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| POLICY: | TRANSPORT – CORRIDOR OVER THE BLUE MOUNTAINS |
| DATE ADOPTED: | Director Corporate Services & Finance’s Report #8.1.1 Policy Meeting 6 November 2024 Resolution No. POL2024-30 Director Corporate Services & Finance’s Report #1 Policy 5 December 2012 Council 6 February 2013 Minute Book No. 11477 |
| ORIGINAL ADOPTION: | Director Corporate Services Report #1 Policy 1 December 2004, Council 8 December 2004 Minute Book No. 9416 (former BCC Policy) |
| FILE REFERENCE: | 07.00017, 41.00089 |
| OBJECTIVE: | To continue to lobby for an upgrade of the transport corridor over the Blue Mountains. |

Council supports the position of the Central NSW Joint Organisation with respect to the transport corridor over the Blue Mountains. The JO’s current position is:

Key Message:

1. There must be progress on a safe swift and secure link between Central NSW and Sydney for both passenger and freight, seeking:
 - a. a similar level for service as communities to the north and south of Sydney as well as those west of Brisbane;
 - b. to have speeds of 100k along the route and able to service High Productivity Vehicles;
 - c. to have the corridor sequestered for a future upgrade of a safe swift link between Sydney and Central NSW;
 - d. a multi modal approach to shorten journey times including faster rail; and
 - e. a strategic approach including the rewiring NSW and its impacts on the east-west link of the Blue Mountains.

Sub-messages:

- 1.1. A safe swift connection and secure between Sydney and Central NSW is a priority of the CNSWJO Board. In terms of speed – this means 100kph.
- 1.2. Build this safe swift link now and development will follow, like the M5 and the M2 into the Central Coast.
- 1.3. Corridors needs to be set aside now for development in the future, particularly Kurrajong to M7.
- 1.4. There are more than thirteen kilos of studies on the Bells Line. What is needed now is action.
- 1.5. Taking a staged approach to the development of the Bells Line is sensible.

- 1.6. The CNSWJO Board fully supports the \$2.5b upgrades to the Great Western Highway between Lithgow and Katoomba but has concerns that speeds along this alignment are slowing down.
- 1.7. 80% of the freight by road from Central NSW goes through Lithgow.
- 1.8. Tourism is the third largest industry in Central NSW and totally constrained by transport options most particularly congestion on the Great Western Highway.
- 1.9. Given the significant population increases projected by both the State and Federal Governments, several routes including the Bells Line will be needed for the expansion of Sydney.
- 1.10. A second crossing of the Hawkesbury near Richmond should be part of the considerations of the route.
- 1.11. The corridor needs to be secured now as the costs every day of growth in the north west of Sydney will only increase costs in the future.
- 1.12. We challenge the State Government to publish the daily costs to the tax payers of NSW of not securing the Corridor.
- 1.13. We need to leverage Inland Rail providing linkages to port including the Aerotropolis from the Parkes Special Activation Precinct.
- 1.14. This region supports the use of tunnels and new technologies if feasible.
- 1.15. The past three year La Nina rain event has exposed the fragility of both the road and rail network across the Blue Mountains.
- 1.16. Sections of the road a regularly reduced to 40kph and various other congestion management processes have been put in place, particularly on long weekends. This is having significant impacts on the visitor experience.
- 1.17. Freight impacts of renewable energy build need urgent consideration.

The Maunsell McIntyre report's findings and recommendation are also supported.

8.3 Option 1

8.3.1 Description

Option 1 represents a road built to motorway or near motorway standards over its full length. This implies a 4 lane, dual carriageway structure with 3m wide breakdown lanes on the outer edges.

The terrain is steep and mountainous over the eastern half of the route. For a 6km section near Mt Tomah the road must follow a narrow ridge which requires the curve radii to be reduced to 100kph standard in order for the road to stay on the ridge.

A 1.29km long section of tunnel would be required under Mt Tomah to accommodate a four lane road. In the tunnel the road cross section is assumed to reduce to 4 lanes without breakdown lanes for economy. Twin tunnels are envisaged, one for each direction of travel. The existing highway could be used to maintain access to properties, including Mt Tomah Botanical Gardens, and as a bypass for vehicles normally prohibited in tunnels, such as those carrying flammable cargo.

Gradients are significant for loaded truck traffic on the existing road that has grades up to 13%. Option 1 limits gradients to 7% or less, except at one location with 8%, which is a significant improvement.

8.3.2 Alternative Alignments

Alternative alignments were assessed for several sections of the route. Trial design and costs were prepared for each of them, using the same design standards. Alternative sections can be compared between a few common points along the route.

The alternative sections are shown in Figure 8.2 and are as follows.

Lithgow Bypasses

Two possibilities exist to go around to the north of Lithgow:

- Southern route, new route leaving GWH at Marangaroo and climbing up to the Newnes Plateau.
- Northern route, new route leaving the Mudgee road (MR 55) near Wallerawang and climbing up to the Newnes Plateau by

Berambing – Bilpin Area

The existing road could be widened to 4 lanes, or alternatively a separate alignment could be used which would leave facilities along the existing road untouched. A new alignment would be roughly parallel to the existing road.

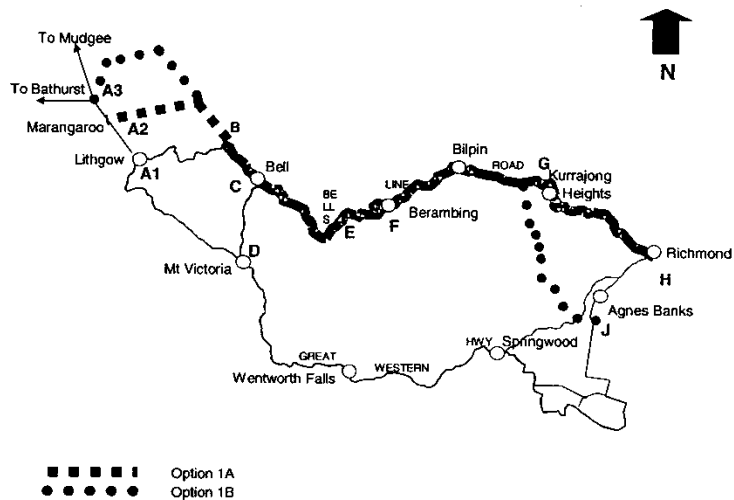


Figure 8.2: Diagram of Options 1A and 1B

Kurrjong Heights to Nepean River

The existing road up Bellbird Hill is too steep to be upgraded to the preferred standard. Two alternatives were considered:

- Alternative to Bellbird Hill involving a longer route to the south that avoids the S bends and permits flatter gradients for the steep sections. This route would still go through Kurrjong Heights township.
- An alternative route from a point west of Kurrjong Heights that runs south to near Bowen Mountain and crosses the Nepean River upstream of the Yarramundi Bridge. This route bypasses Kurrjong Heights township, Kurrjong and North Richmond.

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8.3.3 Costs

The MXRoad model provided a preliminary alignment and basic earthworks quantities for the various alternatives for Option 1. Lengths of large bridges were also estimated. Drawings of the alignment at 1:25,000 scale are given in a separate volume of A3 size drawings.

Costs were based on the basic quantities with allowances for standard construction features and finishes, safety, drainage, signage, lighting, environmental management and project management at representative rates.

Table 8.6 summarises costs for two complete routes using different alternative sections for the Lithgow bypass and the Kurrajong Heights – Nepean River section.

Table 8.6: Preliminary Costs for Option 1 Alternatives

| Section | | Option 1A | | | Option 1B | | |
|--|--------|-------------|--------------|---------------------|-------------|--------------|---------------------|
| | | length (m) | Cost \$ mill | Av rate \$/mill /km | length (m) | Cost \$ mill | Av rate \$/mill /km |
| Southern Lithgow bypass to Newnes Junction | A2 – B | 18.0 | 309 | 17.2 | | | |
| Northern Lithgow bypass to Newnes Junction | A3 – B | | | | 21.8 | 300 | 13.8 |
| Newnes Junction to Bell | B-C | 5.4 | 70 | 12.9 | 5.4 | 70 | 12.9 |
| Bell to Mt Tomah | C – E | 18.1 | 371 | 20.5 | 18.1 | 371 | 20.5 |
| Mt Tomah - Berambing, incl 1.3km tunnel | E - F | 3.1 | 227 | 73.6 | 3.1 | 227 | 73.6 |
| Berambing to Kurrajong Hts | F - G | 18.4 | 208 | 11.3 | 18.4 | 208 | 11.3 |
| Kurrajong Hts to Richmond | G - H | 19.1 | 275 | 14.4 | | | |
| Kurrajong Hts to Agnes Banks | G - J | | | | 18.1 | 339 | 18.7 |
| Total | | 82.0 | 1,459 | 17.8 | 84.8 | 1,514 | 17.8 |

To construct a freeway-standard link from Agnes Banks to the M2/Western Sydney Orbital at Blacktown would cost about \$260 million, excluding land, or a total of about \$1,770 million.

8.4 Option 2

Preliminary design results for Option 2 indicate that minimum design standards may need to be reduced to 70kph in order to retain the use of most of the existing road pavement. If higher standards were imposed, the length of reconstruction would increase substantially with associated high costs.