



Dongara-Geraldton-Northampton Route Frequently Asked Questions

Key Terms

Corridor: broad area of land for further investigation, considered potentially suitable for a future road.

Reserve: land in which a road and associated infrastructure is located, nominally 100m wide.

Why are you considering building a new road? What problem are you trying to solve?

There is a recognised need to remove heavy vehicles from town centres, particularly Geraldton and Northampton (which already has the long-planned Northampton Bypass), and provide safer options that separate tourist, regional and local traffic from the growing number of freight vehicles in the area.

Main Roads needs to plan for future roads that will adequately cater for the safe and efficient movement of all vehicles in and through the area. Future demand for the area includes increased extractive and mining activity in the Pilbara and Gascoyne regions, along with increased commercial/freight movements, resulting in more and more heavy vehicles on the roads. There will also be growth in populations for towns along the route, resulting in increased numbers of other travellers on the road. The interactions of all of these vehicles create safety and efficiency concerns, particularly where the traffic runs near developed areas.

In addition, the Commonwealth and State governments continue to investigate the extension of Western Australia's triple road train network from Carnarvon to Muchea, improving freight efficiency and productivity as well as safety. The existing road is not suitable for these vehicles for a number of reasons including their geometry, number of side accesses and lack of overtaking opportunities.

The current planning study considers a range of options to cater for these future needs.

Why can't you upgrade Brand Highway between Dongara and Geraldton?

Main Roads has considered upgrading Brand Highway as part of planning undertaken to date.

If we were to use the existing Brand Highway for the long-term corridor, projected traffic demands indicate that a dual carriageway would be required between Dongara and Geraldton, which would have significant additional land requirements.

Along this stretch of Brand Highway, there are many access points and intersections, and surrounding development is typified by smaller lots and more intense land use. This requires very careful consideration of access arrangements and it is likely that service roads would be needed on both sides of a dual carriageway. This would

result in increased land requirements, as well as higher construction and ongoing maintenance costs. Impacts typically associated with such additional land requirements include:

- Greater impacts on existing landowners and loss of amenity/use of land;
- higher construction costs, including earthworks and drainage;
- increased maintenance costs for all infrastructure including the road, drainage and other structures;
- more substantial environmental and heritage impacts; and
- larger impacts on drainage and the waterway regime.

The road reserve along Brand Highway is currently very narrow in sections, with some as narrow as 20m. A reserve for a dual carriageway road would typically be up to 100m wide. If requirements for service roads are included, additional privately-owned land would be needed to accommodate service roads (and separation from the highway), drainage and other infrastructure.

A rail line runs parallel to Brand Highway and options utilising the existing highway would require an extra bridge to cross the rail, requiring more land, greater earthworks and increasing costs even further.

Access and connectivity are key considerations when developing a safe and efficient network. Our aim is to ensure adjacent and nearby landowners are not disadvantaged in terms of network connectivity, while still enabling safe access to and from their properties, as well as optimising safety for through traffic.

Managing surface water is an important consideration in all of our assessments, and flooding and waterways are complex matters. Main Roads aims to provide a road serviceable in a major flood event, but seeks to avoid impacting the flooding regime on adjoining land (i.e. where land floods, it should continue to do so). The preferred corridor identified for further investigation crosses the Greenough River and runs through the 1 in 100-year flood plain associated with the river (designated by Department of Water and Environmental Regulation) for approximately 4km. The Brand Highway runs through the 1 in 100-year event flood plain for 16km. Further modelling is being undertaken to better understand flooding in the corridor and surrounding area.

The best outcomes for safety and efficiency would be achieved by providing a new route away from built-up areas, including residences, shops, businesses and schools. The location of the preferred corridor has been informed by consideration of the above and also existing and proposed developments, as well as environmental and heritage constraints.

Use of Rudds Gully Road for a freight route would present a number of issues. It would not avoid the built up areas, it would run straight into a Strategic Industrial Area with high levels of access required, it would require a grade separation (bridged interchange) close to the southern extent of the airport, and Brand Highway would need to be upgraded for almost its entire length, resulting in the concerns referenced above.

Planning recommendations are made seeking a balance of likely impacts and opportunities. To meet the safety and efficiency objectives for the road and its users, including freight and heavy vehicles, and to address the issues outlined above, it is not considered feasible to upgrade Brand Highway.

If this proposed new route goes ahead, will Main Roads continue to plan and deliver upgrades on the existing road network?

Yes, there will always be local investment in maintenance and upgrades on the State road network throughout the Mid West region, as evidenced by recent intersection upgrades throughout the City of Greater Geraldton and upgrades to the Brand Highway through Greenough.

The new road corridor would provide a long-term solution to cater for future freight demand and provide a safe and efficient route for all road users including local traffic, tourists and heavy vehicles.

How did Main Roads select this preferred option?

In 2015, we assessed a broad range of possibilities for a new route and then shortlisted three feasible corridors between Dongara and Geraldton and another three between Geraldton and Northampton. We then undertook comprehensive community and stakeholder consultation on these options later in the year.

Having assessed the feedback received from this consultation, we tested assumptions from the early planning and considered the current economic and development situation in the Mid West region. The preferred corridor has been recommended for further investigation. Early planning indicates that this preferred corridor offers the best value for money and achieves the best balance of environmental, social, economic and engineering factors.

Won't taking traffic away from Brand Highway affect the businesses and tourism providers in Dongara Geraldton?

Main Roads will continue to work with local governments to understand opportunities and optimise overall tourist and business benefits. We are working with local governments and other stakeholders to investigate a potential coastal extension of Indian Ocean Drive into Dongara/Denison that would provide an attractive coastal route for tourists and regional traffic, and continue supporting local tourist and business providers.

A number of options to access towns would also be provided along the new route. Later planning stages will consider how best to manage and encourage access into built-up areas, including a signage strategy and entry statements to direct interested travellers towards Dongara and Geraldton at all relevant journey decision points.

A socio-economic study is also to be undertaken by an independent consultant, to consider the impacts of the preferred corridor on towns and communities.

Why is Arthur Road proposed as part of the southern alignment between Dongara and Geraldton, rather than Edward Road?

Edward Road (Geraldton Walkaway Road) is an important link to the south east of Geraldton; however, upgrading this road would be very difficult due to a number of constraints, including its proximity to the town of Walkaway itself at the southern end of the road. There is a rail line on one side and a number of above and below ground utility corridors (e.g. water pipes) adjacent to the road. In addition, there are a lot of access points directly to the road, which would need to be managed with either a service road, significantly increasing the land required and construction/maintenance costs associated with delivering a future road, or alternative access arrangements (e.g. across more privately-owned land).

Initial modelling indicates that additional structures in this area could detrimentally impact flooding on a larger number of properties than a corridor further to the east.

Would the proposed new road have limited access?

Interactions between high speed through traffic and traffic entering from the side are known to present safety hazards for all users. Right turn movements in particular present a risk of high severity incidents occurring. The presence of heavy vehicles makes these issues worse as a result of their size and manoeuvrability.

To provide a safe and efficient route, Main Roads seeks to space intersections along a new road appropriately and avoid direct lot access. Access to all lots will still be provided, but would generally not be directly to the highway. Instead, it would be via an existing or new local or service road.

What will happen to Arthur Road if the new road corridor is confirmed, and how will landowners cross the new road to access their land and other community facilities in Walkaway?

In many cases, the existing Arthur Road would be retained as a service road adjacent to a new road.

Discussions will be held with individual landowners to understand how they access and use their land. While the planning study is still only at an early concept stage, options including service roads, underpasses or overpasses, adjusting the alignment, and compensation (as a last resort) can all be considered.

We consider access to and from lots, and to and from the wider network (e.g. allowing for movements in all directions from the lot) from the early concept stage. A comprehensive access strategy will be developed during later planning work, which will take into account feedback received from stakeholders, particularly landowners.

Certain movements may be prohibited for safety or other reasons. Where this is the case, alternative access options will be considered and discussed with individual landowners throughout the consultation and planning process.

How do I provide comment on your preferred corridor and what is the timeframe?

If you are the owner of a property intersected by or adjacent to the preferred corridor for investigation, you will have received a personally addressed letter from Main Roads. This letter invites you to request a meeting with the Main Roads' planning team by contacting leanne.pitcher@mainroads.wa.gov.au.

If you are a member of the wider community and you wish to provide feedback on the planning study, please review the interactive map and information available at www.mysaytransport.wa.gov.au/main-roads then provide feedback in one of the following ways:

- Complete the online survey and subscribe for future project updates at www.mysaytransport.wa.gov.au/main-roads
- Send an email to enquiries@mainroads.wa.gov.au (External link)
- Write to DGN Alignment Selection Study, c/- Main Roads, PO Box 6202, East Perth WA 6892

When will you make a decision?

A decision will not be made until this round of consultation is complete, including meeting with all affected landowners who make a request.

We are encouraging comments to be submitted via My Say Transport by the end of January 2021, but we will continue to engage with affected landowners and other stakeholders for as long as necessary to ensure all feedback and suggestions can be discussed and considered.

Once we have reviewed all feedback, we will undertake any further required work and make refinements to the corridor. We will then finalise a report with our recommendations for local government and stakeholders. We are hoping that by mid-2021 we will be able to make a recommendation to the WA Planning Commission and local governments for final endorsement. However, if it takes longer to review feedback and consider other options, this date may not be achieved.

What happens once a preferred corridor is endorsed by the WAPC and local government?

Once the endorsement is received, we will begin an Alignment Definition Study to determine what a road may look like within the preferred corridor and develop a concept. This will include more detailed environmental, heritage and geotechnical investigations, and ongoing engagement with landowners and stakeholders.

How long will this whole planning process take? When will we know for certain where a future road may go?

Completion of Alignment Selection and Alignment Definition, to develop a concept, will take several years and would be dependent on funding.

If my property is affected by the final road corridor, will you buy some or all of my land?

This is a high-level planning study only. There is currently no funding available for detailed design or construction. Typically funding for land acquisition only becomes available when a project is funded for construction by government. In exceptional circumstances, Main Roads may consider early acquisition but this will be considered on a case by case basis.

Main Roads normally only acquires the land required for the project, however, depending on the amount of land required and the impact of the balance of the land in certain cases Main Roads may be prepared to consider purchasing the whole property. For more information on the land acquisition process, download our fact sheet at <https://www.mainroads.wa.gov.au/globalassets/contact/land-acquisition-fact-sheet.pdf>. You are welcome to contact one of our land acquisition officers to get more details on this process (phone numbers on the fact sheet).

When will you build this new route?

This study is a high level planning study only. There is no funding for detailed design or construction at this stage. The planning seeks to protect any land required for the ultimate alignment; however, staged upgrades may be delivered as smaller projects if funding is made available. Main Roads will continue working with stakeholders to identify when upgrades are required and the most appropriate way of delivering smaller packages of works.

How does your preferred corridor align with the local planning scheme and other land use planning strategies?

As part of our assessment of options, Main Roads reviewed endorsed and agreed planning documents and strategies and found no major conflicts.

We also reviewed high-level documents, including the Geraldton Regional Plan (prepared by the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage) and the National Freight and Supply Chain Strategy. This strategy was developed by all Australian governments and endorsed by the Transport and Infrastructure Council in August 2019. More information about this strategy is available at <http://www.freightaustralia.gov.au>.

The DGN route will eventually play a critical role in enabling triple road trains to efficiently travel along the coastal route, which is part of the State Government's long-term freight strategy.

If you are planning for the DGN route, does this mean the proposed Geraldton North-South Highway (GNSH) is no longer being considered?

No. The planning for the GNSH, completed in 2012, sought to address safety and freight issues caused by heavy vehicles travelling on Brand Highway and North West Coastal Highway through Geraldton. While it would alleviate some pressures by providing a parallel network to the existing NWCH, it is still located within a built-up area and would not cater for the needs of strategic freight movement. The GNSH corridor has been protected and the road will be an important distributor road in the future. This infrastructure is still expected to be built when the need is clearly illustrated by population and traffic growth. However, it will not safely cater for the predicted increase in oversize vehicles and road trains. It also will not resolve current and future safety and freight issues on North West Coastal Highway north of Webberton Road; nor will it resolve the issue of increased heavy vehicles on Brand Highway, including the flood risk area.

Is this the same as the Oakajee Narngulu Infrastructure Corridor (ONIC)?

No, but we are seeking to use the same corridor to minimise impacts. We can separate the planned transport infrastructure within this corridor, allowing a future road to be built independently of any planned rail. Planning for ONIC remains the responsibility of the Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Industry and we are working closely with them in this area.

Why can't freight be transported on rail?

While rail can be a great solution for moving freight and commodities, it is inflexible and requires large volumes being moved at the same time to and from the same place. It is also very expensive to build and maintain. The flexibility and accessibility of a road-based freight network can be used by a wider range of smaller operators.

The State Government's Transport portfolio agencies (Main Roads, Public Transport Authority and the Department of Transport) collaborate with their stakeholders and each other to provide a broad range of transport solutions across the state.

What has changed that has influenced the outcomes of this planning study?

Since 2015, there has been:

- A contraction of the mining industry and associated infrastructure investment.
- Increased interest in extension of RAV10 network along the North West Coastal Highway and Brand Highway between Carnarvon and Muchea.
- Updated road design and access control standards.

I provided feedback as part of this planning study in 2015. How have you considered the comments I made, and have they been taken into account?

Yes, all feedback received in 2015 was reviewed and considered carefully to help identify this single preferred corridor. In defining the preferred corridor, changes have been made to mitigate impacts as much as possible. We will continue to work closely with affected property owners and stakeholders in the next phase of planning to define the route and further mitigate individual impacts.

The following table summarises the key issues raised during previous consultation and explains how these have been considered as part of our current planning work.

Issue raised during consultation	How we have addressed or considered this in determining our preferred corridor	What we will do in the next planning phase
Impact on homes and properties	<i>Minimised impacts on land holdings by following lot boundaries, where possible</i>	<i>Further consultation with affected landowners to mitigate individual impacts and address any access issues</i>
Impact on farming properties	<i>Considered the best way to avoid severance of farming properties</i>	<i>Further consultation with affected landowners, where impacts cannot be avoided</i>
Heritage considerations, including Aboriginal and European	<i>Avoided known Aboriginal sites</i> <i>Avoided impacts to local and state heritage-listed properties in the Walkaway and Dongara areas</i>	<i>Relevant Aboriginal groups will be notified of the proposed corridor and engaged</i>
Safety at Walkaway Nangetty Road intersection	<i>Shifted the proposed alignment west to increase the distance between the hill and the intersection</i>	<i>Further engagement with stakeholders to finalise the most appropriate solution</i>
Use Geraldton – Walkaway instead of Arthur Road as part of the southern section	<i>Considered alternatives but none were viable. Geraldton-Walkaway Road is highly constrained by services, utilities, rail and access points</i>	<i>Continue to mitigate impacts from the Arthur Road alignment</i>
Flooding on Arthur Road	<i>Noted for further investigation</i>	<i>Consider as part of future planning and design work and develop a comprehensive drainage strategy</i>

Main Roads should prioritise the Geraldton North-South Highway (GNSH) instead of planning for a new road corridor	<i>The GNSH does not address the main strategic objective of the proposed Dongara-Geraldton-Northampton Route. In particular, our aim is to provide a route that removes heavy vehicles from town centres</i>	<i>No further action as part of this study, however Main Roads will continue to investigate suitable upgrades to the network in the built up area</i>
A route that bypasses town centres may have economic impacts on the region	<i>These concerns are understood and acknowledged. Intersection treatments and signage can be considered during any future design phase that will continue to direct tourist and local traffic via the town centres, while keeping heavy vehicles on the designated route.</i>	<i>Work closely with stakeholders to address concerns, while balancing these with the objective of delivering a safe and efficient route suitable for heavy vehicles</i>
Inclusion of cycling infrastructure and truck rest bays	<i>Noted for further investigation</i>	<i>Engage with stakeholders to determine needs and requirements for consideration in further planning</i>

Will you keep the community and stakeholders updated?

Yes. The best way to stay informed is to provide your feedback via My Say Transport and register for future email updates. We will also continue to engage with landowners intersected by or adjacent to the preferred corridor.

If you have already provided a submission, and did not register for updates, you can subscribe directly via: www.mainroads.wa.gov.au/projects-initiatives/projects/regional/dongara/

Can I still develop/subdivide my land if it is affected by the final road corridor?

If your property is in or close to the proposed corridor, we recommend that you contact Main Roads before submitting any formal development plans. This will help you identify and address any considerations as early as possible in your planning process.

The relevant planning authority, such as your local government authority, will also contact us as part of any planning assessment if they believe there may be implications for the future road corridor or your development proposal.

Why have you located the proposed corridor on the prime agricultural land in the area?

Main Roads has received feedback from landowners about the value of agricultural land affected by the proposed route. Main Roads is currently investigating the opportunities and impacts of moving the corridor in consideration of land quality and use issues.

Will Main Roads hand over administration and maintenance costs of Brand Highway and North West Coastal Highway to local government if the new route is constructed?

Brand Highway will continue to be an important strategic link and is expected to remain under the control of Main Roads.

Some short sections of the North West Coastal Highway would continue to be used to provide connectivity and access to adjoining properties. Management of those sections will need to be discussed when further details are known.