

Consultation on a dedicated Freight Rail corridor between Fassifern and Hexham

What are you consulting on?

Planning is now underway to identify land for the Lower Hunter Freight Corridor between Fassifern and Hexham, bypassing Newcastle's urban area. This investigation will ensure land is available to deliver essential freight rail infrastructure, in the future, and when it is needed.

Stakeholders, landowners and the community can provide feedback on the location of the recommended corridor, identified from a short list of options. This consultation will help the project team identify additional constraints and refine the corridor for future use.

The recommended corridor has been identified following technical investigations from a long list of options assessed with consideration to environment, community and future operational requirements.

What is the Lower Hunter Freight Line corridor?

Transport for NSW is investigating a corridor for a dedicated future freight rail line between Fassifern on the Main North Railway line, and the Hunter Valley Rail Line at Hexham. This vital transport corridor will provide for an essential freight rail connection to support growing communities, businesses and industries.

The Lower Hunter Freight Corridor is generally 60 metres wide, excluding sections in tunnel, to accommodate two new rail tracks and supporting infrastructure. The future infrastructure may not require the full width of the corridor, which will depend on future infrastructure development and an environmental assessment process.

We are planning now to ensure land is available to deliver a future dedicated freight rail line, when it is needed.

What is a transport corridor?

A transport corridor is a parcel of land used to deliver future infrastructure such as new roads and rail lines. Planning for transport corridors is a process to identify land for infrastructure in the future, and when it is needed. Technical investigations are undertaken to determine the suitability of the land and to also assess for impacts to adjoining land uses.

The corridor identification process is important to ensure there is planning for the transport needs of growing communities, businesses, and industries who all rely on different types of transport modes. Identifying land now allows for land use planning and development to proceed with certainty, and ensures good transport links are planned to keep our communities and industries connected.

Why plan for a dedicated Lower Hunter Freight Corridor?

The Hunter region is an important hub for freight transport in NSW and plays a major role in supporting freight movement between Greater Sydney, Northern NSW, and Queensland. Newcastle Port is identified as an international trade gateway with an annual trade worth about \$25 billion to the NSW economy. This growth and future demand for freight rail services will place increasing pressure on the existing rail network.

The Lower Hunter Freight corridor will provide for a dedicated freight rail line between Fassifern and Hexham, bypassing Newcastle's urban area. This is a NSW Government initiative to separate freight and passenger rail operations through Newcastle in order to improve reliability and capacity on both freight and passenger rail networks. A dedicated freight rail line will help businesses and industry move freight more efficiently, and support economic growth across the Hunter region.

FAQs

Lower Hunter Freight Corridor



Removing freight services along the passenger rail line will allow for additional passenger rail services to connect communities with jobs and services. Most importantly, it will improve amenity for the local communities.

It is important that we plan and identify a corridor for a future freight rail link now to ensure land is available to deliver the infrastructure in the future, and when it is needed. Currently, there is increasing demand for new housing and development which is expanding the urban areas of Newcastle. If we don't identify a suitable corridor location now urban growth will make it difficult and near impossible to secure a corridor which connects to Hexham. When a suitable corridor is identified early, planning for new housing and employment hubs can occur with certainty around the new corridor location.

Why is early transport planning important for Newcastle region?

Over the next 30 years Newcastle's population is expected to grow from around 575,000 people to around 760,000. The increase in population will also place greater demand for more housing and jobs closer to home. Currently, over 1,500 residential lots are planned on 517 hectares of land near Minmi. In addition to residential development, plans for two large industrial estates, adjacent to the M1 Motorway and John Renshaw Drive at Black Hill, have been submitted.

This growth will continue across the Newcastle area. Identifying a dedicated freight rail corridor now ensures land will be available to deliver the infrastructure in the future and when it is needed. Early planning for the future freight rail line also ensures development for new housing and employment hubs can continue to occur around an identified freight corridor.

How were the options identified and assessed?

A number of corridor options have been identified and assessed with consideration to the technical investigations that have been undertaken. This process helped the project team identify a long list and short list of options assessed against a wide range of key considerations that affect the best place to locate future transport infrastructure, including identification and consideration of:

- Existing and future residential land uses
- Biodiversity and conservation
- Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal heritage
- Existing landscape and geography including contamination
- Existing bodies of water including floodplains
- Potential noise and vibration impacts
- Visual impact
- Transport planning needs, and
- Socio-economic impacts.

These key considerations have been analysed by subject matter experts to identify the best performing option which minimises impacts to sensitive areas, communities, and existing infrastructure. We are now consulting on the best performing option as a recommended Lower Hunter Freight corridor. Stakeholders, landowners and community can provide feedback on the location of the recommended corridor, and are encouraged to identify additional constraints to help us refine the corridor for future use.

FAQs

Lower Hunter Freight Corridor



What previous consultation was undertaken?

Early consultation for the Lower Hunter Freight Corridor was undertaken as part of the development for the NSW Freight and Ports Plan 2018-2023. Transport for NSW held consultation over a four month period, inviting feedback from the community, industry, and government. Key feedback captured from the consultation period included requests for increased investment in freight infrastructure, improved access to Newcastle Port and a dedicated freight rail network that does not need to compete with passenger rail traffic.

When will a final corridor be identified?

There is still a lot of work to be done before a final corridor can be confirmed. At this stage, we are consulting with stakeholders, landowners and communities on the identified recommended corridor. Feedback from the consultation together with further technical investigations will help refine and inform the final corridor location for future freight use.

When will the Lower Hunter Freight Corridor be delivered?

Future population growth and changes in industrial development will drive an increase in the movement of passengers and freight through the Hunter Region and trigger the need for additional infrastructure. The forecast growth in rail freight along the corridor between Fassifern and Newcastle is expected to drive demand for an additional 66 freight train paths per week in both directions over the next 36 years.

The Future Transport 2056 strategy has identified the Lower Hunter Freight Corridor for potential delivery within 10-20 years.

How will the freight corridor ease congestion?

The Lower Hunter Freight Corridor will provide for a dedicated freight rail line between Fassifern and Hexham, removing freight rail services from Main North Railway line along Newcastle's urban area. Planning for a dedicated freight rail corridor will ensure future forecasted freight rail needs can be accommodated. Most importantly, the corridor will improve reliability and increase capacity on both the freight and passenger rail networks.

A dedicated freight rail line will also encourage road freight onto rail to reduce road congestion, and reduce delays for road users at level crossings near St James Road, Adamstown and Clyde Street, Islington.

Has funding been allocated for the Lower Hunter Freight Corridor?

At this time, funding has been allocated to identify a suitable corridor of land for the Lower Hunter Freight corridor. There is still a lot of work to be done before we can confirm the final Lower Hunter Freight Corridor for future use. The Future Transport 2056 strategy has identified the Lower Hunter Freight Corridor for potential delivery within 10-20 years.

What other major projects are planned across the Lower Hunter?

Planning for the Lower Hunter Freight corridor is being coordinated with the M1 Pacific Motorway Extension, linking the M1 Pacific Motorway to the Pacific Highway at Raymond Terrace. The project team will also be working with local councils to coordinate the freight rail corridor with the Richmond Vale Rail Trail between Kurri Kurri and Hexham.

The Lower Hunter Freight Corridor will also complement a number of other projects being planned and delivered by the NSW Government, including:

- **A Fast Rail Program** – planned for the short to medium term to improve passenger travel times on the existing network between Sydney and Newcastle. The Lower Hunter Freight Corridor complements the Fast Rail project by removing freight rail from the Central Coast and Newcastle Railway Line, allowing an increase in services that will be more reliable and faster and therefore capable of meeting future demand.
- **Northern Sydney Freight Corridor (NSFC)** – as future stages of the Northern Sydney Freight Corridor (NSFC) are delivered providing more capacity between Sydney and the Lower Hunter region, capacity through Newcastle will become a pinch point on the corridor.

FAQs

Lower Hunter Freight Corridor



How is cultural heritage being managed?

Transport for NSW has been working with the Aboriginal community to identify sites of Aboriginal cultural significance. This is part of the Aboriginal cultural values assessment across Newcastle region. The study area includes the traditional lands of the Awabakal people. A number of areas of significance were identified including ceremonial areas near the head of Hexham Swamp, pathways between Mount Sugarloaf and Hexham Swamp, Hexham Swamp itself and the headwaters of Cockle Creek. We will continue to work with the the Aboriginal community and Local Aboriginal Land Councils to identify and document culturally significant areas.

How are we consulting with the community?

The NSW Government is committed to the safety of its customers and employee when it comes to complying with Public Health Orders about the spread of Covid-19. Transport for NSW Communications and community engagement will be carried out in ways to ensure the stakeholders, landowners and community can practice social distancing and limit the spread of COVID-19.

How will feedback be used?

Stakeholders, landowners and communities are encouraged to share their local knowledge of the area and provide feedback on the identified recommended Lower Hunter Freight Corridor.

The consultation process will help to identify further constraints and opportunities that will need to be considered before a final corridor is determined.

Feedback from the consultation together with the outcomes of the technical investigations will help inform the final corridor location.

How can I make a submission?

You can provide your feedback about the recommended corridor option by:

- Use the interactive online map to see the location of the recommended corridor and to provide your feedback **transport.nsw.gov.au/LHFC**
- Email **corridors@transport.nsw.gov.au**
- Write
**Corridor Investigation Office
Transport for NSW
PO BOX K659
Haymarket NSW 1240**
- Call **1800 837 511**