

NORTHERN ROADS PACKAGE

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I. Introduction

I.1. Project Name

Northern Roads Package.

I.2. Project Summary

Rationale/objectives: The Tasmanian Integrated Freight Strategy released in 2016 identified the Batman – Frankford - Birralee road corridor as a key regional freight route. It is a strategic connection between the north east and north west of Tasmania.

In April 2019 the Australian Government committed \$24 million to upgrade Birralee Road from the Roads of Strategic Importance (ROSI) initiative. In order to maximise the benefit, and consistent with the 2016 Tasmanian Integrated Freight Strategy it is intended to extend the scope of the original Birralee Main Road commitment to include the Batman Highway and a connecting section of Frankford Road.

Currently many heavy vehicle operators travelling between the industrial and port precinct of Bell Bay and the Bass Highway travel via Launceston, rather than the more direct route via the Batman Highway (A0278), Frankford Main Road (A1044) and Birralee Main Road (A1701). Through industry consultation, the Department of State Growth has determined this is primarily due to the safety concerns of operators travelling on these roads. The safety concerns arise from a number of factors including insufficient sealed pavement width, lack of overtaking opportunities or turn-out bays, and poor pavement quality.

The scoping phase has identified appropriate upgrades along the corridor to address these safety concerns, including a wider sealed cross section, pavement rehabilitation/strengthening and localised curve widening as necessary to support the increased use by heavy vehicles.

Location: Batman Highway (A0278), Frankford Main Road Between West Tamar Highway and Birralee Road (A1044), and Birralee Road (A1701).

Key Benefits: The major benefits expected to be delivered by the project will improve access for freight vehicles using this route and will reduce the number of heavy vehicles travelling through the Launceston Central Business District (CBD). In addition, the works will provide safety improvements for all road users travelling on the Batman Highway, Frankford Main Road, and Birralee Road corridor.

As part of the project, a heavy vehicle rest area (HVRA) is to be included at the Sidmouth Hall area. This has been identified as a need by the Tasmanian Transport Association (TTA), as dedicated areas where heavy vehicle drivers can safely pull over and stop to check the vehicle or to take a break are a critical component of a safe and productive road freight network. Consultation with the TTA and local council has been undertaken in implementing the design of the HVRA.

Progress to Date: The project is in concept design/scoping phase for the Frankford Main Road and Birralee Road. The design has been completed for the Batman Highway and is currently being tendered.

I.3. Project Location

The location of the Northern Roads package is provided in Figure I. The geographical coordinates are:

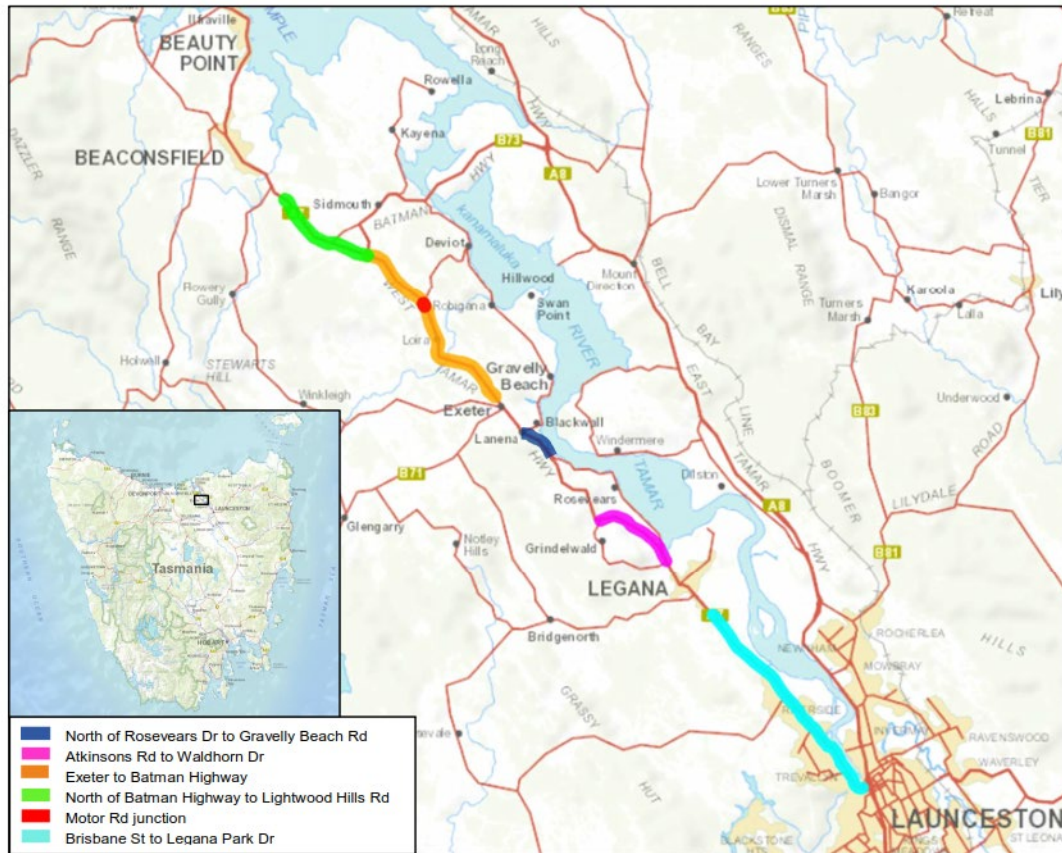
Road Name	Start Location		End Location	
Birralee Road	41°30'34" S	146°49'31" E	41°22'04" S	146°49'52.5" E
Frankford Main Road	41°17'55" S	146°57'03" E	41°22'04" S	146°49'52.5" E
Batman Highway	41°14'25" S	146°52'59" E	41°11'58" S	146°58'10" E



Figure 1: Locality Plan of the Northern Roads Package

I.4. Related Projects and Strategic Context

In addition to the Northern Roads Package, the Tasmanian Government committed \$12 million to transport efficiency and road safety improvement projects along the West Tamar Highway (A0252) between Riverside and Greens Beach. These projects commenced in 2020/2021.



2. Project Scope

2.1. Problem/ Opportunity Statement

Batman Highway, Frankford and Birralelee Roads are part of an identified key regional freight corridor. Improvements proposed include road widening, pavement strengthening and localised curve improvements to enable the corridor to meet Tasmanian Standards to cater for the increased heavy vehicle movements supporting business and industry.

The roads included in the Package all have a significant percentage of heavy vehicles in their daily traffic volumes. The Batman Highway has an approximate traffic volume of 2,500 vehicles per day with 21 percent heavy vehicles. Frankford and Birralelee Roads have traffic volumes of approximately 1,800 and 842 vehicles per day, respectively and both have in excess of 20 percent heavy vehicles daily.

The Department of State Growth obtained feedback from transport operators regarding the operational performance of the roads. Through this consultation, it is understood that due to the safety concerns of operators travelling on the Batman Highway, Frankford Main Road and Birralelee Road, some heavy vehicle operators prefer to travel between Bell Bay and the north west along the longer route through the city of Launceston.

It is anticipated that the Northern Roads Package will encourage heavy vehicle operators to use this route, reducing the number of heavy vehicles travelling through the Launceston CBD.

This project will also result in safety improvements for all road users travelling on the Batman Highway, Frankford Main Road, and Birralelee Road.

2.2. Options Evaluation

This project involves upgrading an existing corridor and focuses on safety and travel time efficiency improvements.

An Options Analysis has been completed which reviewed options for shoulder widening and pavement strengthening in order to maximise the benefit to the Northern Roads Package road corridor working to the available budget.

The options analysis included industry consultation comments, traffic volumes, existing and target road widths, construction and seal history, structures in the road corridor, services, and crash history.

Pavement investigation testing has also been completed on Batman Highway, Frankford Main Road and Birralelee Road, which has provided a preliminary indication of targeted areas for pavement rehabilitation.

The details of the scope of work following the 2019/20 review are outlined in the Section 2.3 of this report and form the current scope of the project. Overall project site plans and typical cross sections for these roads are attached in Appendix A.

2.3. Scope of Project

The project involves upgrades to 10.87km for the Batman Highway, 13.53 km for Frankford Main Road, and 18.49km for Birralelee Road. A total road length of approximately 42.89 km for the corridor.

The proposed for this project include road widening, pavement strengthening and localised curve improvements for the Batman Highway, Frankford Main Road, and Birralelee Road, to enable the corridor to cater for the increased heavy vehicle movements supporting business and industry and improve safety for all road users. A heavy vehicle rest area is also being incorporated at Sidmouth Hall, as discussed in Overall project site plans and typical cross sections for these roads are attached in Appendix A.

3. Project Cost

3.1. Overall Project Cost Summary Table

The total Northern Roads Program budget is \$55 million, which includes a Tasmanian Government commitment for shoulder sealing on the Batman Highway that commenced construction in 2020.

The following project cost estimates have been prepared on concept design and option analysis information. The package has remaining funding of \$50 million with Tasmanian State Government (\$6 million) and the Australian Government (\$44 million) contributions. The Department of State Growth will use a probabilistic cost estimation process to assess the total outturn cost. The costs are broken down in the table below, where the base cost estimate includes design development which is underway and ongoing.

The project scope will be refined using the results cost estimation to ensure the project is delivered in within the project budget.

	P50 (\$m AUD)	P90 (\$m AUD)
Base Cost Estimate	38.4	38.4
Contingency	5.4	9.0
Total Project Cost Estimate	43.8	47.4
Escalation	0.5	1
Total Outturn Cost Estimate	44.3	48.4

3.2. Budget profile for the Project

Expenditure of the \$50 million allocated budget will be defined during development of the concept design and finalisation of the staging of the works. A budget profile outlining the Australian and State funding contributions per financial year will be developed as per the process outlined in the National Partnership Agreement.

4. Project Benefits

4.1. Expected positive outcomes and benefits to be delivered by the Project

The Northern Roads Package will effectively open a shorter freight route in the North of Tasmania – providing freight vehicles especially a higher efficiency route. Non freight vehicles will also benefit from the improved route.

Major Benefits include:

- Freight Operational Cost Savings – shorter trips and the enabling of higher productivity vehicles
- Time savings – all vehicle and occupant types
- Crash reductions
- Environmental benefits – reduced greenhouse gas emissions due to fuel savings
- Lower maintenance costs

5. Finance and Procurement

5.1. Preferred procurement method for the Project

It is expected that a traditional construct only procurement model will be adopted for the delivery of this project. This method will allow for designs to be fully developed to accommodate for the stakeholder complexities while minimising risk to the Department on the final designed project outcomes.

A Private Public Partnership is not considered a viable option for this project as there is not appetite or benefit to that model in the Tasmanian market.

5.2. Project Timeline

The proposed program for the project aims to progress the design so that a Stage 1 package could progress to construction at the start of the Tasmanian construction season in October 2021. In parallel with construction of the Stage 1 package, the design for the remainder of the works would be finalised and then proceed to construction. Stage 1 will involve upgrading of the Batman Highway (West Tamar Highway to Batman Bridge), and Stage 2 will involve upgrading of Frankford Main Road and Birralelee Road. This will involve the preparation of multiple separate tender packages, with Stage 2 likely to be broken down further as separate packages. The benefit of this approach is that construction can be commenced on the road with the highest freight volumes whilst the design of the remaining works is completed.

The critical path for each of the stages of the Northern Roads Package is the completion of design to enable tender documentation to be prepared and finalized.

Activity	Timeline
Submission to the Parliamentary Standing Committee	August 2021
Request For Tender – Stage 1	July 2021
Award of contract – Stage 1	October 2021
Commencement of works – Stage 1	December 2021
Practical completion of works – Stage 1	June 2022
Request For Tender Stage 2	November 2021 to February 2022

The key assumptions of the schedule developed for the project include:

- Any required Development Applications are accepted by the relevant councils without any major representations or onerous conditions imposed.
- No environmental or heritage delays impact the Project.
- Property acquisition is completed prior to commencement of construction.

6. Risk and Sustainability

6.1. Major risks, and proposed mitigation strategies

A project risk register has been produced. The risk register will be further developed through the various stages of the project and this will be managed by a risk workshop at each of these stages with mitigation strategies to be reviewed and adopted throughout the project.

The table below outlines the impacts and proposed mitigation strategies for some of the key risks identified to enable successful delivery of the project.

Table: Northern Roads Package Major Project Risks and Proposed Mitigation Strategies

Risk Event	Potential Impact of Risk	Risk Mitigation Strategy
The project outputs cannot be delivered within the allocated project budget	Scope of project required to be reduced, minimising the benefits of the project. Alternatively, additional funding sources would need to be explored.	Project scope prepared through the Planning and Scoping Phase required for the PPR includes the preparation of project cost estimates in accordance with Department of State Growth procedures and the PCB template. High level estimates to be completed at Concept/Preliminary Design completion. Preparation of P50 & P90 estimates at Detailed Design completion.
Investigation of the existing pavement identifies significant areas of underperforming pavement.	Requires diversion of funds for road widening to pavement strengthening.	Deflectograph testing early during development phase. This identified regions of acceptable pavement which do not require rehabilitation works. Identify and cost additional remediation of existing pavement.
Local council requests for additional project scope through the consultation process	Increases project scope, cost and delivery schedule.	Undertake early discussions with councils to understand their future planning and specific requests, especially around Exeter.
Significant property acquisition is required to achieve desired pavement widths.	Additional cost in land acquisition.	Investigate road corridor widths and property boundaries early in the Development Phase. Utilise design methods which minimise the impact of potential property acquisition.

6.2. Major dis-benefits including likely impacts to the community and environment

Possible negative externalities associated with the project could include the need to remove threatened species to accommodate road widening and the potentially aggrieved landowners affected by land acquisition. Environmental investigations along with topographic survey collection and road design modelling have been completed for Stage 1 during the Scoping Phase to confirm the extent of any impacts and are also well progressed for Stage 2.

6.3. Detail any sustainability strategies that will be adopted

Following the completion of the project, the increased efficiency for freight vehicles will lead to a more sustainable outcome for road users, including fewer heavy vehicles travelling through the Launceston CBD.

Additionally, the safety improvements for the Batman Highway, Frankford Main Road and Birralee Road will provide community benefits in the form of lower impacts on the community and as a consequence reduced resource demand to treat injured persons and repair damaged vehicles and infrastructure.

7. Stakeholder Engagement

7.1. Public and Stakeholder participation and consultation

A Stakeholder and Community Engagement Plan (SCEP) has been prepared for this project in accordance with the State Roads Stakeholder and Community Engagement Framework and adopts the practices developed by the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2).

The SCEP is a whole of project document that will be updated and managed throughout each phase of the project.

The SCEP identifies the timing and outcomes of consultation as part of a transparent and well-planned decision-making process and inform stakeholders throughout the project.

7.2. Record of Stakeholder Consultation

Stakeholder engagement and Public Consultation has undertaken in with local government, local landowners, and affected transport operators in the region of the road corridor to ensure all relevant considerations are included in the design process.

The key project stakeholders identified include:

- Property owners and occupiers
- Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment
- West Tamar and Meander Valley Councils
- Public Utilities
- TasNetworks
- Telstra
- TasWater
- Tasmanian Gas Pipeline
- TasGas
- National Heavy Vehicle Regulator
- Tasmanian Transport Association; and
- Public transport operators.

A public information session was held at the Sidmouth Community Hall on Wednesday 31 March 2021 for both stages of the Northern Roads package. The information session was held between the hours of 12.00 noon to 6.30 pm and was well attended by over 47 community members.

Local residents were notified of the public display by an invitation sent in the post.

Project information was also on display at the West Tamar Council and Meander Valley Council from Monday, 29 March to Friday 30 April. Feedback forms were provided at all venues for the community.

A copy of the draft Community Consultation & Feedback Report is attached in Appendix B.

7.3. Directly affected landowners and property acquisition

Consultation has commenced with directly affected landowners and consultation will continue as the project progresses in accordance with the Stakeholder Consultation and Engagement Plan.

A Notice of Accommodation Works will be provided to all directly affected landowners which will summarise how the landowner will be impacted by the project and how the proposed design will manage these impacts.

Property acquisition is likely to be required along areas of the project where the existing road corridor is of insufficient width to accommodate the proposed increased road cross section.

Property acquisition requirements will be communicated to the affected landowners and undertaken in accordance with the Land Acquisition Act 1993 using the compulsory acquisition process.

8. Compliance

8.1. List Commonwealth or State legislation triggered by the Project

Commonwealth and State legislation triggered by the project has been investigated during the Scoping Phase for the project. A flora and fauna survey has been completed along the Batman Highway and is currently being finalised for Birralee Road and Frankford Main Roads to assess whether there will be any impacts on threatened species or habitat.

Desktop investigations indicate that Aboriginal and historic heritage legislation are unlikely to be triggered by the project. This will be confirmed as part of ongoing design development

8.2. Noise

The Department uses the Tasmanian State Road Traffic Noise Management Guidelines to manage traffic noise on State Roads. The Guidelines have been endorsed by the Environment Protection Authority (Tasmania).

The Department has applied the Guidelines and determined that the project does not trigger any requirements for noise mitigation, being a safety upgrade of an existing road. Notwithstanding this and the nature of the proposed works, the operational noise generated once construction is completed is not considered likely to increase significantly.

8.3. Environment (Flora, Fauna, Landscaping and visual amenity)

Detailed flora and fauna assessment has been completed for the Batman Highway portion of the Northern Roads Package. The flora and fauna survey identified no potential impacts on threatened species or habitat by the project. There was some threatened vegetation identified alongside the highway in two isolated sections, however these will remain untouched by the works.

The detailed flora and fauna survey for Frankford Main Road and Birralee Road is currently being finalised. Where possible the design work towards avoiding impact on native vegetation.

The detailed flora and fauna assessment identified no potential impacts on threatened species by the project for the Batman Highway.

This detailed flora and fauna survey for Frankford Main Road and Birralee Road is currently being finalised. The desktop assessment for Frankford Main Road and Birralee Road identified several threatened fauna species in the area.

There are no significant changes proposed to the existing road alignment for the project. The works involve an increased road cross section. These works are expected to remain largely within the existing road reserve. Therefore, these works are expected to have low landscape and visual impacts on the surrounding area.

8.4. Heritage (Aboriginal and Historic)

An Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment has been undertaken for the project. No Aboriginal heritage sites or suspected Aboriginal heritage features were identified during the assessment. A search of the Aboriginal Heritage Register shows that there are no registered Aboriginal sites within or in the immediate vicinity of the study area corridor.

A Historic Heritage Assessment has been undertaken for the project site. One state listed property has been identified along Birralelee Road, 'Egmont' 415 Birralelee Road, Westbury. The property is adjacent to the road corridor outside road cadastre. The potential impacts on this property are not yet known without the concept design being developed, however it is unlikely the works will impact the property, and the design shall accommodate for it accordingly. If the property is to be impacted, a certificate of exemption shall be sought from Heritage Tasmania.

8.5. Planning Approvals

The Northern Roads Package works extend across two municipal areas: West Tamar and Meander Valley. Accordingly, the West Tamar Interim Planning Scheme 2013 applies from Exeter to north of Birralelee and the Meander Valley Interim Planning 2013 applies from north of Birralelee to Westbury.

West Tamar Council has confirmed that a Development Application is not required for the Batman Highway upgrade works. The need for a Development Application for the Birralelee Road and Frankford Main Road upgrade works will be confirmed following the completion of a Flora and Fauna Survey and development of a concept design.

Appendix A: Public Display Plans

Appendix B: Community Consultation & Feedback Report