

8. Preferred concept design and next steps

8.1 Preferred concept design

The Iluka Road to Woodburn project was announced in 2004 and investigations commenced to determine options to upgrade this section of the Pacific Highway. As the work progressed, it became evident that the upgrading and/or duplication of the highway could feasibly be achieved through the utilisation of substantial proportions of the existing road and building two new lanes either east or west of the existing highway. In many locations the existing road corridor has sufficient width to accommodate the second carriageway within existing RTA road property boundaries. The Iluka Road to Woodburn upgrade is unusual in that it does not pass through any towns or commercial centres. Furthermore, deviation from the existing highway corridor would yield little or no functional or transportation benefits and would have substantial environmental impacts on the surrounding area.

Consultation with community and stakeholders, along with technical investigations were therefore commenced on this basis. The Concept Design Report was released in March 2006 and community input was sought. Community Information Sessions were held, along with face-to-face meetings, to help explain the project, understand the issues and seek feedback on the concept design.

The community and stakeholder feedback, along with the results of the technical investigations, has been incorporated into the refinement of the project. The preferred concept design includes the following amendments to the concept design:

Strategic changes:

- Emergency stopping bays, emergency u-turns and maintenance crossovers removed and replaced with combined u-turn, crossover facilities located at an average of 3 km at:
 - CH 58.000.
 - CH 61.800.
 - CH 65.000.
 - CH 68.500.
 - CH 70.800.
 - CH 73.600.
 - CH 77.300.
 - CH 81.300.
 - CH 81.300 with u-turn north to south only.
 - CH 87.450.
- Bus stops added to egress side of selected side roads.

Specific design changes (from south to north):

- Iluka Road access to be designed to connect final dual carriageway under Wells Crossing to Iluka Road Project, as a result Banana Road would connect to the Iluka Road Interchange via a new slip road.
- U-turn located at CH 59.400 just north of Mororo Road.
- Rest area just north of Mororo Road to be retained under Class A only.
- Southbound rest area to be shifted 30m north to reduce environmental impact.
- Jacky Bulbin Road seagull to include u-turn.
- Offline section realigned to conform with revised cadastral information.
- Median right turn added at CH 65.650 into private access.
- Merge Taper added at Serendipity Road.
- Median right turn added at CH 80.400 into Cypress Road.
- Cut at New Italy reduced to decrease impact on area, including *Melaleuca irbyana*.

- Road realigned between Cypress Road and New Italy Road to reduce land acquisition and impact of mango trees. Retaining wall added to eliminate batter adjacent to mango trees and well.
- Access to four properties 300 to 600 m north of Cypress Road to be combined to one egress only.
- Parking area to be formalised at New Italy to enable parking for 60 vehicles.
- Median right turn added with u-turn facility at Whites Road.
- Bend at Gap Road realigned to 1000 m to reduce impact on western side.
- Cut at New Italy reduced to decrease footprint and impact on area.
- U-turn located at CH 85.800 Nortons Road.
- Parallel service road from Wondawee Way to Trustums Hill Road added.
- Major design change at northern tie in due to excessive material requirements for the Woodburn to Ballina project. Full dumbbell interchange to be incorporated into design with future north facing ramps.

8.2 Next steps

Following the display of the preferred concept design, the Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) will consider issues raised in any comments. Once this process is finalised the relevant local council will be approached to have the corridor formally reserved in its local planning instrument. The boundaries of the corridor will be based on the final concept design.

The next steps for the Upgrading the Pacific Highway Iluka Road to Woodburn project would be to apply to the Department of Planning for project approval under Part 3A of the EP&A Act and to undertake detailed environmental assessments. Further survey, geotechnical, ecological and other investigations would also be undertaken to provide input into the refinement of the design.

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 were to be 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.

Further refinements may occur during the environmental assessment stage of the project and in response to community comments.