

Manilla Low Level Bridge - Questions and Answers

Why didn't the community of Manilla know about this project before the funding announcement?

Residents of Manilla have told us through our Annual Operational Plan community consultations over the last 10 years about how the current bridge does not meet the community's needs. Council has looked for ways to address the issue. When an opportunity for State Government funding became available, Council submitted an application.

Council regularly applies for funding and applications are not always successful. However, once an application is successful Council works with the funding partner to announce the news as soon as possible.

Why wasn't the community consulted about where the bridge should go?

There have been preliminary investigations to find suitable sites for a second river crossing in Manilla, but Council was not able to start work to take the bridge concept to a detailed design until funding was secured. The site of the bridge is based on providing the shortest route for through traffic to reduce the construction cost. Longer routes would cost significantly more and we would not have received the funding.

It was always planned that once some route options for the road tie in's were identified, Council would discuss with the local community. A final decision on the preferred alignment will be made following this meeting and once the remaining constraints have been resolved.

It is expected the bridge will cross the Namoi River parallel to but in the vicinity upstream of the existing Manilla Bridge in the Arthur Street road reserve. The bridge will be approximately 140 metres long and will transition to a road either side to tie in with the existing road network

Who decides where the bridge and approach roads will go?

There are several aspects of the design that need to be resolved before detailed design and can be finalised. Discussions are ongoing between Council and Roads and Maritime Services and the final decision on the road alignment will be made by TRC and RMS after consideration of the constraints and impacts of each option. The community will also be involved through both direct one-on-one consultation (where applicable) and events like the March 6 Community Information Session at Manilla's Small Town Hall.

Who will own the new road/bridge?

Manilla Road (Main Road 63) and is owned and maintained by Road and Maritime Services (RMS). The new road and bridge will become part of that road network and also be owned and maintained by RMS.

What happens to the existing bridge

The existing bridge will remain in use for local traffic. As the bridge is on the RMS Heritage Bridge register, RMS will remain as the owner of the existing bridge.

Where will the bridge approach roads be?

There are a number of different routes now being considered. Each have some challenges, but they include:

- Land Ownership, existing road reserve widths and possible land acquisition
- Number of 90 degree bends
- Length of the new road
- Steepness of the road
- Number and location of underground and overhead services that need relocation

Will there be increased traffic due to an additional bridge?

It is not expected that traffic travelling through Manilla will dramatically increase as a result of having a second river crossing. However, one of the reasons for constructing the bridge is to provide better connectivity within the Region to allow future economic growth which will see the majority of heavy vehicles using this route rather than the existing detour via Rangari Road.

The Manilla community has identified weight limitations and the narrow width of the existing Manilla Bridge as an impediment to development. Residents and road users are also concerned about safety issues related to heavy vehicles using the existing bridge or detouring through the local road network. The lack of adequate road infrastructure is also impacting on the road transport industry and deterring agricultural investment and expansion in the Region.

It is to be expected traffic volumes will increase into the future as the Region and Manilla itself grows, but the new proposed crossing will create a safer route for all road users.

What is Council going to do to manage road noise and traffic on the new route?

Noise levels can be managed through design methods and through additional controls. A Review of Environmental Factors Report will assess the current noise levels, and determine the predicted noise levels once the road is opened. Although the level of noise will be increased compared to the current situation, the preference will be to keep the predicted noise levels below the allowable threshold. Where this is possible, no additional noise mitigation measures will be adopted. If required, we will investigate noise mitigation measures with the affected residents.

The noise can also be mitigated through the detailed design stage. The steeper the road, the louder the noise from heavy vehicles as they accelerate or decelerate. The design will consider as flat a grade as possible.

How will access to my property be affected during construction?

Residents will always be able to access their property both during and after construction. Impacts during construction will be communicated with the residents closer to the commencement of construction.

How can I receive updates on the project?

Council will continue to update residents about the project as it proceeds. We have already written letters to Manilla residents and we held a community information session at the Manilla Small Town Hall on March 6, 2019. Our efforts to keep the community informed will continue.

If you would like to be part of the email group that receives monthly updates for this project, please email trc@tamworth.nsw.gov.au and ask to be added to the register of interested residents or visit www.tamworth.nsw.gov.au/ManillaLowLevelCrossing to stay updated on this project.