

Huon Link Road Presentation to Public hearing by Joint Standing Committee on Public Works Monday October 17th

Focus on Huonville

HVC Huonville Ranelagh Master Plan 2019

The introduction to the Master Plan says:

“Huonville is the main activity centre for the Huon Valley and provides important services and functions to the local government area and beyond in a sub-regional function.”

Huonville is the commercial and services centre for the Huon Valley, with schools, trade training centre, council offices, a large library, police headquarters, health and community services, Centrelink, recreation facilities – playing fields, skate park, swimming pool, large PCYC, as well as a commercial zone with petrol stations, hardware shop, supermarket, cafes, restaurants and many other small businesses that are used by all the residents of the valley.

We are looking at the proposed construction of the Huon Link Road, a by-pass for traffic from Cygnet, and it is predicted that this by-pass will reduce traffic and therefore congestion in Main Street Huonville.

I'd like to talk about the issue of transport described in the **Huonville Ranelagh Master Plan** that the council endorsed in April 2019.

HVC - Huonville Ranelagh Master Plan April 2019

Aims of the Master Plan

The following aims were identified:

- **Contribute to increased activity and revitalisation of the townships, enhancing key assets;**
- **Strengthen Huonville's role as a significant regional centre;**
- Consider the appropriateness of the current zoning of both Huonville and Ranelagh and identify future zoned areas of commercial, residential and industrial uses which will guide future use and development;
- Identify investment opportunities for both the public and private sector;
- Improve linkages between and within Huonville and Ranelagh;
- Identify the required residential, commercial, community and industrial land options.

The Master Plan outlines the key directions, recommendations and actions.

It also includes an outline of the next steps in the process.

Section 5 provides **A Holistic Transport Management Approach** (p.36)

“A key outcome of the stakeholder and community engagement was the effect of the volume of traffic through Main Street and the lack of permeability and connectivity of the road and trail network.

A holistic transport management approach is required, with the first step being the preparation of a **comprehensive transport management study** that considers all aspects of the movement of people and vehicles, including:

- **the realignment of the Esplanade;**

- a link road or bypass;
- the number of entry/exit points on Main Street;
- the permeability and connectivity of the road and trail network;
- car parking capacity in the Central Business area; and the reduction of on-street car parking in Main Street."

The recommendations in **Actions section is for Further Specialist Studies** (p.46, SS1)

RECOMMENDATION RELEVANT PLANNING PRINCIPLES

Prepare a comprehensive and holistic transport management study that considers the critical elements of the transport network within and around Huonville and Ranelagh.

This is to consider and include

- the diversion of Channel Highway (the Esplanade);
- the creation of a bypass (from the northern end of town through to Flood Road);
- a link road;
- treatment and effectiveness of intersections;
- (connectivity to and between (including adequacy of bridges) Huonville and Ranelagh;
- the adequacy of parking in the business area of Huonville;
- the number of access points onto Main Street;
- the reduction of on-street car parking along the Main Street business area;
- adequacy of trail and pathway network for bikes and pedestrians;
- improved heavy vehicle access into the Glen Road industrial area;)
- and public transport interchange including park and ride.

Following completion of the transport management study, a review of the recommended actions in the master plan will be necessary to ensure alignment with the study.

The report to council in April 2019 emphasised this point because "many actions rely upon the outcomes of the proposed Transport Management Study described in Further Specialist Study SS1. Therefore, it is considered that the implementation of this action should be prioritised."

So, has the Transport Management Study been completed?

If not, when will it be completed, and will a review of the recommended actions in the master plan be made to ensure alignment with the study, and why was the decision to create a Huonville by-pass made before the Transport Management Study was released?

A community consultation by State Growth was held in January/February this year and the introductory statement was:

"We are committed to building a link road between the Huon Highway and Flood Road. The link road will divert Cygnet-bound highway traffic from Main Street Huonville. It will reduce congestion and improve safety through Huonville town centre."

The options provided were only whether the link road, or by-pass, should be on the potential northern route or the southern route, with two plans provided.

The results of the community consultation with stakeholders and residents were provided in a report with the following summary:

The link road will divert Cygnet-bound highway traffic from Main Street Huonville. It will reduce congestion and improve safety through Huonville town centre.

In early 2022, the community and key stakeholders provided valuable feedback on two options for the Link Road - a Northern Route and a Southern Route.

Following expert engineering and environmental assessments and the feedback from the community we have chosen the Northern Route as the preferred alignment for this important infrastructure upgrade.

More than 60 per cent of the responses received during the community consultation process in January - February 2022 preferred the Northern Route, which would run from Main Street, opposite Orchard Avenue, southeast to the top of Flood Road.

The Northern Route is also the Huon Valley Council's preferred option.

I found the responses from the community to be ambiguous, and there doesn't appear to be an in-depth cost/benefit analysis of the by-pass.

I would have expected that the **Transport Management Study** that was recommended in **Master Plan** to take a holistic traffic management approach to congestion in Huonville would have been done before committing to a \$29.2million by-pass.

The primary aim of **Huonville Ranelagh Master Plan** is to strengthen Huonville's role as a significant regional centre."

How would the by-pass contribute to Huonville's role as a significant regional centre?

Huonville is a major destination for many people from Cygnet, as well as from all other small townships and rural areas in the valley, so many of the 30% of vehicles entering Huonville from the Channel Highway are actually travelling to Huonville, not going directly to Kingston or Hobart, and some are going south to other parts of the Huon valley.

They will not want to by-pass Huonville, and therefore the reduction in traffic in Main Street is likely to be considerably less than predicted. Also, it looks as if a lot of the congestion – or at least the feeling in Main Street - is the domination of heavy trucks which are mostly coming over the Huon River bridge from the south. For a \$29.2 million expenditure of taxpayers' money there seem to be so many unanswered questions.

1. One question is about whether the statement that the by-pass would "divert Cygnet-bound highway traffic from Main Street Huonville and reduce congestion and improve safety through Huonville town centre because there doesn't appear to be any data on the destination of traffic coming into Huonville from the Channel Highway.
2. Another basic question is whether the major traffic issues in Main Street Huonville are due to commuters travelling directly between the Cygnet area and Kingston and Hobart?
3. In future, commuter traffic from Cygnet may be reduced because the Cygnet area has a relatively high proportion of professional workers who can, and probably will, increasingly work from home. Have any detailed analyses been done on the trends in working from home, either full or part-time, and how this may affect the volume of commuter traffic using the Huonville by-pass?
4. Would a by-pass mean that residents of the Cygnet area would do less business in Huonville because they would go to Kingston/Hobart, making it less significant as a regional hub?

5. Are there statistics on traffic origins and destinations, types of vehicles, and what alternative improvements could be made to traffic movements/ congestion in Main Street?
6. Has the proportion of traffic on the Channel Highway that is local work-related light commercial vehicles (tradies, local service providers etc) which pass from the Channel Highway into Huonville in transit to other parts of the valley been determined?
7. How could traffic flow in Main Street be improved through traffic calming measures, roundabouts, pedestrian crossings, traffic lights?
8. What area of land will need to be purchased for the Huon Link Road?

The **Transport Management Study** that was recommended in the Master Plan would have addressed and provided data on these issues. Cygnet area residents, including commuters, do not seem to have been consulted on the crucial question of their travel paths to Hobart.

So the biggest question is: who would benefit from spending \$29 million on this by-pass?

There are so many ways in which that kind of money could be spent in the Huon Valley!

So to come back to the 2019 **Huonville Ranelagh Master Plan**

The aims of the **Master Plan** included strengthening Huonville's role as a significant regional centre and contributing to increased activity and revitalisation of the townships, enhancing key assets.

The **recommendation** was to prepare a comprehensive and holistic **transport management study** that considers the critical elements of the transport network within and around Huonville and Ranelagh. This was to consider and include the diversion of Channel Highway (the Esplanade), the creation of a bypass (from the northern end of town through to Flood Road), a link road and the treatment and effectiveness of intersections.

Then, following completion of the transport management study, a review of the recommended actions in the Master Plan will be necessary to ensure alignment with the study. Any review of the Master Plan must also include progressive strategies for bringing about modal traffic changes that will improve mobility for all.

The importance of the Transport Management Study was emphasised in the discussion in the report to the council in April 2007 included the statement that:

“many actions rely upon the outcomes of the proposed **Transport Management Study**. Therefore, it is considered that the implementation of this action **should be prioritised**. It is also noted that some Recommended Actions are based off work that is only conceptual at this stage and will require further investigation and consultation before proceeding. “

So, until this **Transport Management Study** has been done it seems premature to be allocating \$29.2 million of taxpayers' money to building a by-pass for Channel Highway traffic.

So how has State Growth determined that this is a priority project?

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