of transport corridors.
- **Integrated Land Use and Transport Planning:** Identify and use opportunities to collaborate with other organisations to deliver integrated planning outcomes and enable development/growth in line with endorsed strategies.

Purpose of this report

The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of the community and stakeholder engagement undertaken for the project since 2015, focusing on the most recent engagement activities undertaken in 2022.

How community consultation has influenced route corridor selection

Consultation with the community and key stakeholders has played a vital role in this planning study.

Initial community consultation was undertaken in 2015, with six different options presented for community and stakeholder feedback - three north of Geraldton and three to the south (all using the ONIC as the central link).

The information received during this consultation, as well as further planning investigations, led to the identification of a single preferred corridor, released in September 2020 for public comment. Feedback was sought via the My Say Transport website and through direct engagement with property owners and key stakeholder groups.

During the 2020 consultation, Main Roads received 190 survey responses via My Say Transport as well as a number of direct submissions from members of the public and stakeholder groups. The direct submissions supported many of the themes raised in the text submissions received as part of the My Say Transport survey, including concerns about individual property impacts and the potential for community severance in Walkaway.

Further planning work was then undertaken to review and re-test all options previously identified, plus several additional routes suggested by the community. In total, 17 route variations were considered from Brand Highway in the west to Tabletop Road/Burma Road in the east. These investigations identified an optimised corridor between Dongara and Moonyoonooka that improved property, community, environmental and heritage outcomes.

This optimised corridor deviates east north of Mount Horner Road West, avoiding properties and homes along Arthur Road in Walkaway, before reconnecting with the previously preferred alignment at Moonyoonooka.

While this optimised corridor marginally increases the distance of the future transport route, it avoids any direct impact on dwellings in the realigned section and significantly reduces the total number of homes affected between Dongara and Moonyoonooka. It also addresses the access and severance concerns previously raised by the Walkaway community and avoids environmentally and culturally sensitive areas.

Given the generally positive community feedback received on the proposed corridor north of Moonyoonooka and south of Mount Horner Road West, no changes were made to those sections. The central section of the route corridor was also unchanged and remains within the previously planned Oakajee Narngulu Infrastructure Corridor (ONIC).

The optimised investigation corridor was released for public comment in 2022 and the findings are summarised in the next section of this report.

2022 Community Consultation

Consultation Purpose

The 2022 round of consultation primarily sought feedback on the optimised investigation corridor between Mount Horner Road West and Moonyoonooka, within the southern section of the proposed future route (Dongara to Geraldton).

The aim of the consultation was to ensure that:

- Community members were sufficiently informed about to study and had opportunities to discuss and comment on the recommended alignment.
- Issues of community concern were identified and adequately considered before recommending a preferred alignment to Government.

Direct engagement with property owners

Main Roads wrote to landowners within or very close to the realigned section of the alignment offering face-to-face meetings to discuss the potential impact of the corridor. Repeated attempts were made to contact every landowner, using the latest ratepayer data supplied by the City of Greater Geraldton.

Between June and December 2022, more than 30 meetings were held to discuss individual property impacts and requirements for consideration as part of the future planning process. This represented about two-thirds of the landowners with land within or adjacent to the realigned section of the corridor, and almost 100% of those identified as having homes nearby. About 18% of landowners did not respond to Main Roads' correspondence and could not be contacted, despite multiple attempts. Approximately 10% of landowners contacted by Main Roads declined the offer of a meeting because they had no concerns with the proposed corridor. A small number (8%) declined the offer of a meeting, citing their opposition to the proposal as the reason for their refusal.

Most property owners with land impacted by the proposed route had concerns about:

- Impacts on farming operations and lifestyle
- Amenity (noise/visual)
- Property access
- Preservation of water sources
- Perceived loss of property value and the compensation process

Some property owners saw the proposed future route as potentially benefitting them in some way, especially where there was a commercial interest on the property or where improved local access to a highway could provide an advantage to future development, or where they had plans to subdivide and/or on-sell portions of their property at some point in the future.

The questions most frequently asked by landowners are answered in our FAQ document at **Appendix 1**. The collective issues raised, as well as the individual requirements for each property, will be considered in more detail as part of the next planning phase (Alignment Definition). This will provide landowners with more certainty on future plans.

My Say Transport

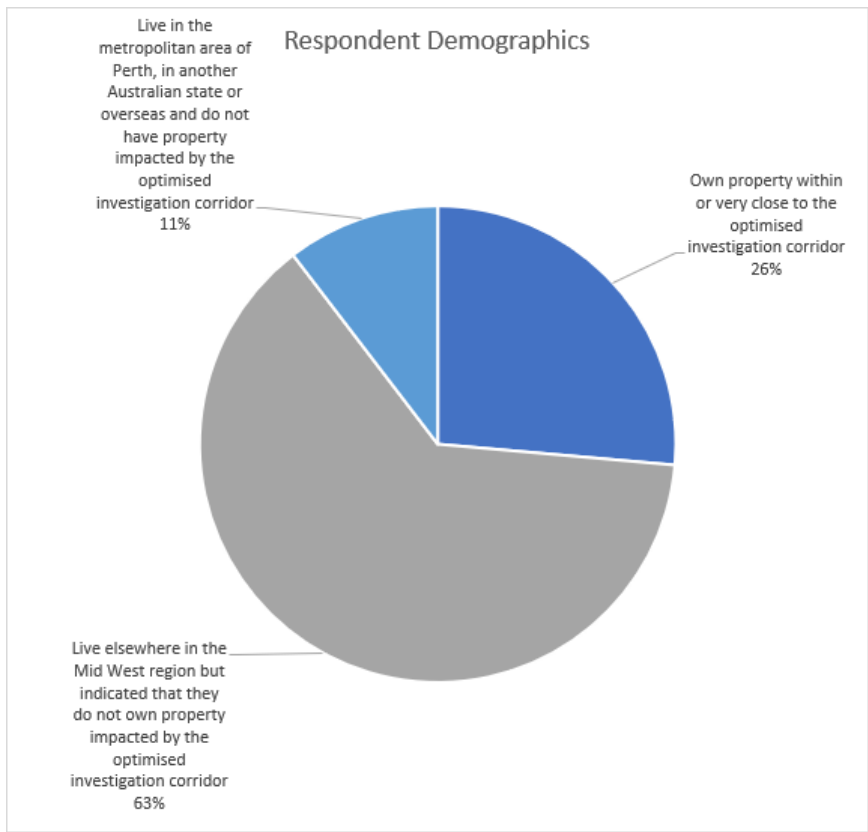
The My Say Transport online portal has twice been used to gather community feedback to inform this planning study (in 2020 and again in 2022).

Since the My Say page was launched in 2020, it has been visited more than 8,000 times for people to access information and maps and/or provide feedback. As a result, more than 900 people have registered for email updates to stay informed about this planning study.

An invitation to participate in the 2022 consultation was sent directly to all project subscribers and the consultation period was also promoted via the project’s dedicated webpage, social media and other stakeholders. During the consultation period, more than 340 people visited the My Say Transport survey page and 125 provided a response. This is notably less than the 1,016 who visited in 2020, generating 190 responses.

Key findings from the 2022 online survey

Three-quarters of the respondents in 2022 do not have property within or close to the investigation corridor, and live either elsewhere in the region, in metropolitan Perth, in another state of Australia or overseas.



Analysis of the 2022 responses indicated the number of individual issues raised by respondents was reduced overall, in comparison to 2020.

In 2020, the submissions focused on:

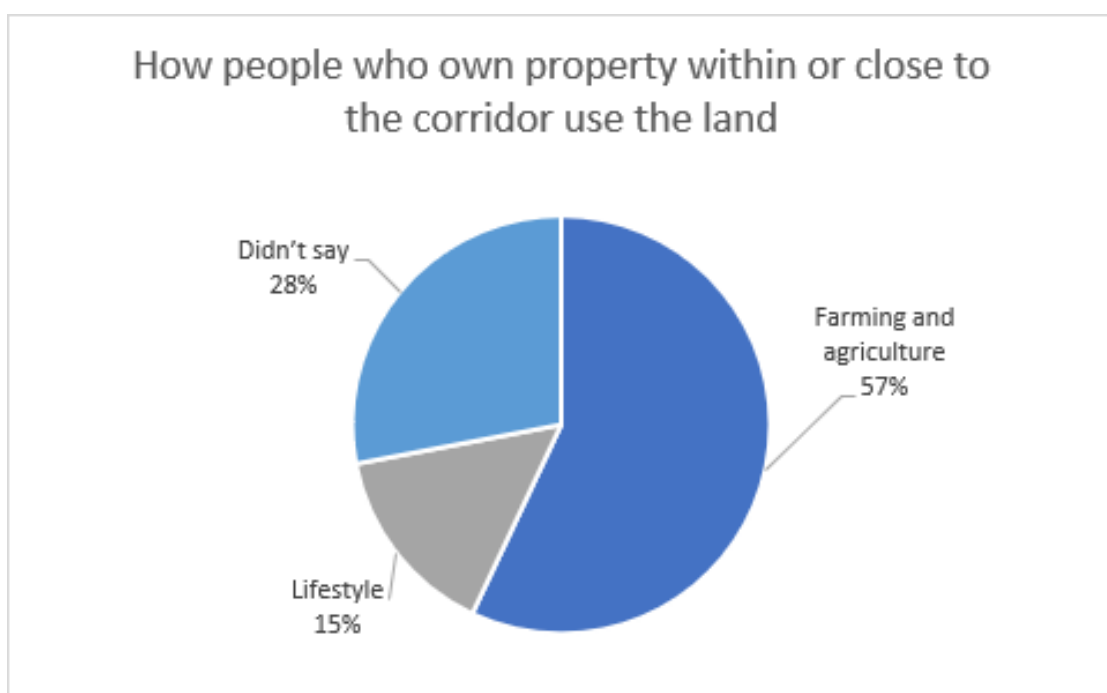
- Property impacts (including compensation)
- Community severance
- Business/economic concerns
- Road safety
- Impacts to lifestyle/amenity
- Communication channels
- Environment and heritage

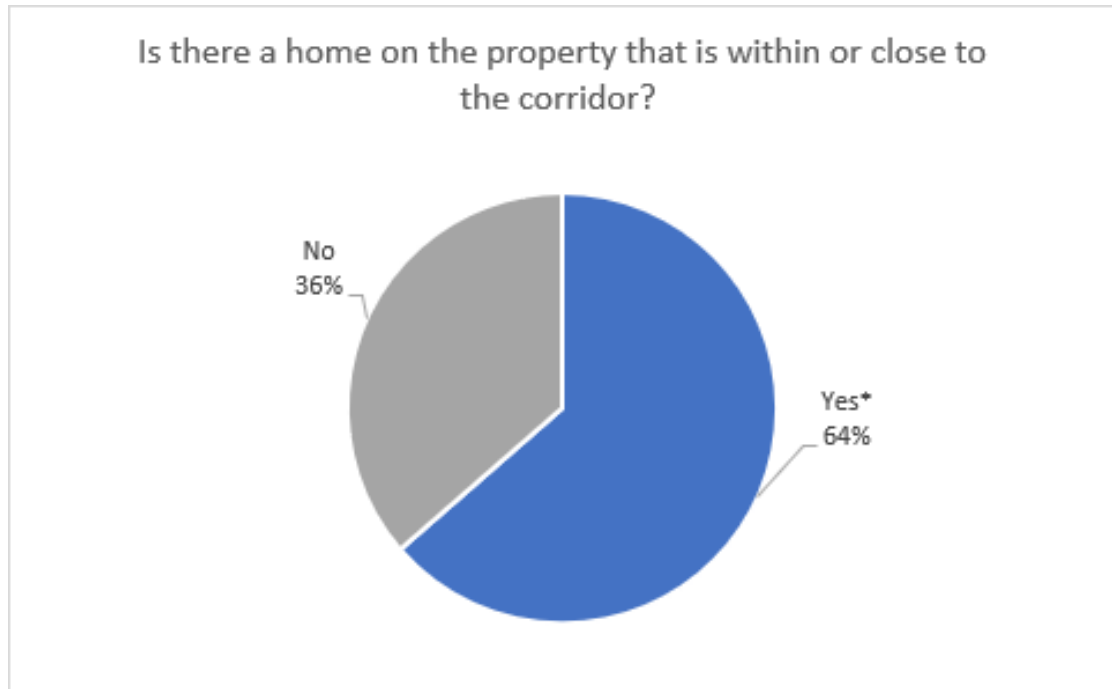
The 2022 submissions primarily raised concerns about:

- Property impacts (including compensation)
- Business/economic concerns
- Impacts to lifestyle/amenity
- Communication channels

While the majority (86%) of survey respondents indicated some level of dissatisfaction with the revised corridor, their supporting commentary reaffirmed the previous finding that individual property impacts were of the greatest concern for most people. In contrast to the 2020 consultation submissions, more than a quarter (28%) of the 2022 responses came from people registering their opposition on behalf of family and/or friends who own or occupy property within the corridor.

More than half the respondents said farming/agriculture was the primary use of land within or very close to the optimised investigation corridor.





Important note: While 64% of respondents indicated there was a home on the property within or close to the corridor, it is important to note that **no homes will be directly impacted within the realigned section. The realignment of the corridor actually reduces the number of homes within the corridor from 10 to 4 and halves the number of homes adjacent to the corridor from 12 to 6.*

The responses indicated that, while most people understood the need to plan for a future route, some still did not understand why Brand Highway or other routes could not be pursued.

Notably, the 2022 feedback also indicated that the broader community issue of access and potential community severance (raised in 2020) was no longer a primary concern for the Walkaway community.

Conclusion

The results of this consultation indicate that there remains some landowner concern about impacts to individual properties, especially those being used for agricultural operations, within the optimised investigation corridor for the Dongara-Geraldton-Northampton route (between Mount Horner Road West and Moonyoonooka). However, when compared with previous feedback, it shows that the optimisation of the investigation corridor has reduced the individual number of landowners who are concerned about impacts to farming or lifestyle properties. It also illustrates that the realignment has largely addressed the previous concerns about community severance and impact on environmentally and culturally sensitive areas. It should also be noted that a significant number of responses were from people who do not own property impacted by the optimised investigation corridor.

The key issues raised during this consultation, and Main Roads' responses, are outlined in the FAQs at **Appendix 1**. In summary, these address:

- The need for a new route, including expected growth in the region, the demands for efficient access along the coastal route from Muchea to Carnarvon and the need to reduce conflict between local and regional traffic to improve road safety.
- Why utilising the existing Brand Highway is not a viable option, because it does not separate local and regional travel and has high social and amenity impacts.
- Avoiding property impacts and how this will be managed in future planning stages.

The results of this consultation will be incorporated into the final DGN Alignment Selection Study Report.

Next Steps

The valuable information we have received from all respondents during the consultation, including the owners of property within or very close to the optimised investigation corridor, will inform a final Alignment Selection Report that reflects the final preferred road corridor.

This report will be presented to the State Government for endorsement. Once the corridor is confirmed by the State Government, Main Roads will investigate opportunities to protect the corridor, which may include reflecting the alignment in strategic statutory planning documentation. This will provide landowners and other stakeholders with greater certainty on future plans.

Future consultation

The valuable information we have received from all respondents throughout the consultation, and in particular the comprehensive feedback from owners of property within the investigation corridor (both verbal and as part of formal submission), will inform Main Roads' future planning phase to determine the final location and configuration of a road within the corridor.

Known as Alignment Definition, this future planning will consider, in greater detail, issues such as local road connections and cross-corridor access. It will also include detailed environmental and geotechnical investigations as well as ground surveys.

This ongoing planning will be underpinned by further consultation with property owners, to manage and mitigate property impacts as much as possible, while still achieving the required project outcomes.

Appendix 1 – FAQs

JULY 2022



Dongara-Geraldton-Northampton Route Planning Study

Frequently Asked Questions

Why do you need a new road?

Traffic volumes through the region are increasing and, more specifically, the demand for freight traffic using the coastal route of Brand Highway and North West Coastal Highway (north-south) is on the rise. At times, one in every five vehicles on Brand Highway is a truck. Current predictions show the number of heavy vehicles using the north-south corridor may increase by about seven per cent per year.

Traffic and freight movements along Geraldton-Mount Magnet Road (east-west corridor) show a similar trend, with an increase in both traffic volumes and heavy vehicles.

To safely cater for this future traffic, upgrading the transport connection between the Perth metropolitan area, the Mid-West, Gascoyne and Pilbara regions is considered essential to the region's economic development, including tourism, agricultural, mining and renewable industries, as well as community wellbeing and growth. In addition, there is a strategic need to enable transport operators using triple road trains (RAV 10 vehicles) to travel between Carnarvon and Muchea safely and efficiently, increasing productivity and viability for current and potential business and the community.

A safe and efficient route between Dongara and Northampton, that reduces interaction between communities and removes heavy vehicles from townsites and other populated areas, is a critical element of this strategy.

Why can't you upgrade Brand Highway?

To address safety and efficiency considerations for all road users into the future, it is not feasible to pursue localised upgrades on sub-standard sections of the existing road network, including Brand Highway. This is because these upgrades would not meet the freight efficiency and safety objectives, as larger triple road trains (RAV 10 vehicles) would be unable to use much of the existing road network.

It is also not feasible to pursue a wide scale upgrade (or replacement) of much of the existing road network, including Brand Highway. This is because these upgrades would have a significant impact on established adjoining land uses and property accesses, as well as community and heritage values, attractiveness of the route for tourism and protection of sensitive environmental areas.

More specifically, if we were to upgrade Brand Highway it would need to be a dual carriageway road to meet road safety requirements. To provide safe access to adjacent development and housing, service roads would be required along most of the route. This means we may require at least 180 metres of land, severing about 300 individual freehold titles and impacting almost 100 homes. This may increase into the future, based on ongoing development, and would be an undesirable impact on the local community.

Furthermore, 55 minor access roads would need to be diverted, closed or integrated into a new parallel local road network at considerable cost. Additionally,

the road would need to be raised considerably to meet national highway standards, which may determinately affect the local flood regime of the Greenough River or require expensive design solutions to mitigate flood risks to the community.

A dedicated new route, that provides safe regional-level movements of people and freight, and allows the existing road network, including Brand Highway, to retain its role for access to local land uses, businesses and tourism destinations, is preferred. This best balances the project objectives and benefits against its impact on the community, environment and heritage.

How did Main Roads identify and develop the optimised investigation corridor?

Since 2015 we have been working on a high-level analysis and assessment of a broad range of options. In 2020-21 we consulted on a single preferred corridor north and south of Geraldton (interfacing with the previously planned ONIC corridor).

Generally, community feedback received on the proposed corridor north of Moonyoonooka and south of Mount Horner Road West was positive and for these sections people generally supported the new corridor alignment.

However, there were significant concerns raised for the proposed section south of Moonyoonooka and north of Mouth Horner Road West.

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Based on this community feedback, and considering current economic growth in the region, we therefore retested all potential route corridor options for the south, including the option recommended and consulted on in 2020-21. A Brand Highway to Rudd's Gully Road upgrade was also reviewed and tested again, as well as a number of new options around Walkaway to address the specific community concerns raised in 2020-21. This led to the optimised investigation corridor being identified, which is now being presented for consultation.

The optimised investigation corridor alignment is considered the most viable alternative, as it provides an equal balance of environmental, social, economic and engineering factors and similar value for money outcomes as the 2020-21 preferred corridor, benefitting current and future generations.

The optimised investigation corridor presents a route which mostly respects the community's expectations while reducing impacts on affected landholders, including dwellings, community amenity and ecologically sensitive areas.

In the current phase of corridor planning, the optimised investigation corridor recommends a broad, 500m wide investigation alignment for further, detailed analysis and refinement during a future alignment definition phase.

During alignment definition, it is expected that a 100m wide reservation will be defined within that broader corridor, allowing for a single carriageway of varying median width with overtaking lanes, wide shoulders and roadside vegetation buffers. Additional space for service roads and interchanges may also be required. The corridor may also be wider where engineering solutions are required to address undulating terrain and where extra width is necessary to accommodate heavy earthworks. At times, additional space is also required for the location of public utility services.

The current alignment selection phase of the optimised investigation corridor does not formalise the planning process or confirm road reservation requirements.

What are you consulting on now?

We are currently seeking feedback on the optimised investigation section of the southern corridor, between Mount Horner Road West and Moonyoonooka.

This consultation process includes targeted, individual engagement with landowners along the realigned section of the corridor to better understand how they may be affected and discuss options to mitigate impacts to homes, lifestyle, business and agricultural operations, and to discuss potential future constraints and opportunities that may arise from the new corridor alignment.

Given, the generally positive community feedback received on the proposed corridor north of Moonyoonooka and south of Mount Horner Road West, no changes are planned in these areas. However, all feedback is welcomed for consideration in the future project phases.

Why were affected landowners and local government not contacted ahead of public announcement of the optimised investigation corridor?

Prior to the 2020-21 public consultation on the preferred route corridor option, Main Roads discussed the proposal with a number of key stakeholders in a confidential setting. However, confidentiality was not maintained and information was released to the public without consent.

As this information was released without supporting consultation material, it caused a lot of angst and uncertainty in the community. To the best of our ability, Main Roads responded to landowners, members of the public and the media, however this ad-hoc process was undesirable and further impacted those potentially affected.

To avoid a similar situation from arising again, and to ensure an open and transparent process that respects and

treats everyone the same, the current consultation and information on the optimised investigation corridor was released to everyone at the same time. Individual consultation with affected landowners was rolled out immediately following this announcement, with initial face-to-face meetings prioritising those with property impacts. All landowners along the optimised section of the corridor have been contacted and will have equal opportunity to provide feedback.

Why was this optimised investigation route not identified earlier?

Route planning is an iterative process. Given the length of the entire route corridor and its rural location, potential corridor alignment permutations are almost endless. The assessment of routes is complex, resource and data intensive. Therefore, only a limited number of distinctively different key route options were investigated previously, and a preferred option published for community feedback. The optimised investigation corridor presents a further improvement to that route corridor option, in response to the valuable feedback received throughout the 2020-21 consultation period. In particular, it addresses community feedback regarding potential impacts to dwellings, community severance and proximity to wetlands associated with the previous route corridor variant. Main Roads is now recommending the optimised version of this route as the preferred investigation corridor option.

How many homes will be affected in the realigned corridor?

There are four homes within the optimised investigation corridor between Dongara and Geraldton, compared to 10 in the previous option. Also, the number of homes adjacent to the optimised investigation corridor has halved, from 12 to six.

How does this fit with the local planning scheme and other land use planning strategies?

As part of our options assessment, we have reviewed endorsed and agreed planning documents and strategies to align the proposed DGN route corridor with these schemes.

Following endorsement of the preferred corridor by State Government, Main Roads will seek to include the optimised investigation corridor in strategic statutory planning documentation to provide landowners with greater certainty on future plans.

When will it be built?

This is a high-level planning study and there is currently no funding available for detailed design or construction. The planning seeks to protect land for the ultimate alignment; however, staged upgrades may be delivered earlier than the ultimate plans. Main Roads considers the northern section between Geraldton and Northampton is a priority and no construction is expected on the southern section between Dongara and Geraldton until at least 2035. We will continue working with stakeholders to identify when upgrades are required and to identify the most appropriate delivery methods.

Can I still develop / subdivide my land?

If your property is in or close to the proposed route corridor, we recommend that you contact Main Roads before submitting any formal plans.

At times, the future road may unlock opportunities to provide access to land parcels that are not currently serviced by a public road, enabling further subdivision or enhancing the development potential of that land. Any access and development proposals should be discussed with Main Roads as early as possible. This will allow them to be assessed and, where possible, reflected in an access strategy that will be developed for the new route.

The planning authority should also contact us as part of their assessment, if they believe there may be any implications on the future road corridor or your proposal; however, it would be beneficial to identify and address any considerations as early as possible in the process.

If my property is impacted, will you buy my land?

This study is a high-level planning study identifying the future need for the road and its broad location within a route corridor.

Typically, funding for land acquisition is not available until a project is ready for construction.

However, in exceptional circumstances requiring individual case-by-case consideration, Main Roads may consider early acquisition on a hardship basis. Should you have concerns around the impact the DGN corridor may have on you or your property, please contact Main Roads on 138 138 or email enquiries@mainroads.wa.gov.au

How do you determine what compensation I will be paid for my land?

This is a comprehensive process requiring specialist advice. The process is outlined in our Land Acquisition Fact Sheet which is available at <https://www.mainroads.wa.gov.au/globalassets/contact/land-acquisition-fact-sheet.pdf>.

For more detailed information, you may call 138 138 and ask to speak to one of Main Roads' Land Acquisition Managers.

How do I provide comments?

General feedback about this planning study can be provided online at www.mysaytransport.wa.gov.au/dongara-geraldton-northampton.

If your property is impacted and you would like to speak with a member of the planning study team, please call 138 138 or email enquiries@mainroads.wa.gov.au.



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