



Transport for NSW

Blackheath

Consultation Summary Report



April 2021



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1. Executive Summary

The NSW Government is investing \$2.5 billion towards upgrading the Great Western Highway between Katoomba and Lithgow to a four-lane carriageway.

The Great Western Highway Upgrade Program (the Program), once completed, will reduce congestion and provide safer, more efficient and reliable journeys for everyone travelling in, around and through the Blue Mountains, and better connect communities in the Central West.

In November 2019, the strategic corridor for the proposed upgrade between Katoomba and Lithgow was released to the community for feedback. This included the previously reserved corridor from Mount Victoria to Lithgow and a new corridor between Katoomba and Mount Victoria.

In Blackheath, the route had not been determined and a strategic area was presented for consultation which included four broad options:

- An outer bypass with bridges crossing over Shipley Road, Centennial Pass, Porters Pass Track, and over the rail line at the north
- A bypass running next to the rail line either at ground level or in a cut-and-cover tunnel
- Duplication of the existing highway in the town centre of Blackheath
- Long or short tunnels underneath Blackheath.

Options to the east of Blackheath were ruled out due to likely impact on the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area.

A summary of feedback from the 2019 consultation period can be found at **nswroads.work/GWHConsult**.

The Blackheath Co-Design Committee (BCC) was formed by Transport for NSW in March 2020 in response to community feedback. The committee included stakeholder group representatives, selected community representatives, and representatives from the Blue Mountains City Council and emergency services.

After five meetings and additional site tours the BCC assessed six broad route options, including a new tunnel alignment suggested by the Committee.

The Committee's unanimously preferred option, of the options available, was for a long tunnel underneath Blackheath.

Following the BCC process, in October 2020 the NSW Government consulted on the construction of a tunnel underneath Blackheath, with a number of different possible entrance and exit points, or portals. The Government also announced that the proposed outer bypass option through Centennial Glen, and the proposed inner bypass next to the rail line on Station Street were no longer being considered as potential routes for the Great Western Highway Upgrade Program.

Transport for NSW also committed to continue investigating ways to improve intersection performance, safety and connectivity on the existing Highway alignment in Blackheath, to complement the \$250 million Safety Upgrade Program completed in 2019.

Following this announcement, over six weeks, three proposed tunnel portal locations were made available for exhibition and consultation with the community: a northern portal in the vicinity of the Mount Boyce Heavy Vehicle Safety Station, a southern portal to the south of Evans Lookout Road, or an alternative southern portal in Sutton Park.

These locations were chosen to minimise impacts on property and are situated in areas where the ground is rising. This gradient would help to achieve the right depth for a tunnel while minimising above ground impacts.

The community were asked for feedback on:

- Preference for a long, or mid-length tunnel
- Preference for location of tunnel portals
- Any feedback or questions regarding impacts of either route
- Other improvements that could be made to the existing Highway to improve safety, amenity and connectivity in Blackheath.

Further survey work and detailed technical studies will now be undertaken to inform the environmental assessment. We anticipate that the Review of Environmental Factors for the section of work between Katoomba and Blackheath (excluding Medlow Bath) will be exhibited for consultation in late 2021.

1.1 Purpose of this report

This Community Consultation Summary Report (the Report) captures the outcomes from the recent Blackheath route options consultation.

Between Monday 12 October and Saturday 28 November 2021, Transport for NSW (TfNSW) carried out public consultation and invited feedback from the community and stakeholders on the proposed portal locations for a tunnel bypass of Blackheath, as part of the Great Western Highway Upgrade Program from Katoomba to Lithgow.

The consultation also invited suggestions on other improvements that could be made to the existing Highway to improve safety, amenity and connectivity in Blackheath.

The Blackheath route option consultation was open to all interested stakeholders within the Blue Mountains and beyond.

The insights and feedback gathered from the community and stakeholders in this stage of consultation has contributed to the decision on which tunnel portals will progress into more detailed design and analysis. Information gathered will also be considered in decision making as the wider Program progresses. The project team will use the knowledge gained to refine and improve the tunnel design to minimise impacts on, and create added benefits for, the township of Blackheath.

We will continue to build and maintain relationships with the Blackheath and Blue Mountains communities and stakeholders throughout all phases of the Program, and will continue to create formal and informal opportunities for people to have their say.

2. Program Context

2.1 The Great Western Highway Upgrade Program

The Great Western Highway Upgrade Program proposes to deliver 34 kilometres of four lane carriageway between Katoomba and Lithgow. The NSW Government has committed \$2.5 billion in funding towards the planning and construction of the duplication.

The upgrade, once completed, will reduce congestion and provide safer, more efficient and reliable journeys for everyone travelling in, around and through the Blue Mountains, and better connect communities in the Central West.

The NSW Government has progressively upgraded sections of the Great Western Highway to make it safer and more reliable for all road users. The section between Emu Plains and Katoomba has already been completed, and has resulted in a 76.8 per cent drop in fatalities and a 27.7 per cent drop in crash rates.

We now propose to upgrade and duplicate the Highway between Katoomba and Lithgow.

In February 2020, the Program was listed by Infrastructure Australia as a priority initiative. This means that it is officially recognised as a priority infrastructure investment which Australia needs in order to secure a sustainable and prosperous future.

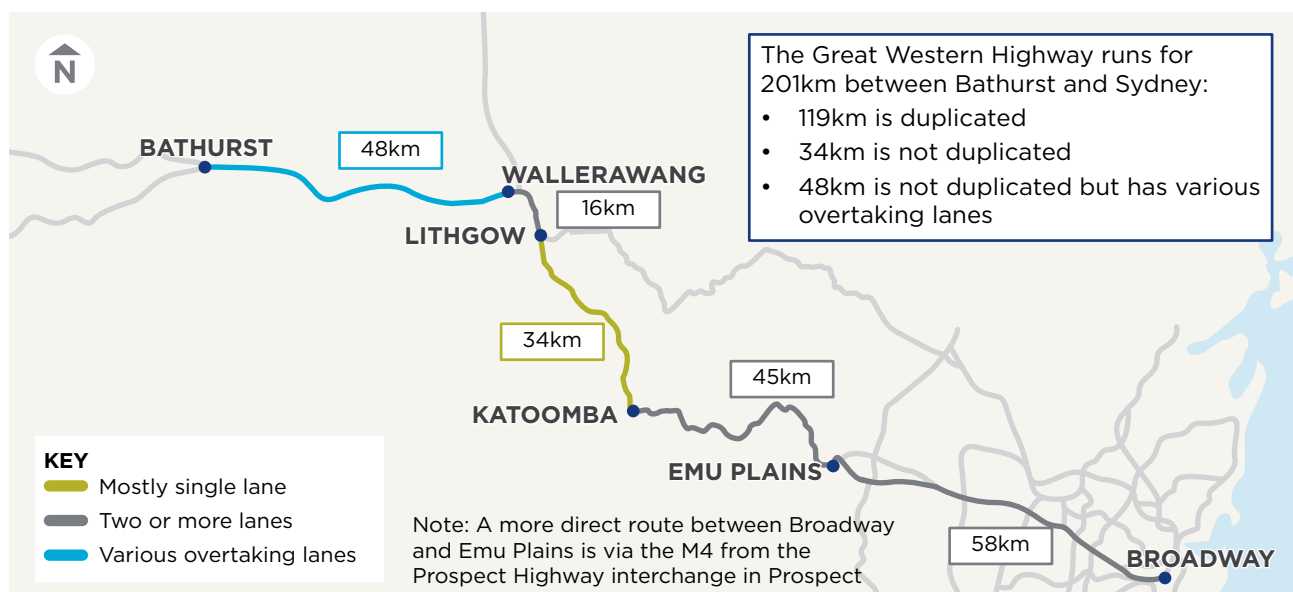
The Program Strategic Business Case has progressed through Gate 1 of the assurance process with Infrastructure NSW and work is underway towards progression through Gate 2 and the Final Business Case for the Program.

76.8%
drop in fatalities

27.7%
drop in casualty
crash rates

For all vehicle types.

Figure 1 Once the Great Western Highway Upgrade Program is complete, over 95 kms of the Highway will be duplicated



2.1.1 Delivering benefits for all road users

The Great Western Highway Upgrade Program from Katoomba to Lithgow aims to deliver the following benefits:



Improve safety:

reduce safety risks along the corridor for all road users



Enhance network performance:

reduce congestion and travel time reliability



Improve and drive regional economic development and productivity, and increase freight efficiency



Enhance liveability and amenity:

maintain and improve local amenity and character, and protect environmental and cultural assets



Improve resilience and future proof: provide a dependable and adaptable transport network which enables continuity of transport and essential services.

2.1.2 The essential transport role of the Great Western Highway

The Great Western Highway acts as the key road transport route across and along the Great Dividing Range for all vehicles, including emergency and essential services, local commuters, through commuters, tourists and freight. Those travelling through the Blue Mountains largely choose to travel by road.

Within the Blue Mountains, the Highway serves an important role, by acting as the main street for mountains townships such as Blackheath, Medlow Bath and Mount Victoria.

Local residents use the Highway every day to get to work, do their shopping, take children to and from school, and enjoy the area's natural attractions and recreational opportunities.

Blue Mountains residents have indicated that over the next five years they will use private vehicles up to 15 per cent more than they do currently.

The Program aims to preserve the unique character of the Blue Mountains communities, and local consultation is a vital part of that process.

Tourism in the Blue Mountains and Central West is growing in popularity. Tourists rely on the road to visit some of the world's most beautiful National Parks and World Heritage areas, or to travel through to tourist destinations on either side of the mountains.

This increase in tourism provides economic benefits for those communities and NSW as a whole, but is contributing to the congestion experienced through the Blue Mountains.

As a state highway, the Great Western Highway's role as a transport corridor is critical for NSW.



Over 95 per cent of people travelling through the Blue Mountains between Katoomba and Lithgow for non-freight trips choose to travel by road

 **Central West region is expected to grow to more than 300,000 people during the next 20 years**

It is the key connector from the Central West and Orana and, with alternate routes up to 100km longer, is the fastest route for those in Dubbo, Orange, Bathurst and surrounds, to reach Sydney.

Over 95 per cent of people travelling through the Blue Mountains between Katoomba and Lithgow for non-freight trips choose to travel by road.

The Great Western Highway is also part of the National Land Transport Network and is a crucial freight transport corridor from the Central West to Sydney and the mountains.

The Central West is NSW's third largest regional centre and contributes 12 per cent to the state's gross regional product. This region is expected to grow to more than 300,000 people during the next 20 years.¹

As NSW's population and manufacturing capability grows, so too will the freight task to service those needs. The Great Western Highway Upgrade Program will support growth in key industries in the Central West.



The Great Western Highway plays a key role in NSW tourism in the mountains and beyond

Industries within the Katoomba to Lithgow corridor, such as quarries and timber mills, also make a significant contribution to the freight moving along the Highway.

Our early investigations show that over half of the freight moved between Katoomba and Lithgow is transported by road. Approximately 40 per cent of freight within the Blue Mountains starts or ends its journey between Lithgow and Katoomba, on or nearby the Highway.

Future customers will continue to rely on both road and rail along the Katoomba to Lithgow corridor.

2.1.3 Highway capacity

The Great Western Highway between Katoomba and Lithgow has a higher average traffic volume than other duplicated highways.

There are over 15,000 vehicle movements on average per day in Blackheath, over 19,000 at Medlow Bath, and over 20,000 at Katoomba. These figures are frequently greater on weekends and holidays.

 **The Great Western Highway Upgrade Program will support growth in key industries in the Central West**

 **Over half of the freight moved between Katoomba and Lithgow is transported by road**

¹ Central West and Orana Regional Plan, www.planning.nsw.gov.au/Plans-for-your-area/Regional-Plans/Central-West-and-Orana

This exceeds average traffic numbers of over 15,000 vehicles per day on the Pacific Highway at Grafton, the Princes Highway at Berry, or the Hume Highway at Goulburn.

Traffic peaks and congestion are common through both the week and weekends. Congestion is especially restrictive during special events and the school holiday periods.

As the route design is refined through community consultation, we will look at opportunities to progressively improve congestion and deliver more consistent speeds across the entire route.

Traffic on the Great Western Highway is projected to grow and the upgrade is being planned to deliver long term resilience and capacity. This upgrade will improve congestion and safety, and cater for future growth beyond 2033.

2.2 Blackheath route options

The Blackheath Co-Design Committee

The Blackheath Co-Design Committee (BCC) was formed by Transport for NSW in March 2020, following feedback from the community.

The committee included stakeholder group representatives, selected community representatives, and representatives from the Blue Mountains City Council and emergency services.

After five meetings and additional site tours the BCC assessed six broad route options, including a new tunnel alignment suggested by the Committee. The routes were assessed against the following criteria, which align to the Upgrade Program's objectives:

- Improve safety
- Minimise impacts to the environment
- Enhance amenity, connectivity and liveability
- Resilience
- Reduce congestion and travel time reliability.

The Committee's unanimously preferred option, of the options available, was for a long tunnel underneath Blackheath.

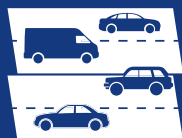
The BCC was not a decision-making body, but the outcome of the BCC is an important input into the Government's decision-making process for determining a preferred route option and design as the Program progresses. A report on the BCC process and findings has been produced by independent facilitators KJA and is available to download on the project website at rmsroads.works/greatwesternhighway. The minutes of each BCC meeting are also available on the website.

Blackheath route options

Following the Blackheath co-design process, the Blackheath route options consultation sought community feedback on tunnel options for Blackheath. As outlined above, a long tunnel was the preferred option of the Blackheath Co-Design Committee. Transport for NSW also chose to seek community feedback on one shorter tunnel portal option.

A tunnel under Blackheath will remove a significant amount of heavy vehicle traffic from the surface roads, improve safety, and give the Great Western Highway through Blackheath back to the community.

Benefits of a tunnel for Blackheath



**Less
congestion**



Safer town centre
for cyclists and pedestrians



Through traffic
moved underground



Alternate routes
for emergency services



Improved
urban amenity



Giving back
the Great Western Highway
to the local community



The BCC undertaking a site visit in Blackheath

3. Proposed Blackheath route options

Tunnel options for Blackheath were presented to the community in the very early stages of strategic design. Portal locations presented for consultation are approximate, and the tunnel alignment has not yet been determined.

Three potential locations for the tunnel openings, or portals, were presented for consultation. The two potential portals at the southern end of Blackheath are marked on the map near:

- Evans Lookout Road
- Sutton Park.

The potential portal at the northern end of Blackheath is also marked on the map near:

- Mount Boyce Heavy Vehicle Safety Station.

These locations have been chosen to minimise impacts on property and are situated in areas where the ground is rising. This gradient would help to achieve the right depth for a tunnel while minimising above ground impacts.

The proposed portal south of Evans Lookout Road would have an impact on a section of National Park and Sydney Water Catchment area.

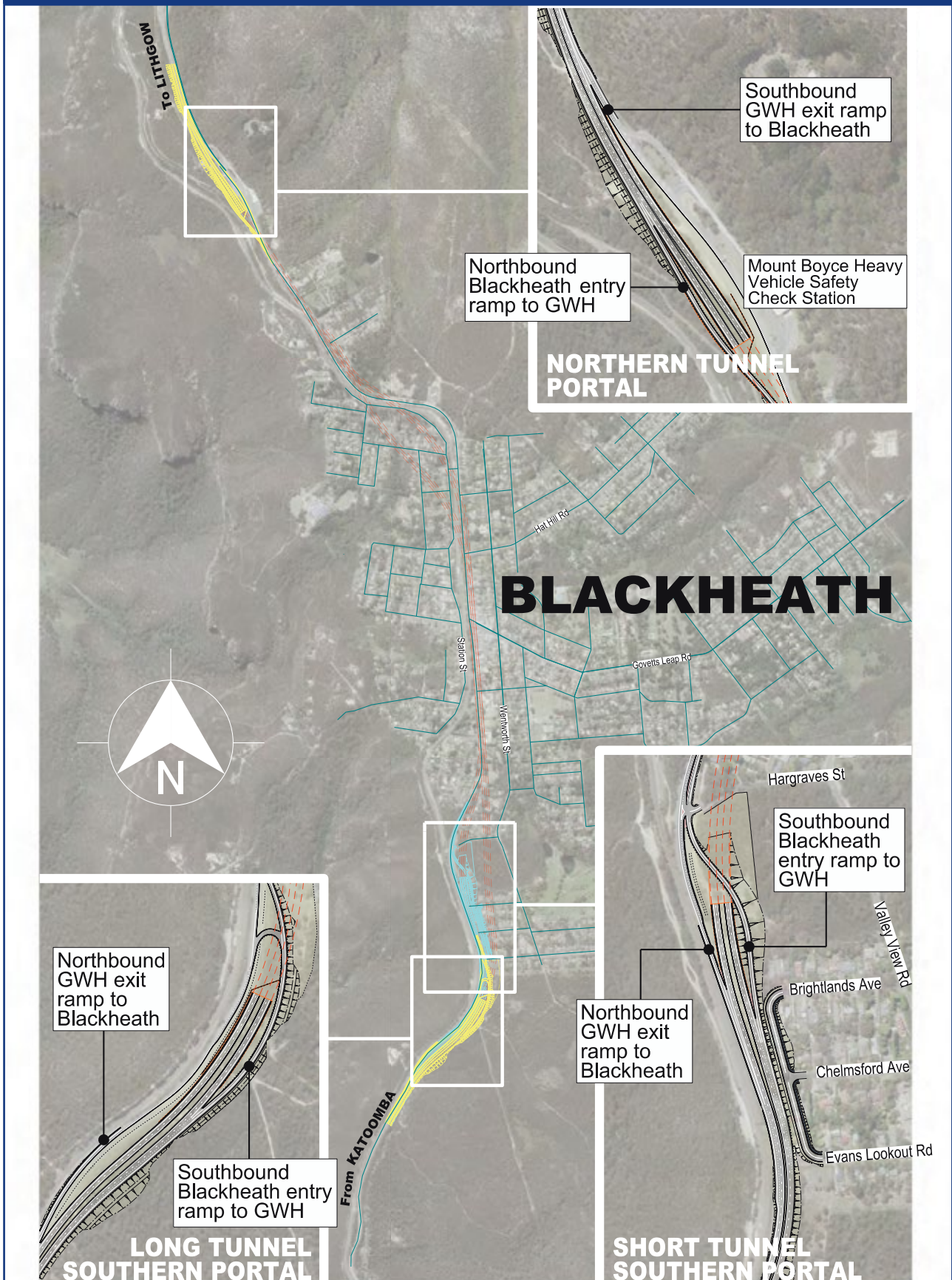
The proposed portal at Sutton Park would have an impact on recreational land and residential properties at the end of Evans Lookout Road, Brightlands Avenue and Chelmsford Avenue.

The proposed portal at Mount Boyce Heavy Vehicle Safety Station may impact access to the picnic area and may also require relocation of the scar tree.

The routes shown for consultation were a preliminary design only. Further technical studies are needed to determine the exact alignment of the route underground.

Early investigations indicate that a tunnel is feasible under Blackheath and that much of the tunnel can be built at an average depth of 30–40 metres below the surface, the height of a 10-storey building. A long tunnel route option, between the two outermost portals, would provide a 4.5km underground bypass of Blackheath. A shorter tunnel, between the Sutton Park and Mount Boyce Heavy Vehicle Safety Station portals, would be approximately 4km in length.

Blackheath route options



4. Consultation

4.1 Values

Transport for NSW's values underpin our decisions and behaviours when working with customers, colleagues, stakeholders and partners. They include:

- **Customer focus** – We place the customer at the centre of everything we do
 - **Collaboration** – We value each other and create better outcomes by working together
 - **Solutions** – We deliver sustainable and innovative solutions to NSW's transport needs
 - **Integrity** – We take responsibility and communicate openly
 - **Safety** – We prioritise safety for our people and our customers.
- Establish relationships and build trust with the local community, particularly local stakeholder groups, business and any directly impacted residents/landowners.
 - Provide clarity to the local community on the current route options for Blackheath
 - Actively accept and respond to feedback and input from the local community on the elements of the strategic design, including within the period of consultation
 - Ensure that members of the local community have sufficient opportunity to provide feedback, in light of fluid COVID-19 advice and restrictions on community consultation.

4.2 Communication objectives

The communication objectives for this Program are to:

- Provide clear, consistent and timely information to communities, stakeholders and customers on the Program
- Build relationships and a database of contacts of interested and concerned community members with whom TfNSW will continue to engage with throughout the development and delivery of the Great Western Highway Upgrade Program
- Provide meaningful opportunities for the community to provide feedback
- Listen to community and stakeholder views to help shape the design of the Program
- Raise awareness of the Program and its benefits and impacts throughout all phases including planning and construction

4.3 Consultation method

Consultation was initially scheduled to take place from Monday 12 October until Saturday 14 November 2020. Following requests from the community, consultation was extended to Saturday 28 November.

Due to COVID-19 guidelines and restrictions issued from NSW Health, we were unable to host face-to-face community consultation sessions.

We established a comprehensive online resource, the virtual consultation room, which hosted all information relevant to the consultation, including:

- Introduction video
- Consultation overview
- 3D animations of portal options
- Interactive route options map
- Project benefits
- Freight
- Urban design
- Blackheath Co-Design Committee
- Tunnel information
- FAQs
- Bookings for and recordings of online consultation sessions, including Q&A.

Three online webinars were held, with each recorded and made available, with full Questions and Answers in the virtual consultation room.

All flyers were printed and made available to the public in the Blackheath Area Neighbourhood Centre (BANC), as well as hardcopy feedback forms, which could be completed and placed in the ballot box for collection.

Community feedback was collated through the interactive online portal, online feedback forms, via email, mail or phone, through hard copy forms at the BANC and during the consultation sessions.

The community was able to contact the project team on the details below:

1800 953 777
gwhd@rms.nsw.gov.au
PO Box 2332, Orange NSW 2800
nswroads.work/greatwesternhighway

Tool/Activity	Description
Communications material	
Blackheath Consultation Community Update October 2020 Appendix A	<p>An eight-page community update was developed and delivered to all residences from Wentworth Falls to Lithgow. The update outlined the consultation process to date in Blackheath and the location of the potential tunnel portal locations. The update also detailed the consultation period, advertised session dates/times and details on how to register for a session.</p> <p>The community update was also made available on the project website at nswroads.work/greatwesternhighway</p> <p>All stakeholders registered on the project database were also emailed regarding consultation, including a link to the community update.</p>
Blackheath Co-Design Committee final report Appendix B	<p>A 52-page report developed for TfNSW by KJA which outlined the process, feedback and recommendations from the Blackheath Co-Design Committee on route options for Blackheath. The report was made available on the Upgrade Program's website.</p>
Blackheath Co-Design Committee fact sheet Appendix C	<p>A four-page fact sheet which outlined the structure and purpose of the Blackheath Co-Design Committee and detailed the Committee's preferred route option in the Blackheath area.</p> <p>The fact sheet was available to download in the virtual consultation room, and printed copies available at the BANC.</p>
Project benefits fact sheet Appendix D	<p>A four-page fact sheet which outlined the Upgrade Program's benefits to the local and broader community.</p> <p>The fact sheet was available to download in the virtual consultation room, and printed copies available at the BANC.</p>
Environmental fact sheet Appendix E	<p>A two-page fact sheet which outlined the framework for environmental assessment for each stage of the Upgrade Program.</p> <p>The fact sheet was available to download in the virtual consultation room, and printed copies available at the BANC.</p>
Tunnel fact sheet Appendix F	<p>An eight-page fact sheet was developed outlining the proposed tunnel options (with a map) and potential tunnel impacts and construction considerations.</p> <p>The fact sheet was available to download in the virtual consultation room, and printed copies available at the BANC.</p>
Doorknocking Appendix G	<p>On 12 October 2020, the project team door knocked residents who may potentially be affected by the shorter tunnel option at Sutton Park.</p> <p>The project team delivered 'Sorry we missed you' cards requesting contact if residents were not home.</p>

Tool/Activity	Description
Consultation sessions and briefings	
Consultation sessions	<p>Community consultation sessions were all held online, in line with NSW Health guidelines.</p> <p>The following community sessions took place:</p> <p>Online community consultation sessions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tuesday 20 October 12:30 to 1:30pm • Wednesday 21 October 7 to 8pm • Wednesday 28 October 5 to 6pm. <p>Each session was recorded and made available in the virtual consultation room at caportal.com.au/rms/great-western-highway/virtual. A copy of the questions asked in each session, and the associated answers, was posted with each recording.</p>
Stakeholder group meetings	<p>Members of the project team met with the Blackheath Co-Design Committee on 12 October 2020, to discuss consultation and the resources available.</p> <p>Transport for NSW also held briefing sessions for local council and local Federal Members of Parliament.</p>
Personalised meetings	<p>The project team held seven phone consultations with stakeholders from Blackheath during the period of consultation.</p>
Media and advertising	
Advertisement Appendix H	<p>An advertisement about the Blackheath route options consultation period was published in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blue Mountains Gazette (14 October and 21 October 2020) • Lithgow Mercury (13 and 16 October 2020) • Bathurst Western Advocate (13 October 2020)) • Orange Central Western Daily (13 October 2020) • Oberon Review (15 October 2020)

Tool/Activity	Description
Ministerial Media Event	<p>On 12 October, Minister Toole made the announcement at a media call in Blackheath that the NSW Government were considering three potential portal options and that consultation on these options was open. Minister Toole also announced that the Station Street and Centennial Glen options were no longer being investigated and that feedback on improvements that could be made to the existing highway were welcome.</p> <p>While visiting Blackheath, Minister Toole and members of the project team met with several members of the Blackheath Co-Design Committee and the Blackheath community.</p>
Media	<p>Two media releases were distributed via the project website and through engagement with local media:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tunnel options best fit for Blackheath (12 October 2020) • More time to have your say on Blackheath Tunnel (30 October 2020)
Digital Tools and social media	
Website and interactive portal	The Transport for NSW website, nswroads.work/greatwesternhighway was used to provide information about consultation and link to the virtual consultation room at caportal.com.au/rms/great-western-highway/virtual
Facebook	Facebook was used to provide information about the consultation period with posts on the NSW Roads page on 12, 23 and 28 October 2020.
Direct contact channels	
Email	The Program's email, gwhd@rms.nsw.gov.au , was publicised for the community to contact the project team directly with queries, concerns and to provide feedback.
Phone	The project hotline was also advertised for the community to contact the project team directly with queries and concerns, and to book phone and online consultations. The hotline number is 1800 953 777.

5. Consultation Summary

5.1 Overview

All information for the consultation period was hosted on the virtual consultation room at **caportal.com.au/rms/great-western-highway/virtual**, including online feedback forms and map comments. Printed information was also available at the Blackheath Area Neighbourhood Centre, as well as a hard copy feedback form.

Three consultation sessions were held, with 190 participants. These sessions included presentations from the project team on the tunnel portal options and on the impacts of tunnel construction, followed by question-and-answer sessions. The sessions were recorded and posted to the virtual consultation room so that stakeholders who were unable to attend could view the sessions when convenient.

For those unable to attend the online sessions, phone consultations were offered. Seven phone consultations were conducted.

During the consultation period, we received 2486 submissions. 798 submissions were made through the online feedback form, 146 were pinned comments on the online map, 47 were email submissions and 33 were postal submissions. An additional 15 submissions were received through a submissions box at the Blackheath Area Neighbourhood Centre. The virtual consultation room had a total of 6205 unique visitors.

2486

submissions from
members of the
community

798 online
feedback forms

146 pinned comments
on the online map

47 email submissions

33 postal submissions

6205 unique visitors



1447

signed group submissions
were received on
behalf of the following
community organisations:

- Blackheath Area Community Alliance
- Blackheath CWA
- Blackheath & District Chamber of Commerce Inc.
- Blackheath Highway Action Group
- Blackheath Public School P&C Association
- Blackheath Rotary
- Blue Mountains Rhododendron Society
- Friends of Blackheath Pool & Memorial Park
- Save Centennial Glen Group
- Vipassana Meditation Centre
- Blackheath Area Neighbourhood Centre
- Blackheath Conference St Vincent de Paul Society
- Blackheath Golf & Community Club
- Blackheath Mount Victoria RSL Sub-branch
- Blackheath Rhododendron Festival Committee Inc.
- Blackheath Streetscape Group
- Friends of Blackheath Hall
- Medlow Bath Residents Association Inc.
- Save Station Street Group.

Key themes raised by the community included questions about:



5.1.1 Support for the 'long tunnel'

Many submissions expressed support for the 'long tunnel', with tunnel portals located south of Evans Lookout Road and at the Mount Boyce Heavy Vehicle Safety Station.

"Long tunnel...please!! It has been so refreshing to witness and participate in genuine community engagement around political decisions that affect our daily lives. Please continue this mature representation by listening to the overwhelming sentiments of our town and opt for the long tunnel option to ensure the least impact on residents."

"Preference is for long tunnel – have concerns regarding noise and ability to leave property quickly in the event of an emergency e.g. a bushfire if short tunnel proposal adopted."

"The 12 homes and the preservation of ALL BLACKHEATH are MUCH more important to me than a couple of hectares of National Parks land for the Long Tunnel portal."

"Long tunnel option would be preferable with no toll. The federal government has put money on the table during their budget speech for infrastructure so it needs to take advantage of the opportunity to get it done. Also with the

current traffic on long weekends and school holidays congestion is a major problem– I sometimes don't leave the house because the traffic doesn't allow me to enjoy being on the road."

"I support the Long tunnel option because I believe that this option is best to maintain the character of the town and it offers the most sensible solution for those travelling west. I am concerned the short tunnel option will cause more traffic to travel on the central streets around the shopping precinct in town. It would enable our business to receive and dispatch goods more freely as there will be less impact on local roads."

"As one of the local paramedics who is responding lights and sirens to Blackheath and beyond in all weather at all times of day, it is vitally important that the entrances are well marked, and easy to navigate in heavy fog, smoke, snow and at night. I suggest the long tunnel with an entrance away from Evans Lookout Rd and the town so as to simplify the entrance and exit."

"I support the LONG TUNNEL (dual carriageway) through Blackheath for the following reasons:

- 1. it will take through traffic away from Blackheath including all residential areas*
- 2. it is likely to not require ventilation stacks since the portals will be out of town*
- 3. it will have a greater positive impact on safety relative to the short tunnel.*

For abundant clarity, I OPPOSE the Mid-length tunnel for the following reasons:

- 1. the loss of 12 homes*
- 2. it is likely to require a ventilation stack*
- 3. Permanent noise and disruption within adjoining residential areas*
- 4. it will have a lesser positive impact on safety due to congestion in Evans Lookout Road."*

5.1.2 Support for the 'short tunnel'

A small number of submissions were received in support of a 'short tunnel' with portals at Sutton Park and the Mount Boyce Heavy Vehicle Safety Station.

"The short tunnel should be the preferred choice.

- 1. It will be more compact starting at the side of Hill 33.*
- 2. No extra Water Catchment or National Park needs to be used.*
- 3. The shorter tunnel will mean that more people will be likely to use Blackheath shops. The longer tunnel will be a big dis-incentive to turn off.*
- 4. The shorter tunnel will be cheaper to build. There is no need to go the extra expense of the longer tunnel. "*

"Blackheath is fortunate to get a tunnel rather than a four lane highway through the middle. However there are several businesses that depend on passing traffic. It will be more attractive for those who wish to duck into Blackheath if the detour is minimised. Blackheath's economy will be greatly affected with the bypass. The shorter tunnel will give many businesses in Blackheath a fighting chance to survive."

5.2 Summary of submissions and responses

5.2.1 Additional observations regarding the 'short tunnel'

Evans Lookout Road and surrounds

Several submissions and queries were received during the consultation period regarding lack of access for residents from the area near Evans Lookout Road, Chelmsford Avenue, Brightlands Avenue and Valley View Road in the draft strategic designs for a tunnel portal at Sutton Park.

"It is preferred that there is more than one road that can provide access to this arm of Blackheath, not just for convenience but also to provide redundancy in accessing this area during bushfires. It may be difficult for emergency services to access this area if a fire travelled up Govetts Leap Brook or Pulpit Hill Creek (Megalong Road)."

"I have witnessed the increased usage of the road to the point that it is one of Blackheath's busiest streets. With increasing tourism to the Blue Mountains and accessibility issues surrounding iconic lookouts like the Three Sisters in Katoomba and Govetts Leap in Blackheath, Evans Lookout is becoming increasingly popular to tour companies and individuals as an alternative."

"Access issues for Evans Lookout Rd – no turn right from highway from southbound direction."

"Appears to be no ability to turn left from Evans Lookout Rd onto highway southbound. This is important for bushfire evacuation, as otherwise residents in the vicinity of Evans Lookout Rd would be forced to travel further back north into Blackheath to escape southbound."

"I have major concerns that Valley View Road would not be able to handle the increased traffic and congestion and it would create noise and congestion issues for residents in the area."

TfNSW response

Through consultation with the community, we have gained a much clearer understanding of the traffic needs in this part of Blackheath. Feedback from the community that a single point of access is unsuitable for this area has been noted, particularly in the instance of an emergency such as bushfire. Should the Sutton Park portal be chosen as the preferred option, we undertake to investigate ways the connectivity of this area of Blackheath to the highway might be improved.

Sutton Park

A small number of submissions raised concerns about the impact of the shorter southern tunnel portal on Sutton Park.

"Sutton Park is a much-utilised stop over and provides hospitality for tourists, travellers and truck drivers. It would not fit in with our town's character to destroy Sutton Park and the respite it provides for travellers. It would also increase the burden on drivers who use it and force them to drive on to find alternate places to stop and rest."

"The Short Tunnel Option will have significant impact on Sutton Park/Reserve. The bushland part of this reserve has been a Bushcare site under the auspices of the Blue Mountains City Council for over twenty years. Bushcare volunteers meet in this area on the first Thursday of every month and over the years have kept the area substantially weed free and rehabilitated more degraded areas. The bushland area of the reserve represents a good example of remnant ridge-top heathland and operates as a buffer area between Blackheath and South Blackheath contributing to the bushland character of Blackheath and thereby increasing amenity. The area is valued by locals as evidenced by the many years of voluntary service given to the site and I ask that this be factored into your considerations as the short and long term effects on the Reserve of the Short Tunnel will be significant."

"My partner and I walk our dog most weekdays in Sutton Park & the conjoining nature reserve. We would be significantly impacted if the park and reserve were destroyed to make way for tunnel facilities, the entrance to a southern tunnel portal and a widened highway...Over the past year, since the bushfires, we have also seen many more birdlife in the nature reserve. In particular, we now regularly see Gang Gang Cockatoos - who we had not sighted there before the fires. Any destruction of Sutton Park and the nature reserve would displace the many birdlife and wildlife who have made the reserve their home."

"Many visitors to Blackheath and beyond make use of Sutton Park as a rest area and 'pit stop'. The Park also provides a green entrance to Blackheath that is pleasant and welcoming for tourists and residents alike."

"The loss of Sutton Park as a rest area would impact on the town as there would be nowhere to easily park large vehicles and caravans."

TfNSW response

The proposed shorter southern portal would reduce the size of Sutton Park. However, if this local recreational area was needed for the project, Transport for NSW would seek input from residents and stakeholder groups on how to address this impact to ensure the best outcome for the community.

We are taking the time to plan this project properly and make sure that we have a strong foundation of community consultation for any option selected, in order to choose what is right for the community and road users. Community feedback will continue to assist our understanding of impacts on Sutton Park in greater detail.

5.2.2 Other routes consulted

Several stakeholders raised questions on whether alternative routes which were proposed to the community in 2019 had been abolished.

“Has the ‘widening of the highway’ option also been officially removed and gazetted? I received assurances from both Minister Paul Toole and Alistair Lunn that the highway will remain as it is, but it would reassure many Blackheath residents to see official confirmation of the fact.”

“Can you assure the community that should the tunnels become not feasible to build that the highway widening through town doesn’t become the default design option?”

“Has the decision, to lift the Station Street and Centennial Glen options off the table, been officially gazetted?”

“How secure is western Blackheath – could a change of government overturn the decision?”

5.2.2.1 TfNSW response

As a tunnel has been selected as the preferred option for the highway upgrade through Blackheath, duplication of the existing highway through Blackheath is no longer being progressed by Transport for NSW. While we progress plans for a tunnel, we have also invited feedback on improvements that could be made to the existing highway to improve safety, amenity and connectivity in Blackheath.

Suggestions from the community received during consultation are detailed below in Section 5.2.20.

A gazette is an official publication for the purpose of notifying statutory instruments – rules, regulations, by-laws, ordinances, rules of the court or proclamations made under certain Acts. The decision to remove the Station Street and Centennial Glen options does not need to be gazetted.

Transport for NSW has undertaken a robust options development and refinement process. This has been informed by the Program objectives, a multi-criteria assessment,

including community and BCC feedback, and financial and economic appraisals. Through this robust and evidence-based approach, the Station Street and Centennial Glen options have been removed.

5.2.3 Heavy Vehicle Safety Station Access

Many submissions questioned the provisions for access to the Heavy Vehicle Safety Station in the draft design of the northern portal.

“How do heavy vehicles who are required to stop at RMS Safety Station at Mt Boyce re-join the highway tunnel (they can’t) or is that weigh station to be moved or removed?”

“Presumably the intention is to encourage trucks into the tunnel, but how will this happen if the inspection station is not on the tunnel access?”

5.2.3.1 TfNSW response

This is a very early strategic design for the bypass, but we anticipate that the Heavy Vehicle Safety Station will most likely be moved to ensure that heavy vehicles could use a tunnel if they are able to do so.

5.2.4 Traffic

Several submissions queried and raised concerns about traffic volumes, safety and planning on the length of the Great Western Highway.

“The reality is that the highway upgrade will result in more traffic – both in terms of cars and freight vehicles. Residential areas, schools, community facilities and some town centres across the Blue Mountains directly front the highway and all will be impacted from increased noise, congestion and pollution. While the Great Western Highway is major inland route it should not be forgotten that for the residents of the Blue Mountains it is the road that fronts their houses, is adjacent to their schools and is a local road corridor for the villages.”

"International research has demonstrated time and time again that freeways and highway expansions only promote more traffic and carbon-polluting transport. This research also shows the time saved in terms of road trips immediately after significant highway upgrades is quickly lost through increased traffic."

"Will there be a traffic demand analysis made available to the community at any stage?"

"Is it planned to be a toll-free tunnel?"

5.2.4.1 TfNSW response

The duplication of the Great Western Highway is being planned and designed to support future traffic growth in line with forecasted projections, whilst supporting local access, regional tourism and freight connectivity.

The Great Western Highway's role as a transport corridor is critical for NSW. It is part of the National Land Transport Network, serving as a key freight transport corridor and connection from the Central West and Orana (including Dubbo, Orange and Bathurst) to Sydney. Alternate routes are also single carriageway Highways which are significantly longer in length.

Most recent traffic studies conducted on the Great Western Highway between Katoomba and Lithgow illustrate a consistent 1.4 per cent growth each year, and indicate that this growth will continue with or without a Highway upgrade.

There are over 15,000 vehicle movements per day in Blackheath, 19,000 at Medlow Bath, and above 20,000 at Katoomba. This exceeds traffic volumes on other duplicated Highways such as the Pacific Highway at Grafton, the Princes Highway at Berry and the Hume Highway at Goulburn.

Transport for NSW will continue to investigate the best possible customer outcomes and transport solution for the corridor and Central West region, including consideration of road, rail (e.g. Fast Rail – Central West) and active transport upgrades, as well as potential opportunities to enhance regional economic development and land use outcomes.

There are no plans to toll the upgraded Highway.

5.2.5 Rail and freight

Several submissions were received in relation to freight and the use of rail, including suggestions for how rail infrastructure could be increased or improved.

"I would like to stress that this whole project should have considered expansion of the rail freight corridor and shifting of freight to rail, rather than assuming a future in which freight will continue to be moved by diesel-powered road transport."

"Most of our community feel that the opportunity for improving safety and passage of cars / goods up and down the mountains should INCLUDE railway upgrade. Why isn't this in the works also?"

"Unless heavy freight is diverted to the rail network the Great Western Highway promises to become a very dangerous thoroughfare for everyone who uses it. It is worth making this change now, before the Badgery's Creek Airport is operational and generating yet more freight movement back and forth over the Blue Mountains."

"Currently a rail line is being built from Melbourne to Brisbane, NT and Adelaide thru Parkes. This rail line will go to Sydney and make all the decimation of the BM road widening pointless."

"Will the NSW Government immediately commence an investigation of compulsory rail transport for dangerous/flammable loads in the Penrith to Lithgow corridor?"

5.2.5.1 TfNSW response

The project team has worked closely with expert advisors in considering the use of the Great Western Highway by freight. This work has considered multi-modal and alternative corridor options for improving transport across the Blue Mountains as part of the broader state transport network.

Upgrading the rail line is not a viable substitute for upgrading the Great Western Highway. The Highway upgrade is being developed alongside long-term rail options such as the Fast Rail program, as both are needed to meet future demand and address current issues around congestion, journey reliability and safety.

Rail freight is the most cost-effective way to move large quantities of bulk goods over long distances, and 90 per cent of containerised freight suitable to be transported by train from the Central West to Sydney is already on the rail network. Bulk goods will continue to rely on the rail line, including grain, export meat, timber, coal, steel products and interstate rail freight to Perth and Adelaide.

The inland rail will service freight travelling between Melbourne and Brisbane. The freight corridor over the Blue Mountains services a different freight chain, so it is not expected that the inland rail route will have much, if any, impact on the amount or capacity of freight transported via the Great Western Highway.

Even with improvements to rail, there are types of freight that producers and manufacturers will always choose to move by road. These include:

- Consumables like groceries which need fast, frequent deliveries
- Goods that need to be delivered to many different stores along the way, like fuel
- Smaller freight loads, where it is more cost effective to be transported by road
- The approximately 40 per cent of freight within the Blue Mountains that starts or ends its journey between Lithgow and Katoomba, on or nearby the Highway.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulates the transport of dangerous goods by road and, in conjunction with the Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator, by rail. They regularly audit dangerous goods transportation to ensure compliance with legislative requirements. For more information, go to <https://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/your-environment/dangerous-goods>

A Transport for NSW Policy is currently being developed to inform whether any dangerous goods would be allowed through a Blackheath bypass tunnel. The bulk of dangerous goods carried on the Highway is fuel – liquid or gas. Preliminary studies indicate that around 4 per cent of daily current heavy vehicle movements in Blackheath are dangerous goods.

The amount of freight moved on the Great Western Highway will continue to grow with or without the upgrade. The broader upgrade will provide the freight industry with opportunities to use modern, more productive heavy vehicles (up to 30m) that meet the highest safety and performance standards.

5.2.6 Road freight

Various submissions were received raising questions about road freight on the corridor.

“What considerations have been given to wide loads through the tunnels, eg; recent transporting of wind turbines to Aarons Pass?”

“I would also hope that a load and speed limit be placed on trucks through the mountains. As a regular commuter to the Central West, the dominance of large and fast moving trucks has had a huge impact on my daily travel to and from work.”

“The argument that the highway upgrade, by allowing modern, higher capacity vehicles will lead to a 15–20% reduction in articulated truck trips on the Highway between Katoomba and Lithgow is spurious. While the upgrade may result in less freight vehicles this can only be achieved if there is an increase in bigger, heavier, and noisier freight vehicles.”

“Will the NSW Government formally rule out Bells Line of Road as a future significant truck route?”

“Will the finalisation of the tunnel automatically mean access by 26m B doubles and 30m rigid vehicles or will there be a process involving the public to lift existing restrictions?”

5.2.6.1 TfNSW response

Transportation of over-size loads, such as wind turbines, would likely need to use the surface road, but this would depend on the gradient and curvature of the final tunnel route underground, which is yet to be determined.

Despite being larger vehicles, modern PBS heavy vehicles are safer and more efficient than the shorter general access vehicles that currently travel on the Great Western Highway. For example, a 26-metre PBS A-double produces 46 per cent less emissions than a 19-metre semitrailer, requires 55 per cent fewer trips to transport the same amount of freight, and can stop and turn in the same space.

The NSW Government continually investigates potential transport options and corridors across the state and has identified many of these within NSW Future Transport 2056.

Based on transport studies and investigations, the Great Western Highway is the key corridor for transporting goods and people from the Central West to Sydney. Investment in the Upgrade Program has been recognised as a priority because of its importance as a freight route and as part of the National Land Transport Network.

Upgrading the Bells Line of Road remains a long-term priority for the NSW Government.

Once the road is upgraded Transport for NSW would need to undergo an assessment of the entire road corridor regarding access for 26 and 30m heavy vehicles. Government would carry out consultation with stakeholders and the community when deciding on any change in gazettal.

5.2.7 Active transport

We received several submissions during consultation regarding active transport and active transport users such as cyclists and pedestrians.

“As a cyclist and an advocate for active transport I am keen to see the use of bicycles encouraged around town. We support active travel tourism and the town is already part of the Heritage trail used by walkers and cyclists and tourists. The long tunnel will enhance the active travel credentials of the town in a major way and align it with the Cittaslow accreditation and movement already well underway across the mountains.”

“Approaches to the Blackheath township should be from a purpose built separate speed cycleway.”

“We would like to see the GWH repurposed into a tree lined boulevard with a cycle path and pedestrian path all the way into town.”

“As part of the GWH upgrade program, the Blue Mountains City Council, the NSW government and the community should develop, and government should fund a plan for better local transport and accessibility options in Blackheath. This should take account of the needs of the elderly and people with disabilities, encourage safe cycling and safe walking options within and around Blackheath and provide for well-designed local roads for local residents, local businesses and visitors.”

5.2.7.1 TfNSW response

Transport for NSW's urban design is governed by the "Beyond the Pavement" policy, which outlines four design objectives we are committed to achieving on all work:

1. Projects should fit sensitively into the built, natural, and cultural environment in both urban and rural locations
 2. Projects should contribute to the accessibility and connectivity of communities and a general permeability of movement through areas by all modes of movement
 3. The design and management of projects should contribute to the overall design quality of the public domain for the community, including transport users
 4. Projects should help revitalise areas and contribute to the local and broader economy.
- For more information go to www.rms.nsw.gov.au/business-industry/partners-suppliers/documents/centre-for-urban-design/landscape-guideline.pdf

The Great Western Highway Upgrade Program aims to upgrade and improve access for walking and cycling along and across the corridor by providing high quality facilities.

Transport for NSW are committed to providing walking and cycling connections that link to existing trails and path networks in the Blue Mountains.

With the construction of a tunnel bypass of Blackheath, cyclists would be able to use the existing Great Western Highway route above ground, connecting with the Highway at either end of the town. With through traffic using the tunnel, the surface road would become a much safer environment for cyclists, as well as pedestrians.

Transport for NSW will work with local stakeholder groups and Blue Mountains City Council to further develop active transport links within the corridor, and enhance provisions for all road users.

5.2.8 Environment

The environmental assessment of all stages of the project will be prepared in accordance with all relevant Commonwealth, State and Local environmental plans and legislation.

The assessment will include investigations into the built (for example heritage) and natural environments (for example biodiversity and water quality) and potential impacts to human amenity (for example visual impacts and access). It will seek to identify, mitigate and manage any potential impacts associated with the proposal.

Consultation with the community and regulators from all tiers of government will be essential during the development of the environmental assessment. The aim of this consultation is to help us identify any unforeseen environmental issues which need to be assessed.

5.2.8.1 Operational noise

Concerns were raised by some stakeholders about the potential increase in noise once construction is complete, particularly in the vicinity of proposed tunnel portals.

"After construction, there will be a considerable amount of noise around the southern portal due to traffic. This will probably be more noise than we hear today. A large component of the noise will be due to the fact that the traffic descends when entering the tunnel and ascends when leaving it. Vehicles (esp. trucks) will probably have to brake as they enter and accelerate as they leave it. Many trucks use noisy air brakes for this type of braking."

"Any acoustic soundproof walls will never be enough to lower the noise levels around the short tunnel portals to an acceptable level (ie nothing) or the associated sound from years of construction. The visual impact from soundproof walls would also be a negative eyesore within the world heritage Blue Mountains."

"Is there compensation for those impacted by additional noise from the additional traffic. For example upgrading installing air con, double glazing windows etc."

5.2.8.2 TfNSW response

Upgrading the Highway from Katoomba to Lithgow will allow us to improve the existing alignment by straightening out curves and flattening steep grades as much as possible, which can help to mitigate vehicle noise. Design of portals to a tunnel would be configured to mitigate any noise, pollution or traffic impacts as far as is reasonably possible.

Providing a Highway more suited to modern heavy vehicles will mean less engine emissions and noise.

We will carry out a noise assessment as outlined in the Environmental Protection Authority's Road Noise Policy, along with Transport for NSW's Noise Criteria and Mitigation guidelines. These guidelines outline a consistent approach for determining what noise criteria applies, and how we evaluate, select and design feasible and reasonable noise mitigation measures for road upgrades.

The assessment would predict noise levels for the year of opening and 10 years after opening, both with and without the project proceeding. We use noise monitoring data we have gathered, along with traffic surveys, to predict noise levels at potentially affected residences.

A comprehensive noise study will also consider the potential for reflected noise from both the Highway and train lines, to determine the suitability for noise walls or other treatment measures.

If noise levels are predicted to exceed criteria set by the Environmental Protection Authority, noise mitigation will be considered. The types of noise mitigation applied to road upgrades includes low noise pavements, barriers, noise walls and property treatments specific for affected homes, which may include double glazing.

A full noise impact study will form part of the Environmental Assessment and investigate any changes in noise and how this might impact local residences. This information will be made available to the public during the period of display, including any proposed noise mitigation measures.

5.2.8.3 Aquifers

Several submissions raised concerns regarding the potential impacts of tunnelling on water systems and aquifers.

"One of our main concerns in building either tunnel is the damage to the aquifers that flow beneath Blackheath. These have provided water to feed the Medlow Bath Dam (water supply for the area) and the creeks and swamp areas which help create the unique vegetation of this area, as well as in the past, provide the wells for town use."

"To date no environmental assessment or hydrological mapping has occurred in relation to either tunnel option. This is major concern given the unique geology and groundwater ecosystems that occurs in the Blue Mountains, including the nationally endangered Blue Mountain Swamps. Either tunnel option will result disturbance through the permeable layers of sandstone through which flows the groundwater that feeds our upper mountains swamps and creeks, and keeps waterfalls flowing."

"It is hoped that the EIS process will identify any underground natural water aquifers that might be impacted by the proposed tunnel and suitable solutions be developed and implemented to ensure aquifer performance in the landscape. There are numerous perched swamp, stream and gully ecosystems comprising complex flora and fauna in and around Blackheath and many may be vulnerable to even small changes to underground water movement."

5.2.8.4 TfNSW response

During the co-design process, as well as during consultation, Transport for NSW received valuable feedback regarding the importance of surface water features such as hanging swamps, as well as underground water features such as aquifers in the area.

We will undertake detailed hydrology studies and monitoring as part of our Environmental Assessment, guided by the Department of Planning, Industry and the Environment (DPIE).

These studies will allow us to assess the potential impact of any tunnel project at Blackheath, and allow DPIE to define any requirements necessary to ensure the safety of the environment and ecology in the area.

5.2.8.5 Water

Submissions were received regarding the potential impacts of construction on groundwater and the Sydney Water Catchment.

"I can see the National Park being minorly impacted by both the widened road from Medlow and the long tunnel entrance. I note that currently Sydney Water won't even allow bushwalking in that area."

"The overall Environmental Impact of the proposed tunnel option/s and the specific impacts on water quality in Blackheath, Blue Mountain National Park and the Sydney Water Catchment must be fully explored and the results and the proposed mitigation strategies and their likely effectiveness shared with the community."

"The drainage structures of the new highway will be directing water away from a ridgetop and the water might be directed either into the Greaves Creek or Megalong catchments. When will the NSW Government explain exactly how it intends to protect the Greaves Creek Water Catchment?"

"I strongly support that the tunnel should be constructed to prevent impacts on groundwater movement and quality and associated surface water impacts on groundwater dependent swamps and streams... Any works to upgrade or replace sections of the Great Western Highway must be completed to incorporate best practice Water Sensitive Urban Design such as biofilters/raingardens and passively watered street trees. This is bare minimum in catchments that drain to World Heritage protected waterways, drinking water storages and Ecologically Endangered Communities (swamps). This opportunity was missed during the recent safety upgrades - I do not accept the argument that no WSUD was needed as it "wasn't there before". This was a chance to do things better and that chance was disappointingly missed."

5.2.8.6 TfNSW response

We are sensitive to the fact that the project sits in the Sydney Catchment area of Water NSW as part of a Special Area Water Catchment. We are consulting with Water NSW and will continue to do so to ensure that safeguards are built into the design of the Highway Upgrade to ensure water quality is maintained or improved.

Hydrology assessments will include a design for water quality control measures and capacity assessment for downstream connections. Basins and pollutant traps will be used to control flow rates and the quality of water leaving the Highway.

Erosion and sediment control plans will be designed and implemented during operation and construction to ensure run off meets regulated standards.

We will consult further with the community on the drainage, design, hydrology assessment and water quality control measures as part of the Environmental Assessment process.

5.2.8.7 National Park

Some submissions asked for further details regarding the potential impacts on National Park and the process for resumption of National Park land.

“What are the implications of the long tunnel portal being in the National Park? Is legislation or some kind of permission required?”

“Assuming some of the National Park is transgressed upon, can there be an offset?”

“At least one tunnel option based on current designs will involve revocation of part of the Blue Mountains National Park as the land is required for associated road infrastructure. As the design options are still to be finalised further areas of either the national park or the catchment area may be lost – this is unacceptable. National parks are gazetted for their conservation value not for road building.”

“Could the amount of National Parkland affected be reduced or nullified if the permanent highway is on the western side of the railway at the point where it enters the long tunnel?”

5.2.8.8 TfNSW response

The long tunnel portal would impact a portion of Blue Mountains National Park area near Evans Lookout Road. None of this land is part of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area.

Approximately 20 hectares of National Park is the total amount of National Park land that would be required for the longer tunnel portal and the widening of the road between Blackheath and Medlow Bath.

The land identified is sufficient width to realign and widen the highway, provide for utilities, maintenance access, fauna control and water storage/quality control measures before it leaves the road corridor and flows into the National Park.

Lands reserved under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 (NPW Act)* are generally only revoked as a last resort and where no other practical options are available. The constraints

of the Great Western Highway corridor create such a situation, as options for upgrading the Highway are restricted by topography, private property and the rail line.

Only the Government (via a Cabinet proposal) and ultimately the NSW Parliament (via an Act of Parliament) can decide if land reserved under the NPW Act can be revoked.

Compensation for revocations is generally in the form of compensation and/or transfer of land for reservation under the NPW Act (and preferably as an addition to the park that is subject to the revocation). Transport for NSW will work with National Parks to determine the appropriate compensation for any national park land revoked.

For more information go to www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/parks-reserves-and-protected-areas/park-policies/revocation-recategorisation-and-road-adjustment.

5.2.8.9 Flora and fauna

A small number of submissions raised queries regarding the potential impacts of the project on local native flora and fauna.

“The stands of very mature Eucalyptus cypellocarpa and Eucalyptus mannifera and other native vegetation in the vicinity of the proposed portal and exit/entry ramps should be protected.”

“I would suggest that animal proof fencing be include as part of the project to keep wildlife off the highway. Currently there is inadequate fencing to prevent traffic hitting wildlife.”

“Can you please provide more clarity around how the construction phase will impact the community and its endangered species?”

“Are you aware that in the last review of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area UNESCO raised concerns regarding a high-speed transit tunnel under this area?”

5.2.8.10 TfNSW response

One of the key stated aims of the Great Western Highway Upgrade Program is to protect environmental and cultural assets of the Mountains and we are committed to minimising environmental impacts during the construction and delivery of the Program.

During the environmental assessment, we will identify impacts to biodiversity for both the construction and operational phases of the upgrade project and will identify appropriate mitigation measures where warranted.

The Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area is a known constraint and Transport for NSW has designed the proposal to avoid any direct impacts on the World Heritage Area. This includes all tunnel alignments.

5.2.8.11 Ventilation outlets

During consultation, particularly during live webinars, several queries were raised regarding the type of ventilation that might be necessary for the safe operation of a tunnel.

"TfNSW plans and technical studies must confirm the precise type of ventilation system, tunnel services and power supply that will need to be used as part of the tunnel operation and consult with the community on their proposed location/s, impacts on air quality and other impacts on Blackheath."

"With respect to tunnel ventilation stacks, if there is the opportunity to adequately maintain the air quality in the area without use of stacks, that would be preferable as the stacks would significantly impact on the aesthetics of the area."

"Tunnel portals and exhaust stacks should be located well away from residential areas of the town and located to prevent the clean mountain air that bathes the town from being destroyed by vehicle emission from stacks."

"Constructing tunnels for fossil-fuel powered vehicles creates major constraints for tunnel gradient, air purification infrastructure and personnel escape routes in the event of an emergency. At what point will the NSW Government consider constructing A32 tunnels for non-fossil fuel powered vehicles only?"

"What kind of filtration will be used in any stacks?"

5.2.8.12 TfNSW response

The NSW Government recognises that air quality and human health are key priorities when designing road tunnel ventilation systems. The ventilation system design will consider local factors and deliver the same outcome no matter what ventilation system is proposed – little, if any, change to air quality where people live or work.

Ventilation outlets are designed to take tunnel air up away from populated areas around tunnel portals. Studies have found that filtration systems on well-designed ventilation outlets in urban areas do not provide any measurable improvement to the air quality in the surrounding community. With extraction systems dispersing the tunnel air high into the atmosphere, there is little to no health benefit for surrounding communities from filtration and air treatment systems in such tunnels. To find out more, you can visit the website of the Advisory Committee on Tunnel Air Quality at <https://www.chiefscientist.nsw.gov.au/independent-reports/tunnel-air-quality>

The shorter tunnel option may require ventilation outlets. However, the proposed portals for a longer tunnel are located away from where people live and work, which may mean that ventilation through the tunnel portals will deliver an equivalent outcome (where people live and work) as ventilation outlets, and hence ventilation outlets may not be required.

Further studies are required to determine the ventilation needed for either tunnel option and if that necessitates ventilation outlets, where they might be located.

5.2.9 Mount Victoria

A small number of submissions queried plans for the village of Mount Victoria.

"It would also be of interest to have some transparency as to the associated highway upgrade plans for the Mount Victoria village. A tunnel to allow for this dying village to recover would also be a worthwhile long term tourism infrastructure investment."

"The long tunnel might help traffic at Blackheath but people at Mt Vic fear it just creates another Blackheath issue for us a little further up the line from Mt Boyce at Mt Vic. Is there any options to continue a tunnel to Lithgow? Or even that this can be considered part of the plans for future? This is what is really needed and other solutions for just one town along the way doesn't solve the same issues all the other towns are also experiencing. Bypassing Blackheath for Mount Vic literally just moves the same problem to Mount Vic."

5.2.10 TfNSW response

As part of the Great Western Highway Upgrade, it is also proposed that a bypass of Mount Victoria is constructed.

The 2013 concept design for this part of the project can be found at: www.rms.nsw.gov.au/projects/01documents/great-western-highway/safety-improvement-upgrades/mv2l_final_concept_design_plan_april_2013.pdf

Transport for NSW is currently re-examining plans for Mount Victoria to take into account advances in tunnel technology and further geotechnical considerations, to investigate whether a more complete tunnel bypass solution for Mount Victoria may now be feasible.

Further consultation on this stage of the upgrade is likely to take place later in 2021.

5.2.11 Business Case

A small number of submissions were received querying aspects of the Program Strategic Business Case for the highway upgrade.

"The following information should be provided in a timely manner to community members so effective consultation can be undertaken:

- The various technical reports that are being undertaken;*
- The Strategic Business Case;*
- The traffic demand analysis for the GWH being undertaken by RMS;*
- Investigations and reports to alter the current limitations on dangerous goods in tunnels; and,*
- Investigations and reports to change the current regulatory limitations on heavy vehicles on the GWH."*

"A proper business study and cost effectiveness of the complete project to upgrade the highway to a dual carriageway is still missing and needs to be done before any further design."

"What will the total cost of the project be to the Australian taxpayer?"

"Has there been a Benefit Cost Analysis done for the Great Western Highway Duplication?"

5.2.12 TfNSW response

The project team has worked closely with expert advisors and at the end of 2020 completed the Program Strategic Business Case in accordance with the Infrastructure Investor Assurance Framework and NSW Treasury guidelines.

A Strategic Business Case is the first step in project assessment and a more detailed Final Business Case for the project will be completed later this year, once more design and environmental assessment work has been completed.

Within the Environmental Assessment process, detailed studies on the various impacts and benefits of the project will be made available for further community consultation.

The benefits of the Great Western Highway Upgrade Program include:

- supporting economic recovery, development and sustainability
- improving efficiency and safety of freight movements
- improving access to tourism facilities and regional centres
- minimising peak period congestion
- providing capacity to meet future population growth.

Safety is a key driver for the Program.

The upgrade of the Great Western Highway between Emu Plains and Katoomba to four lanes, completed in 2015, has resulted in a 76.8 per cent drop in fatalities and a 27.7 per cent drop in crash rates.

Freight is also a key consideration for the Program. The Great Western Highway moves over nine million tonnes of road freight each year with over three million tonnes of road freight originating in or delivered to the Blue Mountains area, with this freight task set to increase.

5.2.13 Bypass effects

"The State Government should allocate funds to the Blue Mountains Council and impacted communities to plan and implement a future economic vision for their communities."

"Boards to promote the shops in Blackheath should be erected to give people a reason to drive through the town or use the tunnel."

"While I appreciate that the tunnel is the best option (and therefore the long tunnel vs short), I do have concerns that Blackheath may become a mountain village too easily forgotten and by-passed by many because of the tunnel. Of course this will have an impact on local businesses and so I feel for them as they try to adapt."

5.2.14 TfNSW response

The NSW Government offers the Bypassed Town signage initiative, which aims to encourage travellers to stop and visit bypassed towns.

A common themes in towns that have been bypassed is a universal improvement in amenity and lifestyle. The community feels they have 'got their town back,' with less noise, congestion, and exhaust emissions.

Bypassed towns experience improved motorist and pedestrian safety in town, with a better flow of traffic, easier parking and access to stores. This, combined with the better use of public space supports and increase in tourism and improves access to natural features or facilities of the town.

Research has shown that, while businesses in a bypassed town can experience a downturn in revenue in the first 12 months after opening, particularly service stations, and food and beverage outlets as they often rely on passing trade, in the longer-term highway bypasses do not have adverse economic impacts on towns, and instead result in economic benefits.

5.2.15 Construction

5.2.15.1 Construction noise and disruption

Several stakeholders, particularly in the vicinity of Chelmsford Road, raised concerns regarding construction noise and disruption.

"I am concerned about the prospect of construction resuming again, and to a significantly larger extent for the purposes of building a tunnel (as opposed to highway safety upgrades) and these related impacts to our right to peaceful enjoyment of our property."

"This will be a much larger operation than the recent "Safety Upgrade" of GWH at Blackheath that dominated Blackheath for 18 months and these operations will overflow into Chelmsford Avenue, Brightlands Avenue and Evans Lookout Road and impact many residents."

"I am also very anxious about the construction phase. During the recent highway upgrade as well as being noisy, the heavy trucks caused the water main on our street to burst. The people who came to repair the burst water main said our street, Chelmsford Avenue, was not built to withstand construction traffic. The short tunnel work will be much, much worse as it is a far bigger project."

5.2.15.2 TfNSW response

We understand that construction of road projects and upgrades can be noisy for residents.

We are committed to minimising environmental impacts during the construction and delivery of the Program, including noise impacts.

The upgrade will be subject to Environmental Assessment, which will outline construction procedures, including construction hours, methods and the mitigations which will be undertaken to lessen effects on the local community.

The Environmental Assessment will be prepared in accordance with all relevant Commonwealth, State and Local Environmental Plans and legislation.

Consultation with the community and regulators from all tiers of government will be essential during the development of the environmental assessment. The aim of this consultation is to help us identify all environmental issues which need to be assessed.

5.2.15.3 Other construction impacts

Many submissions, suggestions and queries were raised during consultation regarding local employment, likely construction hours, impacts and methods, spoil removal and duration.

"Construction and tunnel spoil must be carried by rail and the hours of trucking operations must be limited to 7.30am to 4.30pm and should not include weekends or public holidays."

"There is the potential for significant and prolonged impacts from construction, especially for residential receivers in the vicinity of the portals. As the great western highway is the key road route to the west, it is probable that much of the work will be undertaken at night when the highway can be partially closed. The environmental impact statement must clearly outline the amount of night works that is anticipated for the project over what period of time and how this will be mitigated (noting that the background level of noise is very low)."

"A requirement to provide local jobs and skilling for young people should be a requirement for all Great Western Highway Upgrade Construction contract tender."

"Is it expected that the tender will most likely have to go to an overseas company?"

"When will the public receive a substantially greater degree of detail of proposed construction methods to minimise aquifer disturbance, rock layer disturbance and surface subsidence in A32 tunnel construction?"

"I am also really worried about cracking emerging from tunnelling activities – as experienced by houses above the tunnelling of WestConnex...please can you provide insight on what proactive and reactive measures you have in place to deal with this eventuality?"

"Impacts on residential areas – the tunnel could be 10-12m below existing residents at Evans Lookout Road – does this have an impact even if you are not looking to acquire these properties? (longer tunnel option)"

"From previous experience, what radius from the tunnel can cracking potentially occur?"

"Can you guarantee that tunnel spoils being trucked out of the tunnel are in trucks with covered hoppers? Residents near tunnels of WestConnex experienced huge increases in cases of asthma due to the dust from construction and movement of spoils."

"How many truck movements will occur per day and in total for removal of the spoil from the tunnel? How deep will the tunnel be and where would the dirt etc. Go?"

"Where will the spoil removed be dumped?"

"Are you going to use a tunnel boring machine or are you going to blast?"

"How long will construction take?"

"What is the proposed start date?"

5.2.15.4 TfNSW response

A range of further investigations and technical studies are required to determine many of the construction methods and their impacts and mitigations required. Blasting is unlikely to be used in the construction of this tunnel.

As with any construction project, there will be some noise and vibration impact when work is being undertaken. Transport for NSW will be in contact with residents throughout the planning process; there will be many opportunities for consultation and community input as the project progresses, including during the environmental assessment phase.

Typically, standard construction hours for similar projects are five days a week, Monday to Friday 7:30 – 5:30, and possibly a half day on a weekend, dependant on the Environmental Assessment. Underground, tunnelling can be 24/7, particularly with use of acoustic shielding to mitigate noise impacts.

The construction phase of the Great Western Highway Upgrade will also deliver benefits to local townships, creating about 2500 jobs during the peak construction period, primarily in construction and engineering but also in many service sectors supporting the upgrade project.

As part of our sustainability framework, a number of strategic initiatives have been developed, including:

- Investigation of the potential to fund maintenance programs that offer sustainable local employment and ensure green assets are maintained in perpetuity
- Implementation of a local employment and skills development strategy, including an Employment Hub.

Leading input and local knowledge from Australian contractors will be key as the Program progresses. We will, however, seek to ensure the greatest value is achieved for taxpayers by inviting as many parties as possible to bid for any forthcoming work.

Structural issues from tunnelling are a common concern. Independent reporting will be carried out on all properties deemed to be potentially impacted by tunnelling works, including vibration. Typically, a survey is done of potentially affected properties, in a wide zone of influence. In addition, as the tunnel is constructed, there is typically a structural lining installed to the tunnel. One of the key purposes is to mitigate movement in the tunnel structure, in the excavation that has taken place. The amount of settlement allowed, typically a very small amount, is defined in the Environmental Impact Statement and therefore the planning requirements to which the contractor needs to deliver the project.

Where damage has occurred in other tunnelling projects it is typically within a short distance from the tunnel alignment (less than 50m). The Contractor is obliged under the planning conditions of approval to rectify any damage caused by tunnelling within six months of completion of construction. There are a number of layers of protection in place for the public and several obligations on Transport for NSW, and on the Contractor delivering the work.

Transport for NSW will investigate a suitable location to reuse any material extracted during construction. There are potential reuses across the project, but these have not been established yet. The method for the removal of material, and the minimisation of impacts on the local community, would form part of the environmental assessment.

The construction of a tunnel option could take up to four years from construction contract award to opening date.

We are unable to confirm a start date yet, as there are several studies and investigations still to be undertaken.

5.2.16 Tunnel route and investigations

Several specific queries in reference to the route of proposed tunnels were collated during consultation.

“When can the two tunnel indicative routes for Blackheath and their likely depths be made available? These are essential for us to understand the differences of the tunnel options”

“Can the entrance at Mt Boyce to the tunnel move further towards Lithgow?”

“We understand that the route of the tunnel will depend on geological conditions but we urge that the tunnel go under as few houses as possible.”

“Why are the routes shown on your map underground different?”

“Will the tunnel (preferable the long tunnel) go directly under the Railway Line & if it does, what impact will it be and what affect to the tunnel when long freight & coal trains traverse the tracks over the tunnel.”

“How long do you anticipate the investigation time to be? 6 months? 1 year? Longer? And when will investigations into tunnel specs start”

“Why will it take so long to announce a preferred option given the impact on community delaying this has?”

5.2.17 TfNSW response

The routes shown to describe the tunnel options during the consultation period were indicative only. Further geotechnical and hydrogeological investigations need to be conducted to determine a final alignment underground, as well as an exact location for either tunnel portal. A finalised route and depths of this tunnel will be made available to the community at a later stage of consultation.

In the current draft designs, the route does go under the railway. Our designers pay close attention to the crossings, to make sure they can support all of the loads on the rail line above. There are a number of considerations to make sure there are no impacts to the railway tracks.

The necessary investigations, some of which are already underway, could take up to 18 months to complete.

An announcement on the preferred portal option for the Blackheath tunnel is expected to accompany the release of this report. Along with broad community consultation, we need to properly consider all of the issues and impacts to determine a final location for the portals at each end of the tunnel.

5.2.18 Alternate routes and suggestions

In addition to submissions regarding the proposed portal options, we also received other route suggestions and queries during the consultation period.

"Install a large illuminated sign on the Castlereagh Highway before entering Lithgow, similar to the signs on the M4, M7, M5 etc, alerting drivers of the travel time options taking Bells Line to Richmond, versus using the GWH to Penrith. This would help take some of the traffic pressure at Blackheath if Sydney-bound drivers knew their time-distance options when approaching Lithgow, particularly on high volume traffic days such as Sunday afternoons and Mondays on long holiday weekends."

"Divert some of the proposed \$4.5bn budget for the Katoomba to Lithgow GWH Upgrade to be spent on much needed Black Spot safety upgrades between Katoomba and Blackheath that are not currently being addressed by TfNSW, as well as along Bells Line. Some of the tight curves on both roads could be straightened, a third lane could be added where there's room to help improve safety and traffic flow, and passing lanes could be added on some of the steeper hills along Bells Line for safety and to shorten travel times. Plus the recent Safety Upgrade in Blackheath and the Upper Mountains that failed to include Medlow Bath needs be reconsidered, with turn lanes added for Bellevue Crescent and Foy Avenue, plus a pedestrian traffic light/ zebra crossing between the Hydro Hotel and the Medlow train station would be a welcome safety feature."

"Even the long version of the Blackheath tunnel does not solve many of the problems. In the long run a very long 19km tunnel will cost about the same as the existing proposed long tunnel to go from Evans Lookout to Mt Boyce."

"Could you please consider an alternative I have previously submitted which bypasses the 3 towns completely, only requires one, two kilometre tunnel from Katoomba (under Pulpit Hill) to Megalong Valley, at a reasonable grade from the current dual carriageway, then travels through rural land to re-join the Great Western Highway at Little Hartley or further."

"Scrap the idea of the tunnels and preserve the historical crossing of the Blue Mountains which was mapped out over 2 hundred years ago. Instead put the money towards a 21st century solution that will cater for cars, freight, rail and services such as water, power, gas. Have some foresight like Bradfield and use multiple tunnels to open up the access between Sydney and the rest of NSW."

"Much better to concentrate on Newcastle, with its own potential to expand, taking more of the East Coast population growth and accessing direct to NSW Central West where at the same time population will need to move there for the jobs that can result from good focused manufacturing and processing industry creation. Remember that coal jobs will slowly decline and Newcastle port activity will decline slowly also. Matching east / west connectivity with the Very Fast Train introduction is absolutely fundamental!"

"I think a tunnel going under the whole of the Blue Mountains is necessary in the long term. With that and including a high speed rail link to the west would really open up those areas as Sydney grows. Of course I'm aware the costs would be high but the benefits would be worth it."

"I would also suggest a tunnel under Medlow Bath would help increase traffic flow between Katoomba and Mount Vic as well as avoiding the engine pollution emitted due to the climb out of Katoomba up to Medlow Bath. It would also allow Blackheath and Medlow Bath residents to unite in favour of tunnel options, quashing the dissent of those who live further down the mountain who already have their GWH upgrades in place."

"Why can't you put a highway from Lithgow to meet up with the M4 at the bottom near Lapstone that is a raised road through the Gross Vale?? The road could be similar to the Sea Cliff Bridge, have 3 exit and entry points, lower mountains at Lapstone, between Katoomba and Wentworth Falls (halfway between Lapstone & Lithgow) and along Darling Cause Way between Mt Victoria and Lithgow, so can be access up Mt Victoria Pass or from Bells Line of Road. You could even

have an exit to Bilpin on the other side of the Gross Vale. This would enable those who need to travel directly from the Central West to Sydney straight access at 100kms and provide a third road across the Blue Mountains. Those that want to do the tourist drive through the Blue Mountains and Bilpin would still be able to do that and the traffic in these areas would be reduced as the direct travellers to and from Sydney would use the by-pass. Trucks would use the by-pass. By passes are being made under Sydney to help with the traffic and reduce commute times why can't this be done for people in the Central West?"

"I think the State Government needs to use the existing rail corridor for the two westbound lanes of the new highway and use the current highway for the eastbound lanes. It seems far more cost effective to simply put 4km of rail underground than 4 lanes of freeway and associated infrastructure. The railway station could then have an exit on the northern side of the highway in the middle of town, better for locals and safer for tourists."

"You may not be aware there already is a substantial tunnel terminating at Winmalee which carries the sewerage from the mountain towns to the west. This was a health initiative as each mountain town had its own sewerage management system which emptied into the various creeks. The towns are nearly all connected now, the tunnel is large, can handle vehicles I think. Sydney Water built it."

"Instead of spending \$4.5bn on the GWH Upgrade that will only attract more passenger cars and freight-hauling trucks, why can't we introduce transport initiatives that address Climate Change issues? For starters, we should be making great efforts to encourage tourists to use the trains between Sydney, the Blue Mountains and Bathurst. More frequent passenger trains could be added on weekends and holiday periods with more cars in the morning for west bound trains, and more cars for eastbound trains in the evenings. To further encourage tourists to take the train rather than drive to the Blue Mountains (onwards of 8 million tourists now come to the Blue Mountains every year, with the far majority arriving in private vehicles), some of the

\$4.5bn can be spent on providing free electric shuttle busses that would greet arriving train passengers at Mt Victoria, Blackheath, Medlow Bath, Katoomba, Leura, Wentworth Falls, Glenbrook and other stations, and these shuttle buses would then provide regular pickups for a circuit within each village to the main attractions. Free electric shuttle buses could also operate between Mt Vic, Blackheath and Katoomba, as well as Wentworth Falls, Leura and Katoomba, and TfNSW could initiate a free rail pass for tourists to move between the various towns in the mountains while they visit, making a vehicle-free visit much easier for our visitors."

"Can I suggest that the proposed tunnel be available as a safe place in case of devastating fires in the Blackheath area. I know my reaction if there was a fire which was burning up houses in the centre of town would be to drive down a tunnel and park there!"

5.2.19 TfNSW response

The Program Strategic Business Case has investigated the needs of all road users across the corridor, alongside the Program's objectives. Our early investigations have shown that approximately 40 per cent of freight within the Blue Mountains starts or ends its journey between Lithgow and Katoomba, on or nearby the Highway. Our traffic modelling shows a large number of vehicles entering and exiting the Highway between Katoomba and Mount Victoria. We need to ensure that any tunnel addresses the service needs for this traffic.

Building a very long tunnel under the mountains would be prohibitively expensive to both build and operate and would only divert the traffic that is actually travelling all the way through the mountains. A longer tunnel would fail to serve the significant level of traffic that begins or ends its journey within the Blue Mountains.

The NSW Government must carefully balance its choices of investment across all government portfolios. Transport for NSW is cognisant of this and as such, in areas where the surface road is suitable for upgrading, designs will be progressed that use the existing route. By using as much of the existing road corridor as possible for the upgrade, we can also reduce environmental impacts on the National Parks and Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area.

The Central West and Orana sits at the heart of NSW and supports a diverse and productive economy that leverages connections to Sydney, Canberra and, increasingly, Newcastle. By 2036, the region's population will increase to more than 300,000 people. The area contributes 12 per cent of the Gross Regional Product Contribution, the third largest regional state contributor in NSW.

The NSW Government has committed to provide an initial \$10 million towards planning a fast rail route to the Central West. Building on this initial work, the NSW Government is now working closely with the National Faster Rail Agency to develop a business case for fast rail on the Sydney to Bathurst, Orange and Parkes corridor (via Lithgow).

5.2.20 Improvements to the existing Highway

During consultation, there were also submissions received which favoured improvements to the existing Great Western Highway, rather than a tunnel, as a viable option.

"A better solution, and one which many Blackheath people support, would be to widen the existing road through the middle of town as has happened in many other Blue Mountains towns where the highway has been upgraded. There is plenty of room to do this especially if the railway crossing, the western footpath and car parking space on the eastern side of the town centre were to be removed. I think that many people in TfNSW would agree with this proposal as it would be very cost effective – especially when compared to the tunnel idea."

"While the tunnel options seem to have the most benefits I do not support them. The long-term benefits over an upgrade of the existing highway just aren't that obvious. Within 25 years all the existing residents will have moved on, one way or another, anyway... The impact on the division of the town by a widening of the existing highway would be minimal because it is already thoroughly divided by the railway, which I have not heard will be included into the tunnel."

"Every other town in the Blue Mountains has the highway going through the middle of it and I can't see why Blackheath should be treated any differently. Please do not waste taxpayers' money on this tunnel project. There is plenty of room to put any highway upgrade through the middle of town at a considerably reduced cost. Pandering to the various pressure groups purporting to represent the views of the majority of Blackheath residents is not helping anyone. Please stop this nonsense and put the road upgrade through the middle of town!"

"I would like to see how you plan on not completely ruining Blackheath's economy in the long term with this proposal. I travel this road a lot and the traffic is very bad at times but all your tunnel seems it will do is kill Blackheath and make traffic worse with all the road works. Instead of putting in tunnels why not change the speed limits along the road so there isn't as much speed variations, reducing the traffic pile ups."

5.5.21 TfNSW response

A tunnel would deliver many benefits for Blackheath:

- Less congestion
- Through traffic moved underground
- Improved urban amenity and connectivity
- Safer town centre for cyclists and pedestrians
- Alternate routes for emergency services
- Giving back the Great Western Highway to the local community.

The long tunnel was supported by the Blackheath Co-Design Committee as their preferred route option.

While a tunnel option has been selected as the preferred approach for the Highway upgrade, we will continue to investigate ways to improve intersection performance, safety and connectivity on the existing Highway alignment, which will complement the \$250 million Safety Upgrade Program which was completed this year.

5.2.22 Suggested improvements to the existing Great Western Highway route

In addition to consulting with the community on a preferred tunnel portal option, we also invited suggestions for improvements that could be made to the existing route during this consultation. The comments below summarise the key suggestions submitted for consideration.

"I also recommend additional safety improvements for consideration and consultation:

1. *an underpass at the level (rail) crossing (replacing the current crossing over the rail lines).*
2. *an underpass between Shipley Road and the GWH (a new build) to provide an additional exit/entrance on the southern end of Station Street and thereby relieve congestion on the Bundarra Street crossing and a safer and quicker exit for Shipley Plateau and Megalong Valley for tourists and in the event of fire. NB: As modelled during the BCC with NO impact on surrounding houses in Shipley Road.*
3. *the introduction of a green arrow 'right hand' turn into Bundarra Street from the GWH (northern side) to regulate safe passage from oncoming westbound highway traffic."*

"Why can't there be a three lane corridor through Blackheath that has the capacity to move like the lanes on the harbour bridge according to traffic need? Pedestrian bridge from town to western Blackheath reducing pedestrian traffic and traffic lights. Improved road access from highway to west Blackheath. Cost effective. Minimal impact on residents."

"For evacuation purposes in the event of a severe bushfire emergency, it would be a good idea to have another entrance to the GWH for the people who live on the western side of Blackheath. At present everyone has to use the Bundarra Street railway crossing or the small bridge further north along Station Street."

"In regards to this project and the resulting increase in traffic, there are a few things that need to be done to mitigate the impact. Sound barriers need to be established alongside the highway in residential areas. There needs to be more crossings for pedestrians all along the highway with bridges and tunnels. And then I think there need to be wildlife crossings put in place too. If these can be implemented then I am in support of this project."

"To improve safety I hope cameras could be installed at any traffic lights as large trucks 'running red lights' and travelling at speed through Blackheath township has been a significant safety issue in recent years."

"Consider the potential for a traffic circle at the GWH/Govetts Leap intersection, rather than a traffic light."

"Increase distance between parked cars on side of GWH and lanes of traffic. Too narrow."

"The recent upgrades excluded Chelmsford Ave, Brightlands Ave and Evans Lookout Road. An extension of the recent upgrades up to the 80 zone in this location would improve safety particularly for right hand turning."

"Consider removing the parking lane beside the eastbound lane of the GWH in Blackheath on Sunday afternoons and holiday afternoons for 3-5 hours to facilitate the movement of traffic through Blackheath."

"Provide a proper seagull with a raised median and pedestrian refuge at the Station Street bridge. This will help pedestrians cross safely and also enable safe right turns from Station St which might encourage more people to use that bridge and help take strain off the Govetts Leap Road intersection."

"If room, provide seagull at Hat Hill to facilitate safe right turn onto GWH from Hat Hill."

“Provide left turn lane from GWH onto Sturt to help locals get off the highway quicker during traffic jams.”

“Blackheath has two sets of standalone traffic signals for pedestrians and one set of traffic signals for pedestrians and traffic control on Govett’s Leap Rd. Much of the traffic chaos could have been minimised years ago if the pedestrian signals were replaced with under or over passes. Travel times through the Blue Mountains would be reduced with a policy of replacing pedestrian crossing with over and under passes.”

“The Station St dirt road between Medlow Bath and Blackheath also needs to be sealed as a viable back road but generally locked to traffic unless there are accidents and the highway is blocked. This road needs to be locked (except in emergency) so as to preserve the safety of pedestrians and cyclists.”

“The lead times for commencing construction on existing highway improvements would be shorter than for the Blackheath or Mount Victoria tunnel commencements. Do existing highway improvements deserve funding priority over the tunnels for some years to come if safety and economic benefits are to be maximised?”

“I would also like to draw your attention to the current use of the slow lane on the approach into Blackheath which is being used as an overtaking lane by some car drivers well above the 60k limit. This is resulting in cars forcing a re-entry to the central lane dangerously close to other vehicles and with little visibility at the top of the rise.”

“At present there are only a few streets where traffic can turn right on to the GWH from the east side of Blackheath. e.g. when leaving the golf club via Evans Lookout Road turning right on to the highway to access home on the west side is often dangerous. A halfway turning solution should be considered. This would also apply turning right at Hill Road and GWH intersection. There are only 4 streets (I think) at present where right hand turns are permitted following the recent highway upgrade. These crossings get busy and therefore dangerous.”

“Other recent improvements that have been made to the existing Highway have improved safety and connectivity in Blackheath, however, I like to cycle to Mount Victoria and back and when you arrive into Blackheath from the West, I find the Highway difficult to share between the Cemetery and the Gardners Inn.”

“Can I suggest that the side streets from the Great Western Highway that have been changed to no right turn be reverted back as it is causing congestion as cars line up to turn down Govetts Leap Road.”

“Need to create an active transport safety route for pedestrians and cyclists on Station Street from Shipley Rd to the train station, to effectively connect the railway station to the railway firetrail. The current footpath is too narrow and unsafe for cyclists. Shipley Road junction is dangerous for cyclists.”

We thank the Blackheath community for all suggestions and comments and they will be considered during the next phase of the concept design process.

5.2.23 Consultation

Several submissions were received during consultation regarding engagement with the community, including requests to extend consultation, include face-to-face consultation methods and suggestions for future engagement.

“The level of engagement and promise to the public must be changed from ‘Inform and Consult’ to at least the ‘Involve and Collaborate’ levels on the International Association of Public Participation Spectrum Model (IAP2).”

“A permanent consultative body for the duration of the GWH upgrading projects is required for the whole of the Blue Mountains because all communities will be impacted by the proposed lifting of current restrictions on heavy vehicles.”

“The planning process from this point forward MUST be transparent and the community needs to be genuinely engaged in review of planning documents and understanding of the technical issues and environmental risks. The Environmental Impact Assessment and the technical studies on air and water quality, risk analyses and indeed the cost benefit analysis MUST be made public and the community must have the opportunity to assess and comment on the findings and recommendations.”

“When will there be a further round of public submissions?”

“Thank you for running the live webinars. They were very informative.”

“As construction is ongoing, could you kindly provide letter-drops with updates on progress and whether the timeline for completion changes.”

“I’ve been keeping abreast of the GWH Blackheath upgrade project and I just wanted to commend Transport on your work so far. I read it’s the first time you’ve tried a co-design approach - and the results from the community’s point of view are overwhelmingly positive. Also of note are the crystal-clear proactive communications pieces: I recently received the October update leaflet, which tells the story of the process with a quality I’ve not seen from government before.”

“Is it possible to extend the consultation period?”

“PLEASE! NSW health no longer requires groups under 300 people to meet online and can meet face to face if proper social distancing is followed. Can we be given the decency to have a proper face to face community consultation about this major project you’re proposing for Blackheath?”

5.2.24 TfNSW response

Consultation was initially scheduled to take place from Monday 12 October until Saturday 14 November 2020. Following requests from the community, consultation was extended to Saturday 28 November.

Due to COVID-19 guidelines and restrictions issued from NSW Health, we were unable to host face-to-face community consultation sessions.

We established a comprehensive online resource, the virtual consultation room, which hosted all information relevant to the consultation, including:

- Introduction video
- Consultation overview
- 3D animations of portal options
- Interactive route options map
- Project benefits
- Freight
- Urban design
- Blackheath Co-Design Committee
- Tunnel information
- FAQs
- Bookings for and recordings of online consultation sessions, including Q&A.

Three online webinars were held, with each recorded and made available, with full questions and answers in the virtual consultation room.

All flyers were printed and made available to the public in the Blackheath Area Neighbourhood Centre (BANC), as well as hardcopy feedback forms, which could be completed and placed in the ballot box for collection.

Community feedback was collated through the interactive online portal, online feedback forms, via email, mail or phone, through hard copy forms at the BANC and during the consultation sessions.

6. Recommendations

Following the review of the Blackheath Route Options consultation submissions, the following recommendations are proposed.

That Transport for NSW:

- Discontinue investigations into a possible tunnel portal in Sutton Park.
- Progress investigations into the 'Evans Lookout Road' portal, in a section of National Park 400 metres south of Evans Lookout Road in Blackheath.
- Continue negotiations with the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment regarding suitable compensation for the revocation of this section of National Park Land.
- Continue to design the Great Western Highway Upgrade Program to avoid all possible impacts on the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area.
- Continue to investigate suggestions from the Blackheath community regarding possible improvements to the existing surface road to alleviate current traffic issues in Blackheath during and after the planning and construction of a tunnel bypass.

7. Next Steps

Planning for the Great Western Highway Upgrade Program from Katoomba to Lithgow continues to progress.

April 2021: Transport for NSW will install air quality monitoring stations along the road corridor, to make sure we have thorough air quality readings to support accurate environmental assessment of the project stages. Further studies will continue along the vicinity of the Highway, including geotechnical, ground water, biodiversity, aboriginal heritage, noise monitoring and ground surveying.

May 2021: Medlow Bath safety works for the improvement of the Bellevue Crescent and Foy Avenue intersections with the Great Western Highway will be completed, weather permitting.

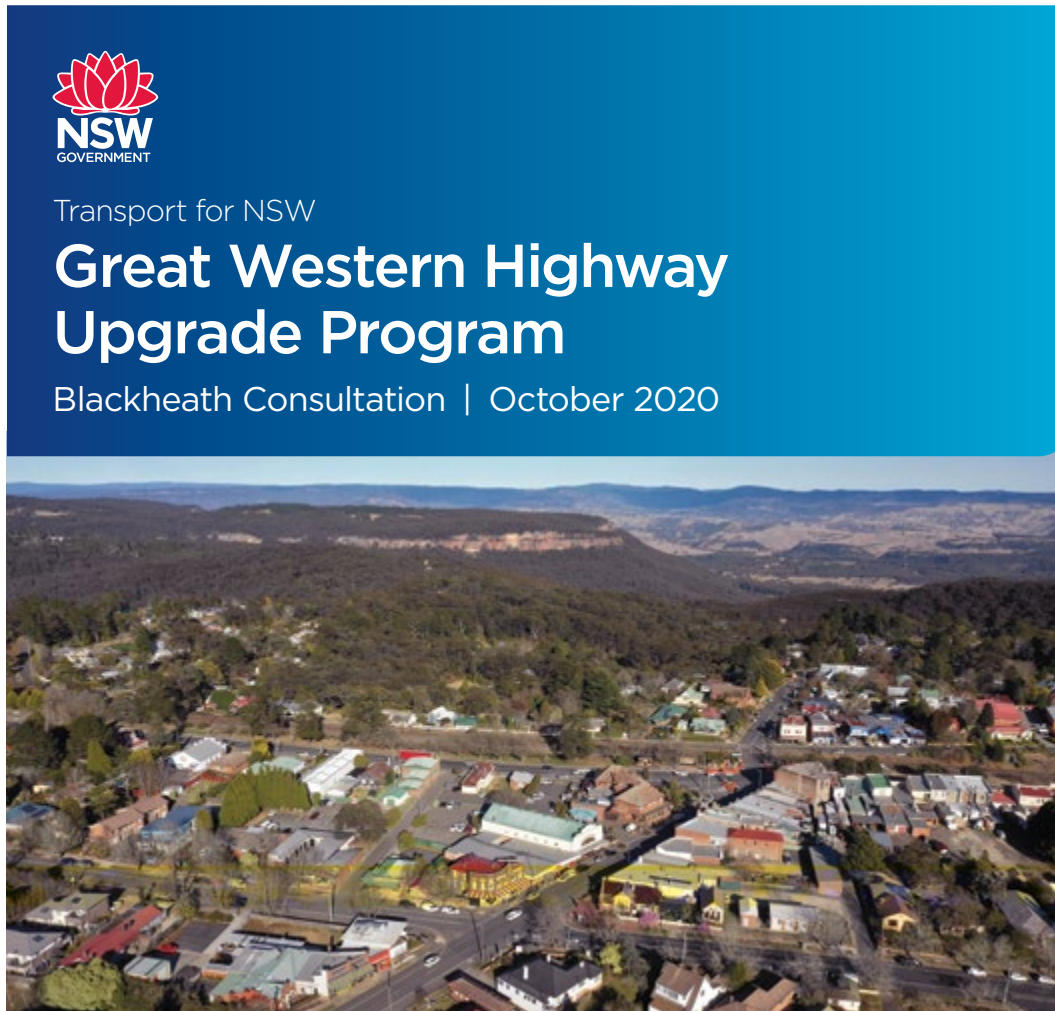
June 2021: Medlow Bath Review of Environmental Factors will be made available for public exhibition and consultation. This will be the community's chance to have their say on the improved design and the environmental impacts of the road upgrade through Medlow Bath.

October 2021: East section (Katoomba to Medlow Bath and Medlow Bath to Blackheath) and West section (Little Hartley to Lithgow) Reviews of Environmental Factors will be made available for public exhibition and consultation. This will be the community's chance to have their say on the improved design and the environmental impacts of the road upgrade through these areas.

Mid-2022: Environmental Assessment of the Central section of the upgrade, from Blackheath to Little Hartley to be displayed.

8. Appendices

Appendix A – Blackheath Consultation Community Update October 2020



Aerial view of Blackheath town centre

Have your say on tunnel options in Blackheath

The NSW Government has committed \$2.5 billion to upgrade the Great Western Highway between Katoomba and Lithgow. As part of that upgrade, it is proposed to build a tunnel under Blackheath to remove heavy traffic, improve safety, and give the Great Western Highway through Blackheath back to the community.

The proposed outer bypass option through Centennial Glen, and the proposed inner bypass next to the rail line on Station Street, have both been removed as potential routes for the Great Western Highway Upgrade Program.

Blackheath Upgrade

In November and December 2019, Transport for NSW consulted with the community about the Great Western Highway upgrade between Katoomba and Lithgow.

The route in Blackheath had not been determined and a strategic area with four broad options was presented, represented by a shaded area over the western side of Blackheath.

The strategic area included four broad options:

- An outer bypass with bridges crossing over Shipley Road, Centennial Pass, Porters Pass Track, and over the rail line at the north
- A bypass running next to the rail line either at ground level or in a cut and-cover tunnel
- Duplication of the existing highway in the town centre of Blackheath
- Long or short tunnels underneath Blackheath.

Options to the east of Blackheath were ruled out due to likely impact on the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area.

We committed to coming back as soon as possible to remove the strategic area and give you more certainty on the possible route through Blackheath.

Now that we have finished the Blackheath Co-Design process, we can present a strategic design for a route in Blackheath.

A long tunnel was the preferred option of the Blackheath Co-Design Committee. Transport for NSW is also seeking community feedback on one shorter tunnel portal option.

A tunnel bypass of Blackheath will improve safety and congestion through the town centre.

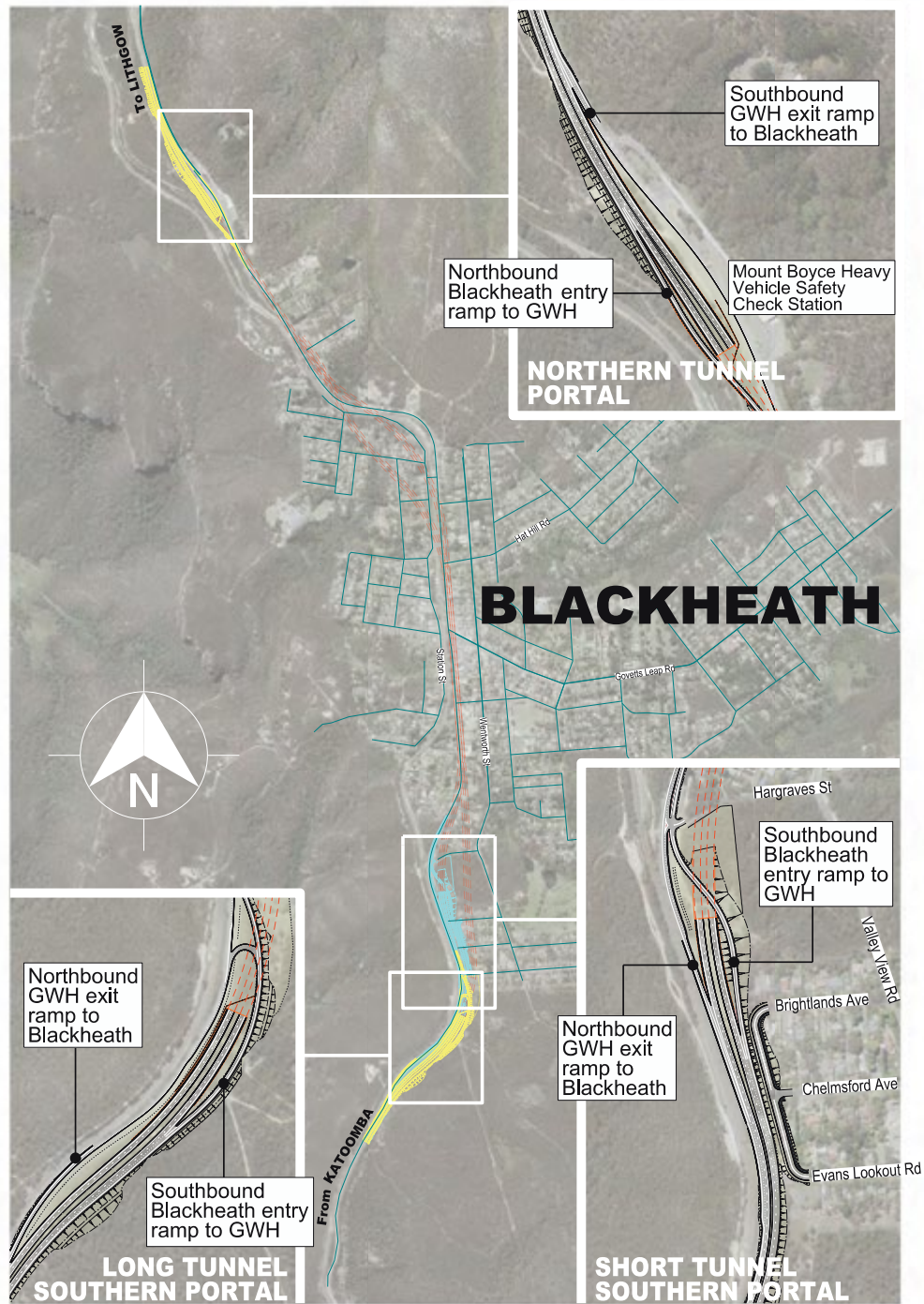
While a tunnel option has been selected as the preferred approach for the Highway upgrade, Transport for NSW will continue to investigate ways to improve intersection performance, safety and connectivity on the existing Highway alignment, which will complement the \$250 million Safety Upgrade program which was completed this year.

Community input and the further development of the Strategic Business Case will guide the development of any further work on this route.



A tunnel bypass of Blackheath will improve safety and congestion

Blackheath route options



Tunnel Route Options

Following the Blackheath co-design process, Transport for NSW is now seeking wider community feedback on tunnel options for Blackheath.

A long tunnel was the preferred option of the Blackheath Co-Design Committee. Transport for NSW has also chosen to seek community feedback on one shorter tunnel portal option.

Tunnel options for Blackheath are still in the very early stages of strategic design. Portal locations are approximate, and the tunnel alignment has not yet been determined.

Tunnel Portals

There are three potential locations for the tunnel openings, or portals.

The two potential portals at the southern end of Blackheath are marked on the map near:

- Evans Lookout Road
- Sutton Park.

The potential portal at the northern end of Blackheath is also marked on the map near:

- Mt Boyce Heavy Vehicle Safety Station.

These locations have been chosen to minimise impacts on property, and are situated in areas where the ground is rising. This gradient would help to achieve the right depth for a tunnel while minimising above ground impacts.

The proposed portal south of Evans Lookout Road would have an impact on a section of National Park and Sydney Water catchment area.

The proposed portal at Sutton Park would have an impact on recreational land and residential properties at the end of Evans Lookout Road, Brightlands Avenue and Chelmsford Avenue.

The proposed portal at Mt Boyce Heavy Vehicle Safety Station may impact access to the picnic area and may also require relocation of the scar tree.

Tunnel Route

The long tunnel was chosen by the Blackheath Co-Design Committee as their preferred route option.

The tunnel route will depend on which tunnel portals are chosen.

The routes shown are a preliminary design only. Further technical studies are needed to determine the exact alignment of the route underground.

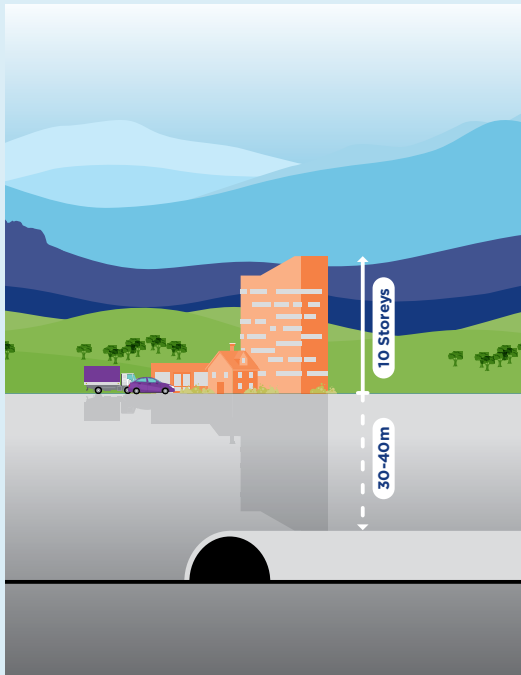
Early investigations indicate that a tunnel is feasible under Blackheath and that much of the tunnel can be built at an average depth of 30–40 metres below the surface, the height of a 10 storey building.

A long tunnel route option, between the two outermost portals, would provide a 4.5km underground bypass of Blackheath.

A shorter tunnel, between the Sutton Park and Mt Boyce Heavy Vehicle Safety Station portals, would be approximately 4km in length.



Artist's impression of the potential portal at Mt Boyce Heavy Vehicle Station



The average depth of the tunnel will be 30-40 metres, the height of a 10 storey building

Visit our virtual consultation room at nswroads.work/greatwesternhighway for detailed information on the Great Western Highway Upgrade Program at Blackheath. Here, you can view the route options in detail, comment on our interactive map, submit your feedback, book for consultation sessions and see frequently asked questions and answers.



Artist's impression of the potential portal south of Evans Lookout Road

The Blackheath Co-Design Committee

The Blackheath Co-Design Committee (BCC) was formed by Transport for NSW in March 2020, following feedback from the community. The committee included stakeholder group representatives, selected community representatives, and representatives from the Blue Mountains City Council and emergency services.

After five meetings and additional site tours the BCC assessed six broad route options, including a new tunnel alignment suggested by the Committee.

The routes were assessed against the following criteria, which align to the upgrade program's objectives:

- Improve safety
- Minimise impacts to the environment
- Enhance amenity, connectivity and liveability
- Resilience
- Improve congestion and travel time reliability.

The Committee's unanimously preferred option, of the options available, is for a long tunnel underneath Blackheath.

The BCC was not a decision making body, but the outcome of the BCC is an important input into the Government's decision-making process for determining a preferred route option and design as the program progresses.

A report on the BCC process and findings has been produced by independent facilitators KJA, and is available to download on the project website. The minutes of each BCC meeting are also available on the website.

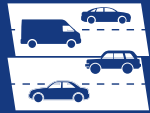
“At the beginning of the process I didn't want (the GWH upgrade), but by the end, I was of the view that safety is critical. We had two accidents during this period so it's clear something needs to be done, and that something is a long tunnel.”

Juliet Bourke, Chair of Save Centennial Glen group and BCC Stakeholder Representative



The BCC undertaking a site visit in Blackheath

Benefits of a tunnel for Blackheath



**Less
congestion**



Safer town centre
for cyclists and pedestrians



Through traffic
moved underground



Alternate routes
for emergency services



**Improved
urban amenity**



Giving back
the Great Western Highway
to the local community

Have Your Say

Consultation will be open from **Monday 19 October** to **Saturday 14 November**. During consultation we invite you to provide feedback on:

- Your preference for a long, or mid-length tunnel
- Your preference for location of tunnel portals
- Any feedback or questions regarding impacts of either route
- Other improvements that could be made to the existing Highway to improve safety, amenity and connectivity in Blackheath.

Due to current COVID restrictions and advice from NSW Health, we are ensuring everyone's safety by holding our consultation online.

Consultation sessions

Three online consultation sessions are being held, at the following dates and times:

- **Tuesday 20 October 12:30 to 1:30pm**
- **Wednesday 21 October 7 to 8pm**
- **Wednesday 28 October 5 to 6pm.**

We will run these sessions with Microsoft Livestream. Our project team will present the route options for Blackheath and you can post your questions for us to answer.

To book a consultation session go to our virtual consultation room. Once you have booked, we will email you a link to join the live event.

We'll record one of the sessions and post it in our virtual consultation room.

Virtual consultation room

Visit our virtual consultation room at nswroads.work/greatwesternhighway for detailed information on the Great Western Highway Upgrade Program at Blackheath. Here, you can view the route options in detail, comment on our interactive map, submit your feedback, book for consultation sessions and see frequently asked questions and answers.

I can't consult online

We understand how crucial it is for you to have your say on this project. If you can't attend an online session or don't have access to the internet, please contact us on the project hotline at **1800 953 777** or gwhd@transport.nsw.gov.au, and we will be happy to conduct a phone consultation at a time convenient to you.

We'll continue to consult

Further community consultation will take place as the design of an option in Blackheath is progressed.

Your feedback is vital in shaping the program, and alongside further investigations and studies, will help us to determine the final route for the Great Western Highway Upgrade in Blackheath.

How we've responded to your feedback

Community feedback is vital in developing the Great Western Highway Upgrade Program.

It helps us to refine and improve the design, and consider and appreciate the extent and importance of noise, environmental and social impacts.

We have already begun refining the project thanks to feedback from the Blackheath Co-Design Committee and others in the community, including:

- Removing the Centennial Glen option due to impacts on the environment, recreation, tourism, recreation and visual amenity.
- Removing the Station Street option due to impacts on properties, key local businesses, town connectivity, traffic flows and emergency access/evacuation points.

Next Steps

Consultation on the Blackheath tunnel route options will close on **14 November**.

In the first half of next year, we will return to the community with a preferred design which specifies which tunnel portals we will investigate further.

Blackheath



Contact the Great Western Highway Upgrade team

Never miss an update

Please be sure to sign up to our distribution list. By signing up you'll never miss an update about the project. You can call, email or write to us to let us know your details. You can also sign up for updates online at nswroads.work/greatwesternhighway



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gwhd@transport.nsw.gov.au



1800 953 777



Great Western Highway Upgrade Program
PO Box 2332, Orange NSW 2800

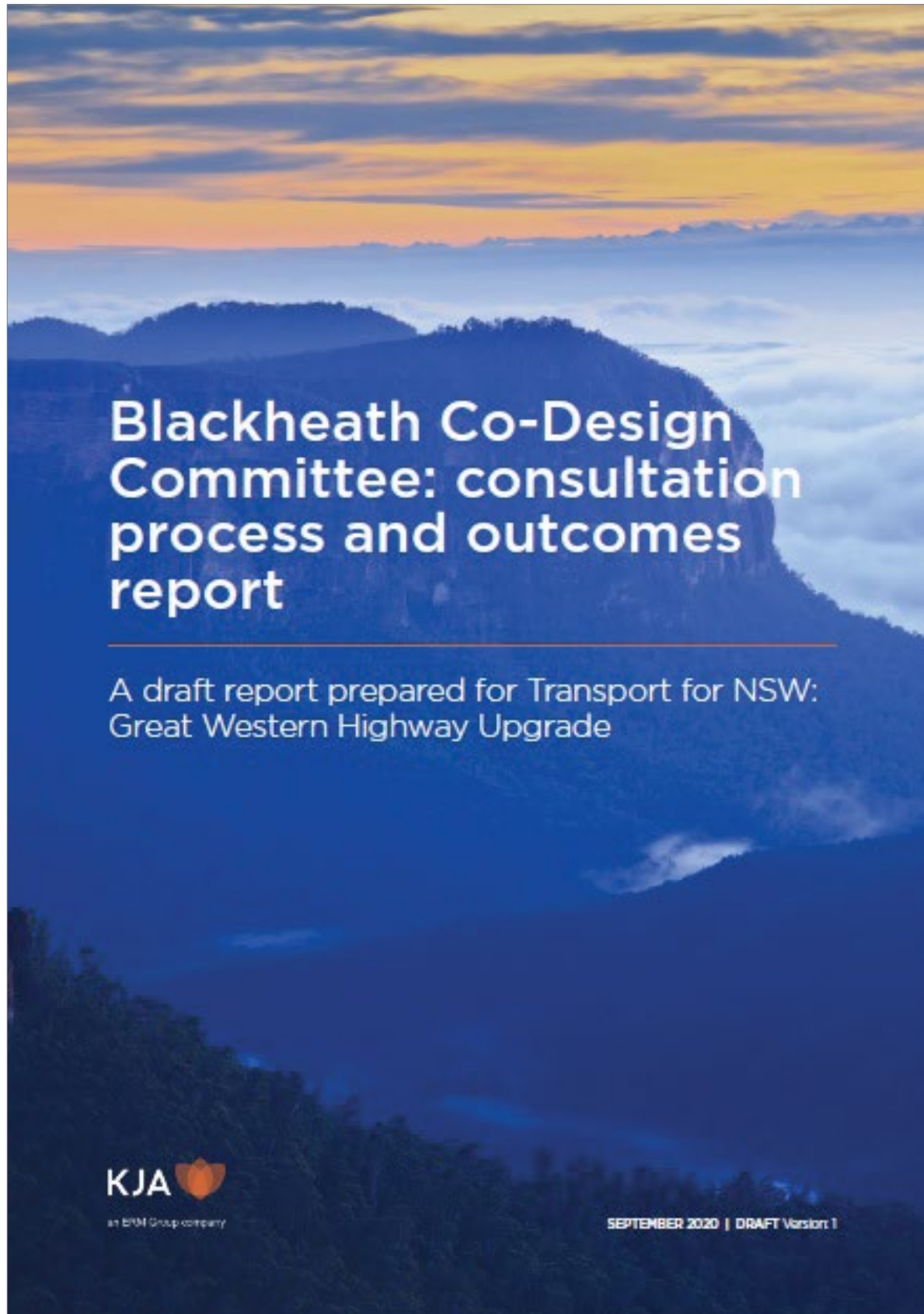


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October 2020
20.331

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Transport for NSW

Great Western Highway Upgrade Program

Blackheath Co-Design Committee fact sheet

October 2020



The Blackheath community have provided valuable feedback on proposed route options

Community feedback has been vital in the development of the Great Western Highway Upgrade Program between Katoomba and Lithgow. It has informed design options and helped us to consider and appreciate the importance of impacts such as social, noise, and the environment.

Working with the Blackheath community

The Blackheath Co-Design Committee (BCC) was formed by Transport for NSW in March 2020, following feedback from the community. The committee included stakeholder group representatives, selected community representatives, as well as representatives from the Blue Mountains City Council and emergency services.

The purpose of the BCC was to involve representatives of the community in working with Transport for NSW to refine route options for Blackheath. The BCC was not a decision making body, but the outcome of the BCC is an important input into the Government's decision-making process for determining a preferred route option and design as the program progresses.

Assessment of route options

After five meetings and additional site tours the BCC assessed six broad route options, including a new tunnel alignment suggested by the Committee. The routes were assessed against the following criteria, which align to the upgrade program's objectives:

- Improve safety
- Minimise impacts to the environment
- Enhance amenity, connectivity and liveability
- Resilience
- Improve congestion and travel time reliability.

The Committee's unanimously preferred option is for a long tunnel underneath Blackheath.

A report on the BCC process and findings has been produced by independent facilitators KJA, and is available to download on the project website at nswroads.work/greatwesternhighway

The minutes of each BCC meeting have also been published on the website following each meeting.

BCC Stakeholder Group and Community Representatives

(as at launch of Committee)

Blackheath Public School P&C:

Ally Drinkwater

Blue Mountains Historical Society:

Ross Ingram

Blue Mountains Cycling Safety Forum:

Damien Mah

Save Centennial Glen:

Juliet Bourke

Save Station Street:

Sally Hollis

Blackheath Area Neighbourhood Centre:

Gary Moore

Blackheath Community Alliance:

Eva Johnstone

Blackheath Streetscape Group:

Adele Colman

Blackheath Chamber of Commerce:

George Vergotis

Blackheath Highway Action Group:

Gary McCue

Community Representatives:

Mick Beltran

Gregory Nankervis



Members of the BCC undertaking a site visit in Blackheath



Aerial view of Blackheath

Transport for NSW is extremely grateful to the BCC for their time and efforts over the long process. The Committee were respectful, collaborative and positive, and contributed deep local expertise and knowledge to the process.

I support the long tunnel (East preferably, but East or West), to get all through traffic away from Blackheath and make it a much safer place for everyone to live, and for others to drive through. And hopefully this will also mean that the current highway, between Evans Lookout Road and Mount Boyce, can become a local road with a 50km speed limit, which will also improve safety outcomes. In comparison, the other options, (such as the short tunnel and highway expansion), would have a negative impact on the lives and livelihoods of Blackheath residents and businesses. Currently some truckers are tempted to run the traffic lights, but if we have a long tunnel this risk will be removed. When the entire highway upgrade is finished between Lithgow and Katoomba, which will include a dual carriageway, there will no longer be an hour and 20 minutes trip between Mount Victoria and Blackheath, which I and many residents have had to endure on Sundays and long weekends.

Greg Nankervis – Community Representative

The Save Centennial Glen group vehemently opposes the outer bypass option as it will destroy pristine flora and fauna, people's homes, recreation areas and Blackheath's heritage, and pose a significant risk to safety through high winds, fog and black ice. We support the long tunnel (from Evans Lookout Road to Mount Boyce Weigh Station) for three reasons: safety, the environment and liveability. Safety: The long tunnel, with a dual carriageway, is the option that creates the biggest safety improvement, by taking through-traffic away from Blackheath for the longest distance and providing a viable alternative route for dangerous weather conditions and emergency situations. Environment: The long tunnel has the least impact on the environment, preserving our significant natural, tourist, recreation and built areas. Liveability: The long tunnel is the only option that enhances the liveability and attractiveness of our unique Blackheath township, does not destroy houses (as do the Centennial Glen, Station Street and Short Tunnel options) or gardens and public spaces (as does the expansion of the GWH), divide the town or involve building stacks (as does the Short Tunnel option).

Juliet Burke – Save Centennial Glen

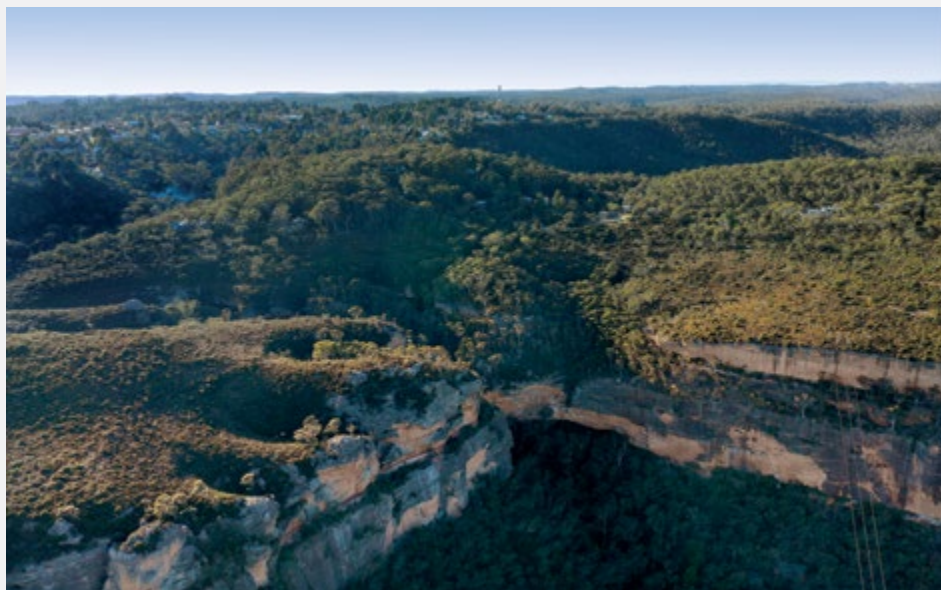
Through my experience with an independent engineer and using this knowledge alongside the TfNSW experts I came to the conclusion that specifically a longer tunnel was the absolutely best option for Blackheath. One starting from east of Evans Lookout Road and finishing near the Weigh Station (approx 4.6km) is both feasible and requires no loss of our heritage, culture, economy, houses, businesses or environment in the long term.

The route of the tunnel needs to be designed for the least impact on any underground environmental issues and above ground disturbances. Due to the depth there should not be any major issues regarding house disturbances.

Sally Hollis – Save Station Street

The long tunnel options with appropriate locations for portals, services facilities and any ventilation stacks, should not result in the loss of properties, public domain and recreational spaces. Compared to other options presented by TfNSW to the BCC, the long tunnels would best maintain the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of Blackheath.

Gary Moore – Blackheath Area Neighbourhood Centre



View of Fort Rock and Centennial Glen

TfNSW 20.335

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Transport for NSW

Great Western Highway Upgrade Program

Project benefits fact sheet

October 2020



The upgrade program will reduce congestion and improve safety on the highway

The NSW Government is investing \$2.5 billion towards upgrading the Great Western Highway between Katoomba and Lithgow to a four lane carriageway. Once completed, the upgrade will reduce congestion and deliver safer, more efficient and reliable journeys for those travelling in, around and through the Blue Mountains, while also better connecting communities in the Central West.

The Great Western Highway Upgrade Program aims to:

- Improve safety: reducing safety risks along the corridor for all road users
- Improve network performance: improve congestion and travel time reliability
- Improve and drive regional economic development and productivity
- Enhance liveability and amenity: maintain and improve local amenity and character, and protect environmental and cultural assets
- Improve resilience and future proof: provide a dependable and adaptable transport network that enables continuity of transport and essential services.

Improve safety

The upgrade program aims to reduce crash rates between Katoomba and Lithgow, which are currently higher than the NSW average for similar roads.

Transport for NSW has recorded a 77% reduction in fatal crashes and a 28% reduction in casualties between Leura and Warrimoo since the highway was duplicated and upgraded.

Duplicating lanes will provide safer overtaking opportunities and allow us to provide median treatments, which help prevent head on collisions. In addition, duplication means faster access and better traffic management opportunities for emergency services.

Improving gradients and straightening curves as much as possible will also help to improve safety along this section of the Great Western Highway.

Improve network performance

The Great Western Highway is a key corridor of national significance and has rising traffic volumes. The daily average traffic volume entering/exiting Blackheath is more than 16,000 vehicles.

This volume is greater than the daily volumes on already duplicated highways such as the Hume Highway at Goulburn, the Princes Highway at Berry and the Pacific Highway at Grafton.

Traffic peaks and congestion are common throughout the week, but especially on weekends and during special events and the school holidays. The Great Western Highway upgrade will provide more opportunities for traffic to overtake slow moving vehicles, and make sure the road can cope with peak periods and growing traffic. Duplication will also allow contraflow and access for emergency services during incidents and emergency events.

The upgrade will also improve how the highway interacts with active transport users, pedestrians and bus and train commuters.



Duplication will allow for better management of traffic during incidents and emergencies

Drive regional economic development and productivity

The Great Western Highway is the key east west connection for Sydney and NSW and freight is vital to regional communities' economic prosperity and survival.

Around half of all freight in the Blue Mountains is carried on the road network, and around 40 per cent of road freight between Katoomba and Lithgow either begins or ends its journey locally, supporting the local economy. Separating heavy and light vehicle traffic with dual carriageway allows freight to move more efficiently.

To meet future demand, the upgraded highway will be designed to carry modern, more productive Performance Based Standards (PBS) heavy vehicles.

PBS vehicles have the highest safety standards and, because they can carry more, this can mean fewer truck trips to move the same amount of freight. PBS vehicles can also stop and turn in the same space.

For more information on PBS vehicles and the Great Western Highway visit nswroads.work/greatwesternhighway



The Great Western Highway will remain a vital link for the Central West

Liveability and amenity

The upgrade will be completed in stages over the next decade, with significant planning and consultation required on each section. The NSW Government is committed to minimising impacts to the natural environment, local heritage and property.

Where we are able to bypass towns, this will separate local and long distance traffic, improve pedestrian and cyclist safety through the townships, and give towns back to the communities.

Resilience and future proofing

The 2019/2020 bushfire season highlighted the need to ensure our highways are resilient and adaptive in times of emergency. This has been at the forefront of our thinking as we plan for the upgrade. Dual carriageway will allow for better traffic management or contraflow capability in times of congestion, and bypasses will provide alternative access routes in times of emergency.

Consultation

Transport for NSW is sensitive to the needs of the local community and all road users. We will continue to engage with the community and affected stakeholders, with multiple consultation opportunities as the program progresses.



Bushfire damage near the Darling Causeway

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Transport for NSW is sensitive to the needs of the local community and all road users. We will continue to engage with the community and affected stakeholders, with multiple consultation opportunities as the program progresses.



Bushfire damage near the Darling Causeway

Strategic Business Case

The project team is working closely with expert advisors and is well under way in developing the Program Strategic Business Case for the entire length of the corridor, which will consider multi-modal and alternative corridor options for improving transport across the Blue Mountains.

The Strategic Business Case is expected to be completed at the end of 2020.

The Great Western Highway is an important route identified as part of the Land Transport Network (Roads), which has been developed through collaboration between Commonwealth, State, and Territory governments.

This upgrade has also been listed by Infrastructure Australia as a priority initiative. This means that it is officially recognised as a priority infrastructure investment which Australia needs in order to secure a sustainable and prosperous future.

The upgrade program is aligned strategically to the following Australian and NSW Government plans, policies, and frameworks:

- NSW Future Transport 2056
- NSW Freight and Port Plan 2018-2023
- NSW Heavy Vehicle Access Policy Framework
- NSW Road Safety Plan 2021
- The Australian Infrastructure Audit 2019
- Regional NSW Services and Infrastructure Plan 2018
- NSW Tourism and Transport Plan 2018
- Central West and Orana Regional Plan 2036
- A 20 Year Economic Vision for Regional NSW.

The Great Western Highway Upgrade Program also responds to government's commitment to invest in regional NSW, and recognises the strategic need to invest in and grow the Central West. The Program Strategic Business Case will include analysis that supports this investment.

Contact the Great Western Highway Upgrade team

Never miss an update

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gwhd@transport.nsw.gov.au



1800 953 777



Great Western Highway
Upgrade Program
PO Box 2332, Orange NSW 2800



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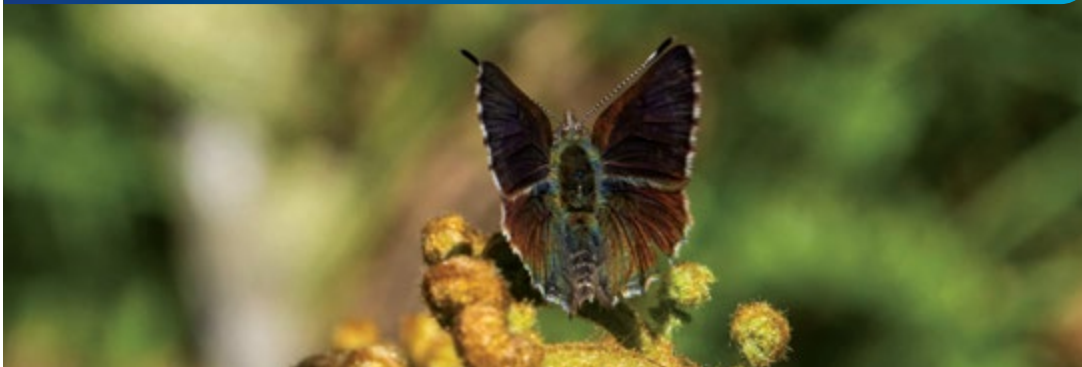


Transport for NSW

Great Western Highway Upgrade Program

Environmental Assessment fact sheet

October 2020



Investigations into biodiversity form a crucial part of environmental assessments. Pictured: the Purple Copper Butterfly, Photo Credit Stuart Cohen, DPIE

Transport for NSW is committed to a safe and sustainable transport system for the whole state. This means that all transport infrastructure plans, design, construction, operations, maintenance and management will take into account economic, environmental, health, community and social factors.

The Great Western Highway Upgrade

The final alignment of the Great Western Highway in Blackheath will be decided through community feedback, alongside further survey work, technical studies and environmental assessments. The Great Western Highway Upgrade Program will require assessment under the *NSW Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*.

Scoping of stages

The upgrade program will be delivered in stages or sections. Once a route for each section of the upgrade program has been determined, the project team will prepare a Scoping Report for sections requiring an

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) which:

- describes the project
- identifies the relevant strategic and statutory context
- summarises the results of any early community engagement
- identifies the scale and nature of the impacts of the project
- outlines the proposed approach to assessment and community engagement.

This report is submitted to the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE).

Environmental Impact Statement

The EIS will assess the economic, environmental and social impacts of the project to help the community, government agencies and the consent authority to make informed decisions on the merits of the project. The EIS will also include consideration of how to manage any impacts.

Once the EIS has been prepared, there will be a period of public exhibition where public submissions are invited.

Considerations and investigations

Considerations/investigations that Transport for NSW typically undertakes as part of preparing the EIS, include but are not limited to:

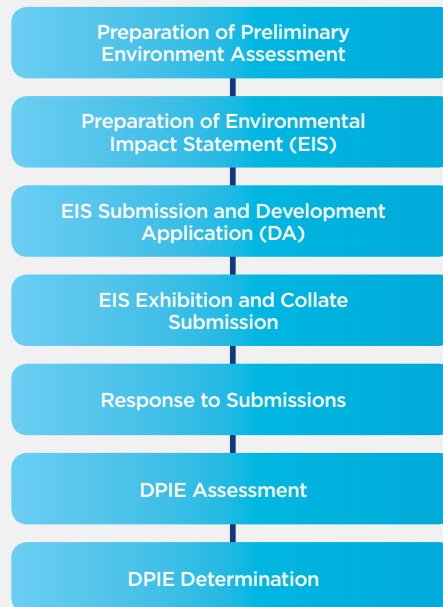
- Air Quality
- Heritage
- Aboriginal Heritage
- Biodiversity
- Noise and Vibration
- Visual impact
- Traffic and access
- Soil and Water
- Socio-economic/land use
- Flood and hydrology
- Ground Water
- Bush fire
- Waste
- Greenhouse gasses.

Environmental assessment for Blackheath

When an environmental assessment incorporating Blackheath has been completed, there will be a period of time for display and consultation.

Engagement with the Blue Mountains community to help inform the decision-making on this matter has, and will continue to be a key part of our planning processes.

NSW DPIE Approval Process



Environmental, economic and social impacts are assessed by the EIS

TfNSW 20.336

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Transport for NSW

Great Western Highway Program Upgrade

Tunnel fact sheet

October 2020

Transport for NSW is seeking community feedback on a tunnel bypass for the Great Western Highway underneath Blackheath.

A tunnel would deliver many benefits for Blackheath:

- Less congestion
- Through traffic moved underground
- Improved urban amenity and connectivity
- Safer town centre for cyclists and pedestrians
- Alternate routes for emergency services
- Giving back the Great Western Highway to the local community.



Artist's impression of the proposed northern portal

Tunnel route

There are various tunnel route options available for Blackheath, depending on which proposed tunnel portal locations are chosen. At the northern end, the Mt Boyce Heavy Vehicle Safety Station (HVSS) is the proposed location. At the southern end there are two proposed options. The first is at Sutton Park, which will be a shorter tunnel, and the second is at Evans Lookout Road, which will be a longer tunnel.

Further technical studies are needed to determine the exact alignment of the route underground.

Early investigations indicate that a tunnel is feasible under Blackheath and can be constructed at an average depth of 30–40 metres below the surface, the height of a 10 storey building.

A long tunnel route option, between the proposed Evans Lookout Road location and the Mt Boyce Heavy Vehicle Safety Station would provide a 4.5km underground bypass of Blackheath.

The long tunnel was chosen by the Blackheath Co-Design Committee as their preferred route option.

A shorter tunnel, between the proposed Sutton Park location and Mt Boyce Heavy Vehicle Safety Station would be approximately 4km in length.

Transport for NSW will aim to have the tunnel follow the route of the highway if possible. During the next phase of design and investigation we will look at ways to remove any need for ventilation outlets, such as minimising changes in tunnel gradient, and placement of portals in locations where they do not affect local residents.

Land impacts

The proposed portal south of Evans Lookout Road would have an impact on a section of National Park and Sydney Water catchment area.

The proposed portal at Sutton Park would have an impact on recreational land and residential properties at the end of Evans Lookout Road, Brightlands Avenue and Chelmsford Avenue. Transport for NSW is speaking directly with any potentially affected property owners.

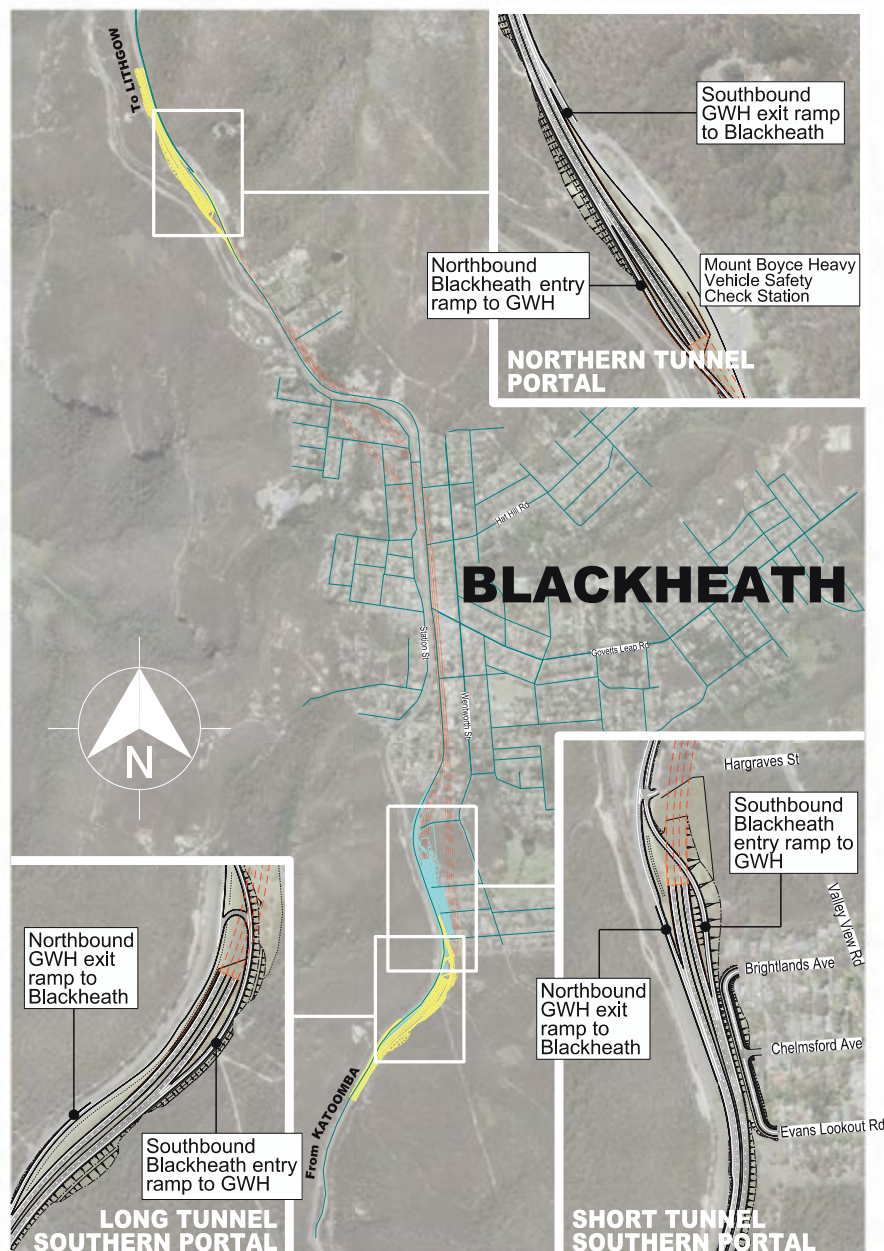
The proposed portal at Mt Boyce Heavy Vehicle Safety Station may impact access to the picnic area and may also require relocation of the scar tree (the tree has been moved previously).

If we need to relocate the tree, this will be done in conjunction with local Aboriginal and environmental organisations.



Artist's impression of the proposed southern portal near Evans Lookout Road

Blackheath route options



Additional structures

Either option would require the construction of buildings to house equipment and personnel needed for tunnel operation. Such facilities could include a Tunnel Operational Control Room, water tanks for the fire suppression system and electrical sub-stations. The location of these facilities is still to be investigated, however these are often located near tunnel portals.

Groundwater

We have already received feedback regarding the importance of surface features such as hanging swamps, as well as underground water features such as aquifers.

We are committed to minimising impacts on the environment, including groundwater sources, and will develop an option that has minimal interference with these. A full assessment of impacts will form part of the Environmental Impact Statement.

Dangerous goods

Currently in NSW some tunnels allow transit of some classes of dangerous goods. A Transport for NSW Policy is being developed to inform whether any dangerous goods vehicles would be allowed through a Blackheath bypass tunnel.

Preliminary studies indicate that around 4% of daily current heavy vehicle movements in Blackheath are dangerous goods.

Surface level impacts

Transport for NSW is committed to minimising impacts on the community and the environment.

As with any construction project, there will be some noise and vibration impact when work is being undertaken. Transport for NSW will be in contact with residents about individual concerns and needs throughout the planning process and construction.

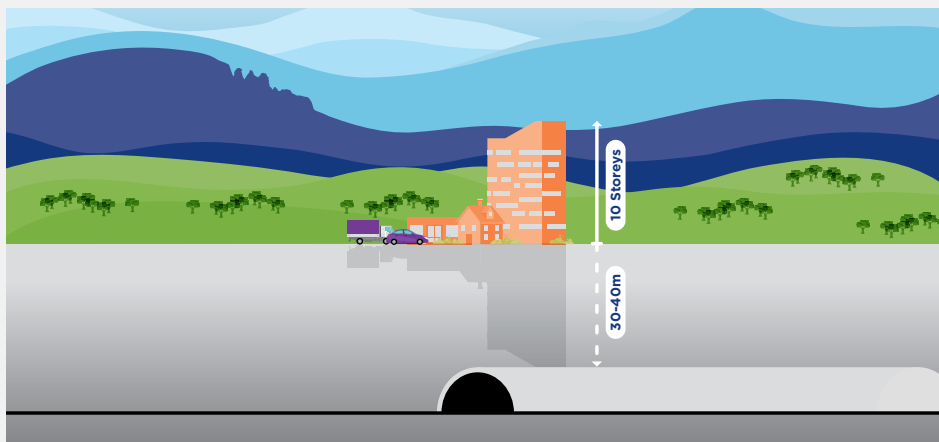
Independent reporting will be carried out on all properties deemed to be potentially impacted by tunneling works, including vibration. However, given the depth of the tunnel, impacts are likely to be minimal.

Further investigations and studies are required to determine the exact route of any tunnel under Blackheath. The route being proposed for the Blackheath bypass tunnel would be located an average of between 30 and 40m below ground, rising to shallower depth at the tunnel portals.

Spoil removal

Transport for NSW will investigate a suitable location to reuse any spoil material extracted during construction. It could be used on other stages of the Great Western Highway upgrade, for other road projects or for quarry fill.

The method for the removal of spoil, and the minimisation of impacts on the local community, would form part of the environmental assessment.



The average depth of the tunnel tunnel would be 30–40 metres, the height of a 10 storey building



Investigations on impacts to existing National Park and biodiversity will be carried out as part of the environmental assessment.

National Park

The NSW Government has ruled out any impact on the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area.

The Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area and the Blue Mountains National Park overlap significantly, but are not always the same area.

The proposed outermost southern portal would impact on a section of the National Park. A full investigation of these impacts and mitigations would form part of the environmental assessment.

Cost

The NSW Government has committed \$2.5 billion towards upgrading the Great Western Highway between Katoomba and Lithgow. This includes planning for projects such as Blackheath and delivery of other sections of the 34km project.

The construction cost of a tunnel will depend on the final alignment, depth and length and is still to be determined.

Partial or staged funding of a project of this magnitude is common and the team is working to develop the project and will seek additional funding as required.

Construction

The construction of a tunnel option could take up to four years from construction contract award to opening date.

Ventilation

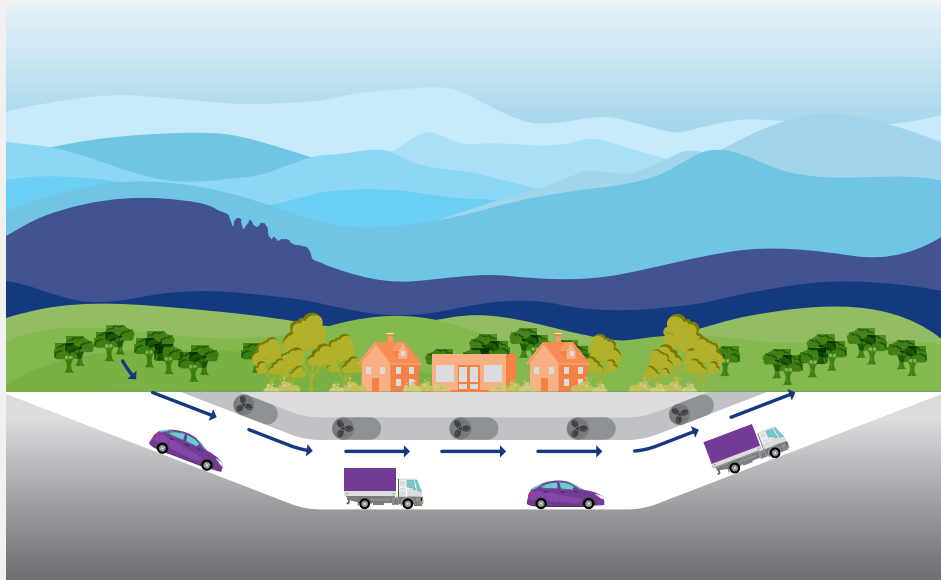
Ventilation outlets, sometimes referred to as “stacks”, are designed to take tunnel air up away from populated areas around tunnel portals.

The outermost proposed portals are located away from where people live and work, which may mean ventilation outlets are not required. Further studies are required to determine the ventilation needed for either of the tunnel options and where, if at all necessary, any ventilation outlet/s might be located.

Tunnel ventilation systems work by ensuring sufficient air flows within the tunnel to extract emissions. Ventilation outlets eject tunnel air high into the atmosphere, where it is diluted hundreds of times as it mixes with the surrounding air.

Tunnel air expelled from ventilation outlets very quickly becomes indistinguishable from background levels of existing air pollution. Each outlet is custom designed to take account of local tunnel air flows, traffic, terrain, surrounding buildings and weather to ensure tunnel air is dispersed effectively under all conditions.

Tunnel ventilation systems generally work most efficiently and effectively when the ventilation outlet is positioned near the exit ramp.



The outermost proposed portals are away from where people live and work, so ventilation outlets might not be required

Air quality

The NSW Government recognises that air quality and human health is a key priority when designing road tunnels.

Modern tunnel ventilation design ensures the operation of our tunnels meets strict air quality requirements set by the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment and the Environment Protection Licence issued by the Environment Protection Authority (EPA).

Air quality within major NSW tunnels is continuously monitored to control the ventilation system. This ensures the strict air quality limits outlined in the approval conditions are complied with at all times. Australia's requirements are amongst the most stringent in the world. The EPA regulates the ventilation outlets for all tunnels to ensure they meet air quality limits.

Filtration systems

Australian tunnels are required to meet stringent air quality standards using state-of-the-art ventilation and tunnel design.

The NSW Government has over 20 years' experience in assessing and operating long motorway tunnels, and has used that experience to ensure that tunnels built today incorporate world's best practice.

Studies have found that filtration systems do not provide any measurable improvement to the air quality in the surrounding community.

With extraction systems dispersing the tunnel air high into the atmosphere, there is little to no health benefit for surrounding communities in installing filtration and air treatment systems in tunnels.

To find out more you can download the Initial Report on Tunnel Air Quality from the Advisory Committee on Tunnel Air Quality, found here http://www.chiefscientist.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0017/51911/060814-FINAL-Initial-Report-Tunnel-Air-Quality-WEB.pdf

Vehicle emissions

Vehicle emissions continue to decrease, despite there being more cars on the road. This is a result of advances in vehicle technology and design, improvements in fuel quality, and government initiatives to reduce emissions by improving the maintenance of heavy vehicles.

As new, cleaner vehicles replace older cars on the road, the total emissions from motor vehicles will continue to fall over the next decade. This is despite an expected increase in the total number of cars as the population grows.

Emergencies

The final tunnel design would include many safety systems and equipment to deal with incidents. These might include visual and audible communication systems; emergency escape passages; access for emergency services vehicles; a water deluge system to suppress fire, and emergency smoke extraction systems. Communications systems and CCTV are used to monitor tunnel activity and respond to incidents as they occur.

NSW Emergency Services will be consulted throughout the design process and during construction, to ensure that Blackheath has the safest tunnel possible.

Speed

The proposed tunnels would be designed to the highest safe speed possible with an 80km/h posted limit.

Cyclists

With the construction of a tunnel bypass of Blackheath, cyclists would be unable to use the tunnel, but would be able to use the existing Great Western Highway route above ground, connecting with the Highway at either end of the town.

With through traffic using the tunnel, the surface road would become a much safer environment for cyclists, as well as pedestrians.



Aerial view across Browntown Oval towards the proposed tunnel portal location near the Mount Boyce Heavy Vehicle Safety Station



Aerial drawing of proposed portal near Sutton Park

Contact the Great Western Highway Upgrade team

Never miss an update

Please be sure to sign up to our distribution list. By signing up you'll never miss an update about the project. You can call, email or write to us to let us know your details. You can also sign up for updates online at nswroads.work/greatwesternhighway



nswroads.work/greatwesternhighway



gwhd@transport.nsw.gov.au



1800 953 777



Great Western Highway
Upgrade Program
PO Box 2332, Orange NSW 2800



131 450

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nswroads.work/greatwesternhighway

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Appendix G



Sorry we missed you

MONDAY 12 OCTOBER

Transport for NSW was in your area today to discuss the proposed **Great Western Highway Upgrade Program** in Blackheath. Next week, we will start consultation in Blackheath, seeking feedback on a tunnel bypass for the Great Western Highway underneath Blackheath.

There are three potential locations for the tunnel openings, or portals. The two potential portals at the southern end of Blackheath are near Evans Lookout Rd and Sutton Park. The potential portal at the northern end of Blackheath is near the Mt Boyce Heavy Vehicle Safety Station.

The project team missed you today, but it is important that we talk to you. Please contact us on 1800 953 777 or **gwhd@transport.nsw.gov.au** as soon as possible so we can come back at a time that suits you.



If you need help understanding this information, please contact the Translating and Interpreting Service on 131 450 and ask them to call us on 1800 953 777.

Appendix H



GREAT WESTERN HIGHWAY UPGRADE PROGRAM

Have Your Say: Blackheath route options consultation

The NSW Government is investing \$2.5 billion towards upgrading the Great Western Highway between Katoomba and Lithgow to a four lane carriageway. Once completed, the upgrade will reduce congestion and deliver safer, more efficient and reliable journeys for those travelling in, around and through the Blue Mountains, while also better connecting communities in the Central West.

Transport for NSW is seeking community feedback on tunnel options in Blackheath. The proposed outer bypass option through Centennial Glen, and the proposed inner bypass next to the rail line on Station Street, have both been removed as potential routes for the Great Western Highway Program in Blackheath.

Detailed information on the Great Western Highway Upgrade Program and about the route options for Blackheath is available in our Virtual Consultation Room at nswroads.work/greatwesternhighway. Here, you can view the route options in detail, comment on our interactive map, submit feedback through the online form, book for online consultation sessions and access frequently asked questions and answers.

Consultation sessions are being held online to ensure the safety of residents and staff.

During consultation we invite you to provide feedback on:

- Your preference for a long, or mid-length tunnel
- Your preference for location of tunnel portals
- Any feedback or questions regarding impacts of either route
- Other improvements that could be made to the existing Highway to improve safety, amenity and connectivity in Blackheath.

Online Community Consultation Sessions:

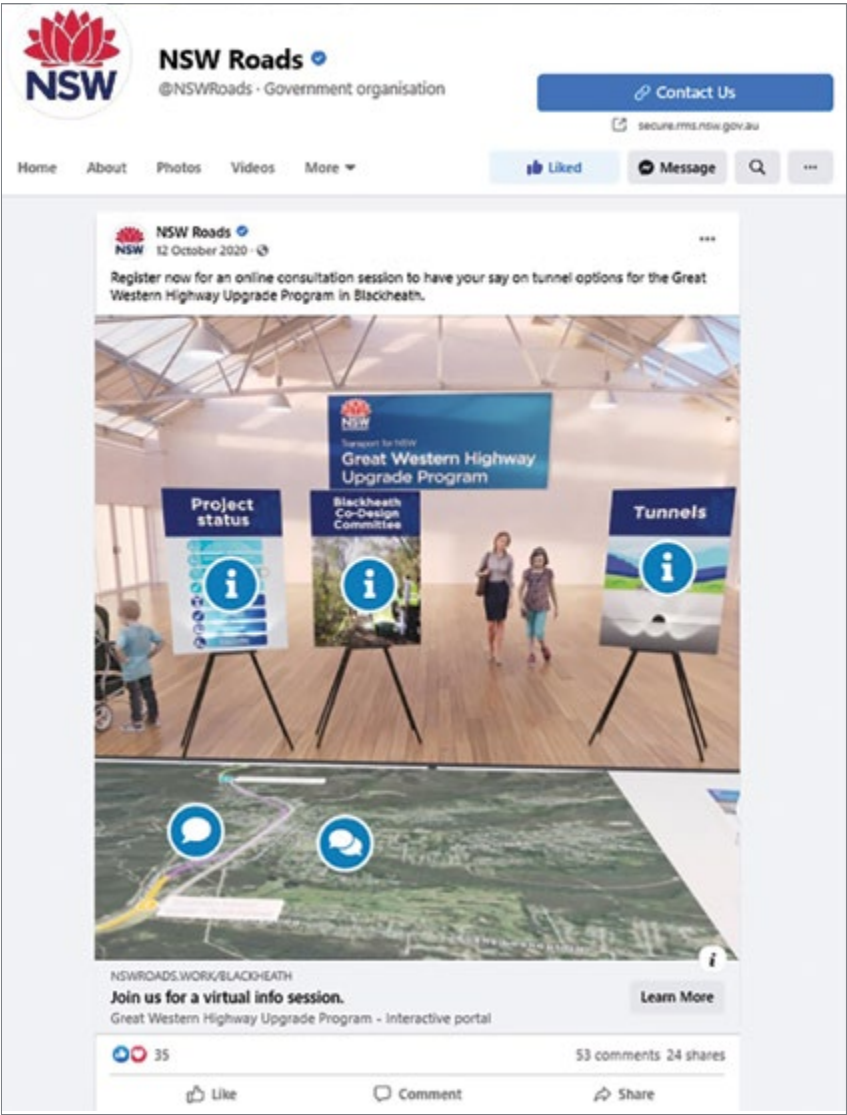
- Tuesday 20 October 12:30 to 1:30pm
- Wednesday 21 October 7 to 8pm
- Wednesday 28 October 5 to 6pm.


Register at nswroads.work/greatwesternhighway. If you are unable to attend an online consultation session or do not have access to the internet, please contact the project team using the details below to book a phone consultation.

For more information please visit nswroads.work/greatwesternhighway email gwhd@transport.nsw.gov.au or call the project team on 1800 953 777.

BLP-501043

Appendix I





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NSW Roads


 23 October 2020

Consultation on the Blackheath Tunnel Bypass is now open. Have your say or book a consultation in our virtual consult room.



Have your say by 14 November

[Learn More](#)




Have your say by 14 November

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183

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NSW Roads

 28 October 2020

Consultation is extended! Have your say on tunnel bypass options in Blackheath by 28 November.



NSWRoadsWork/BLACKHEATH

Great Western Highway Upgrade Program Virtual Info

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111

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