

Dongara-Geraldton-Northampton Route Planning Study

Frequently Asked Questions

Why do you need a new road?

Originally constructed between 1960 and 1976, Brand Highway and North West Coastal Highway forms the most direct coastal route between Perth and the resource-rich north-west region of Western Australia.

Spurred by population and industry growth, an increasing transport demand has seen parts of the network approaching capacity limits, adversely impacting on efficiency and safety of movements.

In particular, the amount of road freight traffic using this coastal route has been on the rise. At times, one in every five vehicles on Brand Highway now is a truck, and current predictions show the number of heavy vehicles using this important north-south corridor will only increase into the future (estimated increase is about seven per cent per year).

Traffic and freight movements along Geraldton-Mount Magnet Road (east-west corridor) have seen a similar trend, with an increase in both future traffic and heavy vehicles volumes predicted. This creates conflicts with north-south demand and drives the need for broader network and intersection improvements.

To ensure regional road freight corridor resilience, safely cater for community wellbeing and the anticipated growth in transport demand, it is essential we plan for an upgrade of the main link between the Perth metropolitan area and the Mid West, Gascoyne and Pilbara regions. In fact, planning for the future DGN route is a vital element in Western Australia's ongoing economic development and

competitiveness, in areas such as tourism, fisheries, agricultural production, mining and renewable industries.

There is also a strategic need to enable transport operators to use 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. Enabling larger freight vehicles to use the road network is likely to reduce the number of trucks on the road and significantly improves the efficiency of their journeys.

Reducing the interaction between communities and heavy vehicles through populated areas, by providing a fit-for-purpose road designed to reduce the risk of incidents causing death or serious injury, will also enhance overall road user safety. The Mid West currently records an above average number of these serious road incidents, when compared to other regions around the state.

The confirmed DGN route corridor alignment allows further planning and investigations to proceed in order to accommodate and address the opportunities and constraints identified throughout the Alignment Selection phase.

Why can't we just upgrade Brand Highway?

To improve safety and efficiency for all road users into the future, it is not feasible to pursue localised upgrades on sections of the existing road network, including Brand Highway. This is because the existing topography, road geometry

and local road network would prevent these roads from meeting the standards required for larger triple road trains (RAV 10 vehicles).

It is also not feasible to pursue wide-scale upgrades (or replacement) of much of the existing road network, including Brand Highway, as these upgrades would typically require much larger footprints than current road reservations can accommodate.

Widening existing road reservations would have significant impacts on established land uses and property accesses, as well as community and heritage values. Areas of environmental value and the attractiveness for tourism of the Brand Highway coastal route would also be impacted.

More specifically, if Brand Highway were to be upgraded, a dual carriageway with a wide median strip for vehicle storage and traffic separation would be required, to meet current design standards and road safety requirements.

In addition, to provide safe access to adjacent development and housing, alternative access to adjoining properties would also need to be found. Often alternative access (eg. via other established roads) is not readily available, requiring new access to be created in the form of parallel service roads, running alongside the upgraded main carriageway.

This would further add to the need for a much wider road reservation. Based on similar situations and past experience elsewhere, the existing Brand Highway reservation would need to be significantly

widened, directly impacting many more homes than the confirmed DGN corridor.

Furthermore, with an upgrade of Brand Highway, many minor access roads would need to be diverted, closed or integrated into the new parallel road network, at a considerable cost. The highway would also need to be raised considerably to meet national highway standards. As this could affect the local flood regime of the Greenough River, expensive design solutions to mitigate flood risks would be required.

A dedicated new route, planned within the confirmed corridor, provides the ability to accommodate safe regional-level movements of people and freight. This allows the existing road network, including Brand Highway, to continue to provide access to local land uses, businesses and tourism destinations.

This best balances the route planning objectives and benefits against potential impacts on the community, environment and heritage values.

How has community feedback influenced this planning study?

For more than a decade we have been working on a high-level analysis and assessment of a broad range of corridor options for a future route between Dongara, Geraldton and Northampton. This planning study has been informed by comprehensive community and stakeholder consultation at key milestones.

Our first major consultation in 2015 sought feedback on three individual route options to the north of Geraldton and three to the south, all linked by the proposed Oakajee Narngulu Infrastructure Corridor (ONIC), which was outlined in a draft alignment definition report released by the (then) Department of Planning in 2014.

Analysis of community feedback, further investigations and a review of the economic and development situation in the broader region subsequently led to the identification of a single preferred corridor presented for community and stakeholder feedback in 2020-21.

Generally, the community feedback we received on the proposed Dongara-

Geraldton-Northampton (DGN) route corridor north of Moonyoonooka and south of Mount Horner Road West was positive and supported the new corridor alignment for these sections. However, concerns were raised for the proposed section south of Moonyoonooka and north of Mouth Horner Road West.

Based on this feedback, and considering current economic growth forecasts in the region, we re-tested all potential route corridor options for the section south of Geraldton, including the option that was initially 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 several new options around Walkaway, to address the specific community concerns raised in 2020-21.

This review led to an optimised corridor being identified, which provides an equal balance between environmental, social, economic and engineering factors, while achieving similar value-for-money outcomes as the previously preferred corridor.

Presented for consultation in 2022, the optimised investigation corridor addresses many of the key community concerns raised in previous consultation. It also reduces the impact on homes, community amenity and environmentally sensitive areas.

The feedback received from this most recent round of consultation was analysed and has informed the confirmed corridor and the final Alignment Selection Report. We will now proceed to the Alignment Definition phase of planning, for detailed investigations to confirm land requirements. This will narrow down the current investigation corridor (nominally 500 metres wide) to define a future road reservation (nominally 100 metres wide).

When will we know what a future road may look like and how it may impact individual properties?

The alignment selection phase of corridor planning confirms a broad, 500 metre investigation corridor for detailed analysis and refinement. However, this planning phase does not formalise the planning process or confirm road reservation requirements.

During the next stage of planning – known as Alignment Definition – a nominally 100 metre road reservation will be defined within the broader corridor envelope, allowing for a single carriageway of varying median width with overtaking lanes, wide shoulders, drainage 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. In some locations, additional space may also be required for the location of public utility services.

This next phase of planning allows flexibility and the ability to plan a road layout around specific locations, such as a healthy patch of bushland or farm infrastructure. It also confirms the general land requirements and provides landowners with certainty on future plans that may impact their property.

The Alignment Definition phase will be informed by ongoing consultation with landowners to mitigate, as much as possible, unavoidable property impacts. It is expected to take around three years to complete, and typically may include detailed environmental, geotechnical and heritage investigations.

It is important to note that this study is a high-level planning study and there will be no immediate impacts. The timing for delivery is unknown and there is currently no funding available for detailed design or construction of any new roads. Once funding and timing have been confirmed, initially for detailed project development and subsequently for project delivery, the planned mitigation strategies will be reviewed again. This will be done in consultation with affected landowners, as circumstances may have changed at that future point in time.

We will continue to engage with landowners during the Alignment Definition phase and will rely on their support to inform this next phase of planning. Their local knowledge is critical and we will also need permission to access to their land for detailed environmental, geotechnical and heritage investigations.

How will we address concerns about property access?

As part of our planning for the DGN route, we are required to ensure every individual lot has road access.

In the Alignment Definition phase of planning, we will undertake detailed planning to identify what local connections are needed to the new road to effectively service surrounding communities. We can then determine which individual lots may need new access points and work with landowners to develop the most appropriate solution that meets their needs.

For safety reasons, it is not intended for individual properties to have access points to the new DGN route. Rather, they will retain or be provided with alternative access to a local road that provides a safe and efficient connection to the new highway via the local road network and a high-standard intersection at an appropriate location.

How will we protect water sources?

We understand the importance of water for rural and semi-rural properties and will work closely with landowners in the Alignment Definition phase of planning to identify any water sources that could be impacted by the future DGN route.

Ideally, we will aim to mitigate the potential impact of the new DGN road on individual water sources. Where this is not possible, Main Roads will work with landowners and plan for a future relocation or replacement of impacted water sources, to be delivered as part of the future project works.

How will we maintain machinery and stock movements?

While every effort will be made to avoid severance of working farms, in some cases it may be unavoidable (especially where multiple titles are farmed as one larger entity).

Where the DGN route intersects a property used for farming, Main Roads will work with the individual landowner to develop mitigation strategies and plan future provisions for the required cross-farm access. This may take the form of

stock and machinery underpasses, which have been used successfully in other regions.

How does a future DGN route align with existing local planning schemes and other land use planning strategies?

As part of our investigations, we have reviewed endorsed and agreed planning documents and strategies to ensure the proposed Dongara-Geraldton-Northampton route corridor aligns with current schemes.

Having confirmed the corridor, Main Roads will liaise with key stakeholders during the Alignment Definition phase to ultimately seek their support to include the required road reservation in strategic and statutory planning documentation. This will provide landowners, communities and industry agencies with greater certainty on future plans.

When will this proposed new road be built?

This study is a high-level planning study and there is currently no funding available for detailed design or construction of any new roads. Our 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. Construction is currently not expected to be required on the southern section between Dongara and Geraldton in the short to medium-term. We will continue working with stakeholders to identify when upgrades are required and to identify the most appropriate delivery methods.

Can landowners still develop/subdivide their land?

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

In some locations 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.

Main Roads will also liaise with planning authorities regarding the future planned route, to encourage decision-makers to also contact us as part of their assessment. While there are no statutory mechanisms in place to compel the decision-maker to undertake such a referral, landowners should also liaise with Main Roads directly if they believe there may be any implications on the future road corridor or on their proposal.

In all cases it is beneficial to identify and address any considerations as early as possible in the planning and development process.

Will the State buy land impacted by the route corridor?

This study is a high-level planning study identifying the future need for the road and the broad location of the corridor for future investigation. Typically, at this early stage, funding for land acquisition is not available and land will only be purchased once a project is funded and ready for construction.

However, in exceptional circumstances requiring individual case-by-case consideration, Main Roads may consider early acquisition of land 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 we determine what compensation landowners will be paid for my land?

This is a comprehensive process requiring specialist advice. The process is outlined in our [Land Acquisition Fact Sheet](#). For more detailed information, you may call 138 138 and ask to speak to a Land Acquisition Manager within the Transport Portfolio's Land and Property Services (TPLPS).