

Question on Notice

No. 907

Asked on 22 August 2023

MR T WATTS ASKED MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT AND MAIN ROADS AND MINISTER FOR DIGITAL SERVICES (HON M BAILEY)—

QUESTION:

With reference to the Toowoomba North South Transport Corridor—

Will the Minister advise (a) what six alternate routes were considered, (b) the outcomes of the environmental impact assessment undertaken, (c) what will the consultation process for directly impacted landowners be, (d) how will the fire risk be managed and (e) given public concern, will the Minister restart the consultation process, providing specific details of the actual corridor so that residents can see the whole alignment and where it intersects on roads, urban and residential areas?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for Toowoomba North for the question.

- a) I am advised the Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR) initially identified a study area over the north, south and west of Toowoomba city, including identifying major destinations and constraints within the study area. A route analysis was then undertaken, which identified many routes for investigation. These routes were then reduced to six main corridors – three south of the Toowoomba bypass and three north of the Toowoomba bypass.

The three options south of the Toowoomba bypass included:

1. the current option that is out for consultation
2. starting at the New England Highway and Drayton – Connection Road intersection; heading north-west to just east of Westbrook then connecting to the Toowoomba Bypass just south of the Wellcamp Airport and the industrial precinct
3. starting at the New England Highway and Sheppard Road intersection; heading north-west to east of Westbrook then joining Drayton – Connection Road to the Department of Primary Industries research and development facility and then north to the Toowoomba Bypass immediately east of the Regional Sports Precinct.

The three options north of the Toowoomba Bypass included:

1. the current option that is out for consultation
2. starting at the Toowoomba Bypass heading north-east to east of Gowrie Junction and north-east to the Highfields Road and Meringandan Road intersection followed by the current option to the north
3. the current option to the Gowrie – Glencoe Road and Gowrie Lilyvale Road intersection, then east to the New England Highway and Mitchell Road intersection.

- b) I am advised the environmental assessment identified that the proposed corridor did not impact on any South-East Queensland koala priority areas. TMR acknowledges that some segments of the 54-kilometre corridor could see the future migration of koalas. A review of environmental considerations identified that any future infrastructure investment in the corridor will be required to include additional koala survey and assessment to determine the feasibility and form of the infrastructure.
- c) The consultation process for potentially impacted landowners and the broader public is underway. TMR is engaging with community members through phone calls, emails, letterbox drops, online surveys and interactive maps, shopping centre displays and community drop-in sessions. TMR is receiving a large amount of feedback through these channels and to ensure community members have enough time to engage meaningfully with TMR, the consultation period has been extended to 13 October 2023.
- d) I am advised TMR has an advanced fire risk management approach that applies to all lands under its control. The risk management approach is delivered in conjunction with other landowners, local and state government. In the Toowoomba area, TMR has fully trained crews to support fire response. TMR utilises a range of techniques from hazard reduction burns (including cultural burns) to grazing and slashing. Fire risk is assessed annually and updated through the fire season to respond to emerging threats to the community.
- e) TMR's focus is on ensuring the privacy of those landowners that did, and still do, not wish for the details of their impact to be widely communicated. TMR respects this request for privacy as this is a difficult time for many potentially affected landowners. TMR has advised the consultation process is still progressing on this planning project, with the consultation phase extended to 13 October 2023 to ensure adequate time for input. More detailed information will be provided as the project progresses and once TMR has had the opportunity to work through the consultation process with potentially impacted landowners.