



Southern Bangalow Bypass – Issues Summary, August 2008

Introduction

Byron Shire Council has prepared a draft discussion paper regarding the current RTA proposal for the Pacific Highway Upgrade between Tintenbar and Ewingsdale.

The paper outlines the concerns of community representations that Council has received thus far and address the stated RTA objectives for the highway upgrade project. In doing so the discussion paper makes a case that the proposed upgrade should *not* precede until a complete and independent assessment of a full bypass and interchange to the south of Bangalow (that is delivered as *part* of the highway upgrade) is completed.

Background

According to RTA advice, such an assessment would come at an approximate cost of \$30,000 – an amount Council believe insignificant when compared to the total project costs, especially in light of the potential benefits and cost savings a full bypass and interchange is expected to provide, including (in Council's view) the opportunity to achieve greater attainment of the RTA stated objectives as follows:

✓ **reducing road accident and injuries:** this objective would be *better met* by providing 100% (not 56%) of all traffic the opportunity to utilise the most expensive component of the new highway (i.e. the proposed tunnel under St Helena Hill). These benefits would be numerous: reduced vehicle numbers on the most unsafe stretch (St Helena) means *less* chance of road accident and injury and *less* maintenance and traffic demands on existing St Helena section – all of which result in *better* value for money as more use the new highway and tunnel (i.e. a better return on investment);

✓ **reduce travel times and transport costs:** this would be *better met* by providing 100% (not 56%) of all traffic the opportunity to utilise the proposed tunnel under St Helena Hill which would allow the removal of the proposed half interchanges (at Bangalow and Ivy Lane) and a substantial interchange upgrade (at Ewingsdale) – all of which offer a potential further and substantial cost saving);

✓ **develop a route that involves community and considers their interests:** this would be *better met* by undertaking the proposed study Council are now calling for;

✓ **provide a route that supports economic development:** this would be *better met* if the highway upgrade *allowed more direct access* to the highway, especially for business, tourist and freight movement;

✓ **manage the upgrade in accordance with the principles of ESD:** which would be *better met* if the matrix assessment (as outlined in the RTA *Strategic Access Report*, p14) and environmental assessment (now underway) included a full assessment of the Bangalow bypass and full interchange in relation to the current proposals and ESD principles; and

✓ **provide the best value for money:** which would be *better met* if the above mentioned concerns were taken into account and the provision of a bypass and full interchange were delivered now and *not* at some later unspecified date (which is current RTA preference). Benefits would also include better value for money (present Vs future value) and immediate safety, insurance and hospital cost savings as it would (in effect) mean only one interchange (not three) and remove need for a substantial interchange upgrade and new road construction (both at Ewingsdale, 6km to the north).



Bypass and Full Interchange South of Bangalow required as part of the T2E Pacific Highway Upgrade

Summary of issues and actions, 8 August 2008

Purpose

This summary is provided to outline the various issues and actions to date regarding Byron Shire Council and community support for a bypass and full highway interchange to the south of Bangalow that is delivered as part of the proposed Pacific Highway upgrade between Tintenbar and Ewingsdale (T2E) scheduled for commencement in 2010 and completion by 2012.

Background

At Council's Ordinary Meeting on 27 September 2007 Council resolved (07-517) that "in principle support for an east-west by pass of Bangalow" be conveyed to the RTA and that "Council works with RTA to facilitate a study leading to the identification of a suitable corridor".

In doing so, RTA advised such a study would cost approximately \$30,000 and in their January 2008 *Strategic Access Report* indicated that while such a bypass is feasible and *would* mitigate the concerns held by most residents who submitted feedback, it fell outside the scope of the T2E Pacific Highway upgrade (Tintenbar to Ewingsdale).

Following this advice and several representations made by concerned residents including adjacent property owners and Ewingsdale Progress Association, Council resolved on 28 February 2008 (Res 08-37) to host a meeting on 28 March 2008 in Council Chambers in which state and federal MPs including Minister for Roads and representatives from the RTA, ARUP, local transport operators, Bangalow and Ewingsdale community would meet to discuss issues with Councillors and management from Lismore City, Ballina Shire and Byron Shire Councils.

As this meeting *did not* eventuate, a Mayoral letter sought confirmation from Minister for Roads for a May 2008 meeting date and included a summary of concerns aimed to assist and inform all attendees to the background of the proposed meeting. Both the letter and summary are attached.

The summary is of a discussion paper which has not yet been finalised or released as the proposed meeting again did not eventuate, thus leaving Council with few available options to fulfil Resolution 08-37 and in light of the July 2008 Council meeting recess, the election caretaker period and, most urgently of all, the imminent release of the project's Environmental Assessment (EA), which offers all parties the last chance to provide feedback on the T2E project which is scheduled for a 2010 commencement, Council considered and resolved the following at their 10 July Extraordinary Meeting:

08-411 Resolved:

1. That the General Manager prepares a submission to the RTA on the Environmental Assessment report for the Tintenbar to Ewingsdale section of the Pacific Highway Motorway within the time frame required by the RTA. That copies of this submission be sent to the Minister for Roads, the Minister for Planning and the General Manager, Lismore City Council.
2. That the submission supports a southern bypass for Bangalow with a full interchange as a strategic access point for the Motorway.
3. That a delegation from Council meets with the Minister for Roads as soon as possible to request inclusion of the above bypass in the Tintenbar to Ewingsdale section of the Motorway.
4. That Council informs Lismore City Council of its representations to the Minister.



Potential bypass corridor RTA concede as feasible. See report at: www.arup.com.au/tintenbar/files/080118_Strategic_Access_Report_Website.pdf



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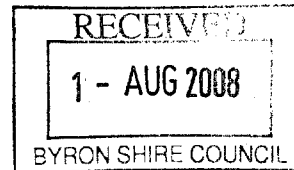
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31 July 2008

THE GENERAL MANAGER
BYRON SHIRE COUNCIL
BYRON STREET
MULLUMBIMBY NSW



Attention Mr. Graeme Faulkner,

Dear Sir.

PACIFIC HIGHWAY UPGRADE

We express our support to Byron Shire Council and Lismore City Council in their efforts to convince The Roads and Traffic Authority to provide an exit off the proposed Tintenbar to Ewingsdale upgrade of the Pacific Highway south of Bangalow.

An exit south of Bangalow connecting to the Bangalow to Lismore Road would divert the southbound traffic to Lismore, Casino and Kyogle centres and districts away from St Helena Hill and away from the centre of Bangalow Township.

The City of Lismore is the largest town in the region and houses Southern Cross University, the Base Hospital as well as a number of Regional Head Offices which in itself generates a large number of vehicle movements. It is important we plan for the future in providing good infrastructure to support the communities and we see an upgraded Bangalow to Lismore Road as an important part of this infrastructure.

Lismore is base for a number of Transport Companies including our own Company and we see an upgraded Bangalow to Lismore road as vital to the future development on the Northern Rivers area. This is further supported by the proposed expansion of the plantation timber industry west of Lismore which will require an improved road network to the Port of Brisbane to cater for the increase in heavy traffic numbers.

We support the efforts of your Council in this matter as we view it as important to the whole community of the Northern Rivers.

Yours faithfully,
A.J.MILLS & SONS PTY. LTD

R.V.MILLS
DIRECTOR

Cc Jan Mangleson

24th July 2008

The Hon. Eric Roozendaal
Minister for Roads
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Minister Roozendaal,

Our members in Northern NSW are very concerned about aspects of the Tintenbar to Ewingsdale Upgrade of the Pacific Highway. They raised these issues with me during my recent visit to the area.

The City of Lismore is the largest town (46,000) in the region and it is the centre for commercial activity in Northern NSW and is the freight centre for many transport operators. The daily movement of freight between Lismore and Casino to Brisbane and the Gold Coast is considerable and at present trucks travel north and south via Bangalow to join the Pacific Highway. We are concerned that the RTA has not taken into account that truck operators do not want to go via the township of Bangalow and would like to access the new Highway south of Bangalow.

The RTA Strategic Access Report Jan 2008 showed the possibility of an interchange south of Bangalow however this was dismissed due to cost. We believe this should be revisited immediately and the interchange built and connected to the Lismore road as part of this Highway upgrade. The interchange north of Bangalow could be eliminated and the new and enlarged interchange at Ewingsdale could be downsized to provide cost savings. The transport operators do not want to also have to negotiate another roundabout at Ewingsdale.

The RTA have claimed that transport operators would possibly use the Bruxner Highway and go via Ballina once these roads are upgraded however our members have dismissed this idea due to cost and time. The extra distance is 50kms per return trip. With current operating costs and forecasted heavy truck volumes on the Lismore to Bangalow road in 2012 (the opening date of the new highway) this would add nearly \$13 million per year to the freight bill. The additional time is also a factor with driver fatigue.

The projected cost of this upgrade is probably close to \$500 million and the pay back of the southern bypass of Bangalow is obvious. We find it difficult to understand how the RTA can justify their current plan to only put 55% of the existing traffic on the new road and through the new tunnel and leave the balance on the existing steep and dangerous St Helena Hill and through the town of Bangalow.

We request that you immediately review this matter for the good of the total community and the transport industry.

Yours faithfully

Jill Lewis
Manager



Byron Shire Council

Media Release

14 July 2008

Bypass and Full Interchange South of Bangalow must be part of the T2E Pacific Highway Upgrade

At an Extraordinary Meeting held 10 July, Byron Shire Council resolved to support a bypass and full interchange south of Bangalow as part of the \$500m Tintenbar to Ewingsdale (T2E) Pacific Highway Upgrade, expected to be undertaken by 2010 and completed by 2012.

This position is to be included in Council's submission to the Roads and Traffic Authority Environmental Assessment (EA), expected during July, and comes after several attempts by both concerned community members and Council to be heard on this issue.

"In September 2007 Council resolved to convey to the RTA its in principle support for an east-west bypass of Bangalow and a study to identify a suitable corridor," said Mayor Jan Barham.

"In doing so, the RTA advised such a study would cost approximately \$30,000 and in their publicly available January 2008 *Strategic Access Report* indicated while such a bypass is feasible and *would* mitigate the concerns held by most residents who submitted feedback, it fell outside the scope of the T2E upgrade.

"The cost of \$30,000 for the study equates to less than 1 percent of the total upgrade project and would be money well spent to broaden the scope and give due consideration to the concerns of not only the largest population on the T2E corridor (Bangalow) but the region. Lismore City Council is also supporting this position.

"Furthermore, this study could save millions of dollars by forgoing questionable works such as an upgraded Ewingsdale interchange and a new half interchange at Ivy Lane, Bangalow. There could also be other savings in road safety, vehicle kilometres travelled and greenhouse gas emission," the Mayor said.

By the RTA's own admission, the current T2E proposal results in 45% of highway bound traffic remaining on the existing highway over St Helena Hill while the remaining 55% would use the proposed new road tunnel under St Helena – a scenario which Cr Mangleson, who put the urgency motion to Council that led to the 10 July resolution, believes presents two immediate and glaring problems.

"Firstly, this does not address the primary reason behind the upgrade, which is road safety. St Helena is the worst stretch on the Pacific Highway and has four times as many accidents than the RTA stated objective – yet they propose to keep nearly half of the traffic on it and conveniently remove its problematic statistics and costs from the highway and state government to the Council and local roads," Cr Mangleson said.

"Second is the questionable return on public investment, most notably the tunnel and I ask if this was a private venture would it proceed knowing 45% of traffic will not use the tunnel?."

“The complexity of issues and the project’s impacts are becoming more apparent and Council encourages residents to become more informed and consider having their say as the EA process offers the last formal chance before the project is sent to treasury for funding.”

Cr Mangleson added, “But really it is very simple. If a full interchange south of Bangalow were constructed, Lismore/Casino traffic could access the new highway without having to travel through Bangalow, St Helena and Ewingsdale, as they do at present.”

To assist residents in learning more about Council’s position and the project, including the EA process, Council will make information available on its website within the coming week and will include a summary of the issues outlined in a letter sent to Minister for Roads in May.

“Council is still awaiting a reply to a letter sent to the Minister for Roads, which outlined Council’s position and requested a meeting with Minister Roozendaal, Council and stakeholders,” said Mayor Barham.

RTA reports, including the *Strategic Access Report* which contains the potential bypass corridor, is available from the project website at www.arup.com.au/tintenbar (as attached).

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