

Dongara-Geraldton-Northampton (DGN) Route: Planning Study

Frequently Asked Questions

GENERAL

Why do we need to plan for a future DGN route?

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 is a truck, and current predictions show the number of heavy vehicles using this important north-south corridor will increase into the future (estimated increase is about seven per cent per year). This will stifle opportunities for Brand Highway and adjacent land uses to become a more attractive and tourism-oriented route.

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 the safety and efficiency of freight, and cater for future population increases, planned land use changes, industry development, community wellbeing and the associated growth in transport demand, it is essential we plan for a resilient, strategic regional road network linking the Perth metropolitan area and the Mid West, Gascoyne and Pilbara regions. In fact, planning for the future Dongara Geraldton Northampton (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 planned DGN road network has the potential to reduce the overall number of trucks on the network and significantly improve efficiency.

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.

When will this proposed future 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 future roads. Our planning seeks to protect land for a future road alignment; however, sections of the route may be subject to staged delivery to meet evolving transport needs.

Main Roads considers the northern section of the future DGN route, between Howatharra and Northampton, a priority. Construction is currently not expected to be required on the southern section of the future DGN route, between Dongara and Moonyoonooka, at least not in the short to medium-term. We will continue working with stakeholders to identify when sections of the future route are required and to identify the most appropriate delivery methods.

What heavy vehicles are likely to use the future DGN route?

The future DGN route is being designed to allow access for triple road trains, which can be up to 60m long. DGN will become part of the RAV 10 heavy vehicle network between Perth and Carnarvon. Having consideration for the increased length of freight vehicles, more overtaking opportunities will be provided.

The future DGN highway is also planned to service over-size and over-mass (OSOM) vehicles. You may see trucks transporting wind turbine modules on their platform trailers as the state gears up towards greener energy.

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 future DGN route aligns with current land use planning.

Main Roads will ultimately seek support to include the indicative road reserve in strategic and statutory planning documents. This will provide landowners, communities and industry agencies with greater certainty on future plans.

POTENTIAL LAND IMPACTS

Will my property have direct access to the future DGN route?

The future DGN route is being planned as a 'control of access' rural highway. This means access points to and from the highway will be strategically located along the route to provide safe access to adjacent communities and properties. A small number of driveways will be retained where minimal movements are anticipated to and from agricultural properties. In other locations, suitable alternative access points will be provided in consultation with landowners.

A control of access highway provides a safer and more efficient driving environment, as drivers will be able to anticipate other vehicles entering or leaving the highway.

My property will retain a driveway onto the future route. Can access to my property change in the future?

A limited number of properties will be able to retain a driveway to the future DGN route, providing direct vehicular access. We anticipate that these properties will generate very low traffic movements.

Direct highway access may be reconsidered if the use of these properties and/or type of vehicles using the driveway is envisaged to change in the future. Depending on circumstances, access may be consolidated into adjoining driveways and/or suitable alternative access provided via a local road or a service road.

How will you protect water sources that may be impacted by the future route?

We understand the importance of water for rural and semi-rural properties and will work closely with landowners 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 future DGN route on individual water sources as part of our planning phase, by making careful adjustments to the ultimate road alignment. Where this is not possible, we will work with landowners and plan for a future relocation or replacement of impacted water sources. This will then be considered as part of the future project development and subsequent road construction works.

How will we maintain machinery and stock movements?

Our current work is a planning study we have no funding for construction. This means there will be no immediate impacts on existing agricultural movements.

As part of our planning phase, every effort will be made to avoid severance of working farms; however, in some cases impacts on agricultural operational movements may be unavoidable (especially where multiple titles are farmed as one larger entity) or where movement requirements change over time. These

will be resolved in consultation with landowners as part of a future project development phase (not currently funded).

Where the future DGN route intersects a property used for farming, Main Roads will work with individual landowners as part of this planning phase 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 similar circumstances elsewhere.

Can landowners still develop/subdivide their land?

If your property is traversed by or close to the confirmed future DGN route corridor, we recommend that you contact Main Roads early on in your development or subdivision planning process.

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 DGN route, to encourage decision-makers to 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 liaise with Main Roads directly if they believe there may be any implications on the future DGN route corridor or on their proposal.

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

Will the State Government buy land impacted by the DGN route corridor?

This study is a high-level planning study identifying the future need for the road and the broad location of an indicate road reserve boundary. Typically, in regional Western Australia, funding for land acquisition is not available at an early stage of route corridor planning. Typically, land will only be purchased once a project is funded for construction.

In exceptional circumstances, which require 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 future 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 landowners will be paid for their 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).

CONSULTATION

Who have you consulted in planning for the future DGN route?

The new route is being developed in collaboration with other state and local government agencies, and taking into account feedback from several rounds of community and stakeholder consultation dating back as far as 2015. We have also reviewed endorsed and agreed planning documents and strategies to ensure the proposed route aligns with current land use planning.

How has the planning for the future DGN progressed since early stakeholder consultation started in 2015?

In 2023 we completed the Alignment Selection process and confirmed a route corridor for the future DGN highway, linked by the already-planned Oakajee Narngulu Infrastructure Corridor (ONIC) from Moonyoonooka to Howatharra.

As part of the Alignment Definition planning phase, we have now developed a concept design plan for the northern section of the future DGN between Howatharra and Northampton. This concept design plan:

- identifies key local access roads needed to service the community along the route;
- plans for movements required at each access point;
- provides for safe intersection types and locations; and
- considers safe bushfire access.

Further planning work is ongoing to develop a concept design plan for the southern section of the future DGN highway between Dongara and Moonyoonooka.

HOWATHARRA TO NORTHAMPTON SECTION

Why don't you just upgrade the existing North West Coastal Highway?

The existing road geometry on North West Coastal Highway is not suitable for triple road trains. The planning concept design for a future DGN route prioritises the efficient use of the existing highway reserve. Some sections of the highway will be realigned to meet current engineering requirements and safety guidelines or to address site-specific constraints, and to implement improved access arrangements that support better road safety and network performance.

What is the future road width, speed limits and gradient being planned for the future DGN route between Howatharra and Northampton?

The future section of DGN between Howatharra and Northampton is being planned as a single carriageway with overtaking lanes. The carriageways will be separated by a painted one metre wide median. Single carriageway service roads will be provided to connect to the highway and provide access to adjacent residential communities.

Road users will be able to travel at a consistent speed for most of the journey, as turning lanes will be provided at intersections and most driveways will be controlled. The future road is being planned for a posted speed of 110 km/h. A 100 km/h maximum speed remains applicable to heavy vehicles.

The profile of the new highway is being planned to be relatively flat, improving the efficiency of vehicles, especially freight vehicles travelling from Perth to Carnarvon.

Will there be any changes to the existing overtaking lanes?

Overtaking lanes will be provided to allow for the additional time it will take to overtake a triple road train. Longer overtaking lanes are being planned in each direction between Howatharra and Northampton.

How are the future intersections being planned?

The future DGN section between Howatharra and Northampton is being planned as a rural highway with several staggered T-intersections, providing for all movements at different locations.

How will the future DGN allow me to stop at the Elephant Hill Lookout?

The Elephant Hill Lookout viewing area will remain at the same location. However, a safer intersection has been included in the planning concept design of the future DGN route. A left turn pocket is planned for northbound traffic, while a channelised right turn lane is planned for southbound vehicles. These added turning lanes will minimise conflict with through traffic.

What benefits will the future DGN bring to my community?

A future DGN route will significantly improve safety and result in productivity benefits for freight operators and business road users by offering travel time savings. Major initiatives such as Oakajee will bring jobs, business, and development opportunities to the local community. The future DGN is planned to accommodate an increase in traffic movements and to efficiently connect local communities to these regional opportunities.

Amenity will also improve for residents living along the corridor. The new infrastructure will consider road noise impacts and implement necessary mitigation measures. New service roads at Howatharra and Isseka will separate existing houses on the eastern side of the highway from the future road. Furthermore, the future road will be landscaped, adding to its visual amenity.

How would I access Coronation Beach and its campground once the future DGN route is delivered?

The final configuration of the intersection of Coronation Beach Road and North West Coastal Highway is subject to further planning and investigation. Additional transport planning is necessary to assess and confirm the potential impacts of the Oakajee Strategic Industrial Area on this intersection. In the meantime, no changes are expected as a result of the future DGN corridor planning.

DONGARA TO MOONYOONOOKA SECTION

Why can't you 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. The existing topography, road geometry and local road network prevent these roads from meeting the standards required for larger triple road trains (RAV 10 network).

Widening the existing road reserves 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.

A dedicated new route for the future DGN, 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.

When do you expect to have a concept plan available for the southern section of the future DGN, between Dongara and Moonyoonooka?

Planning for this section of DGN is progressing well. Main Roads aims to have a planning concept design for this section of the future DGN highway available in the first half of 2026.

Once this planning concept plan is available, we will undertake further engagement with affected landowners and stakeholders.

Further information

Scan the QR code with your smartphone camera for more information and to subscribe for project updates.

Visit www.mainroads.wa.gov.au/dgnroute

