

9. Proposed concept design and next steps

9.1 Proposed concept design

The route development process for upgrading the Pacific Highway between Iluka Road and Woodburn involved a range of technical investigations and concept design development as well as close consultation with the affected local communities and key stakeholders. Upgrading to dual carriageway standard generally along the existing highway alignment was the only feasible option to emerge from this process. This route is to be taken to concept design display, to receive public comment. It was identified at an early stage that there would be a limit to the route options available for this section of the Pacific Highway. The Iluka Road to Woodburn upgrade is unusual in that it does not pass through any residential or commercial centres. Furthermore, deviation from the existing highway corridor would yield little or no functional or transportation benefits, but would have severe environmental impacts on the surrounding area.

The study has therefore concluded that the most suitable option is to upgrade the existing Pacific Highway to dual carriageway (Class A) standard for the entire length of the subject section, and to reduce direct cross carriageway access to three intersections with the remaining access points serviced by left-in left-out turn facilities and strategically located U-turn bays.

The proposed concept design would generally comprise widening adjacent to the existing carriageway and within the existing road reserve, but with some short sections of realignment in order to achieve the required road design standards.

9.2 Next steps

The recommendation of this study is that the proposed concept design outlined above be adopted as the preferred route and be made available for public review and feedback.

At completion of the concept design display, a report will be prepared summarising the issues raised in submissions from the community and stakeholders, for consideration by the RTA. The submissions report will assist in developing assessment criteria with which to carry out a detailed evaluation of the proposed concept design through the value engineering process.

Following completion of the value engineering process and detailed evaluation and refinement, it is anticipated that the RTA will then be in a position to decide, subject to a satisfactory consultation, to recommend to the Minister that the proposed concept design be announced as the Preferred Route.

Following adoption of the proposed concept design as the RTA's preferred route for the Pacific Highway between Iluka Road and Woodburn, the RTA proposes to submit the Iluka Road and Woodburn project to the Department of Planning (DoP) for approval under Part 3A of the EP&A Act.

Further survey, geotechnical, ecological and other investigations would also be undertaken to provide input into the refinement of the design and environmental assessment.

The level of environmental assessment (EA) required for the proposal under Part 3A would be determined by the Director-General of Planning, who issues EA requirements after consultation with the relevant public authorities and local councils. The EA may include a statement of commitments in respect of environmental management and mitigation measures proposed to be undertaken if the project is approved.

When completed, the EA would be publicly exhibited and submissions would be sought. The RTA may be asked to prepare a report on the submissions and revise its statement of commitments. It would also consider modifications to the project to minimise environmental impacts. The DoP may request the RTA to display, for public information, a Preferred Project Report identifying the proposed modifications.

The DoP would consider the EA, the public submissions and any report requested from the RTA in recommending to the Minister for Planning whether the project should be approved.