

10.1.2 Dongara-Geraldton-Northampton Route Planning Study

PROPONENT:	Main Roads WA
SITE:	Multiple lots in Narra Tarra, Yetna, White Peak, Oakajee & Howatharra localities
FILE REFERENCE:	204.16.07
PREVIOUS REFERENCE:	03/14-3, 09/15-10 & 12/17-4
DATE:	5 November 2020
AUTHOR:	Simon Lancaster, Deputy Chief Executive Officer

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

Ref	Title	Attached to Report	Under Separate Cover
10.1.2	Dongara to Northampton Alignment Study map	√	

DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST

Nil

BACKGROUND

Main Roads WA are planning a future road corridor between Dongara, Geraldton and Northampton to address long term freight requirements and alleviate pressure on existing roads, and are inviting comment upon their preferred alignment. This report recommends that Council support the alignment as it relates to the Shire of Chapman Valley.

COMMENT

A link to the relevant information on display on the Main Roads WA website is provided below:

<https://www.mainroads.wa.gov.au/projects-initiatives/projects/regional/dongara/>

In 1976 the State Government released the Geraldton Region Plan which identified a rail corridor linking the Narngulu industrial estate and Geraldton port with a proposed industrial estate and port at Oakajee, the alignment ran east of the Moresby Range and through the Wokatherra Gap.

In 1989 the State Government released the updated Geraldton Region Plan which maintained this proposed rail corridor.

The 1999 the State Government released the updated Geraldton Region Plan which identified the alignment as being a railway, road and services corridor noting that:

“Oakajee Railway, Road and Services Corridor

The alignment of the road, railway and services corridor between Narngulu and Oakajee is shown on the Structure Plan. The alignment is based on preliminary analysis by Westrail in consultation with the Department of Resources Development and local government. This corridor would provide the opportunity to develop a railway and accommodate services which may be required for the Oakajee industrial estate.

The Department of Resources Development is proceeding with investigation into a 250 to 480 metre wide multi-use services corridor to accommodate short, medium and longterm transport and service requirements.

The width of the corridor will be determined by the Minister for the Environment. An environmental assessment has been prepared for the corridor and provides for consideration of visual amenity issues such as the siting of power lines.” (Western Australian Planning Commission, 1999, Section 9.8.5, page 87)

In 2011 the State Government released the Greater Geraldton Structure Plan update to the Geraldton Region Plan that can be viewed at the following link:

<https://www.dplh.wa.gov.au/information-and-services/district-and-regional-planning/country-planning/mid-west/mid-west-regional-publications/greater-geraldton-structure-plan-2011>

This report identified the indicative alignment for the proposed Oakajee Narngulu Infrastructure Corridor ('ONIC') noting that:

“The current Oakajee Port and Rail alignment, the Oakajee-Narngulu Infrastructure Corridor and the Geraldton North South Highway alignments are included in the Greater Geraldton Structure Plan 2011. This reflects the progress in planning key future infrastructure projects since the previous structure plan.” (Western Australian Planning Commission, 2011, Section 3.9.1, page 12)

“Some of the infrastructure proposals identified are currently subject to further planning, such as Oakajee port and rail, Oakajee-Narngulu Infrastructure Corridor and the Geraldton North South Highway route. The timelines for the construction of the proposed infrastructure are subject to future demand and are dependant on final approvals being in place. While delivery of infrastructure projects is dependent on the commitment of funding by government, the planning of transport and infrastructure corridors remains important in supporting regional economic development.” (Western Australian Planning Commission, 2011, Section 3.9.2, page 12)

In 2014 the Department of Planning released the ONIC Draft Alignment Definition Report that can be viewed at the following link:

<https://www.dplh.wa.gov.au/information-and-services/district-and-regional-planning/country-planning/mid-west/oakajee-narngulu-infrastructure-corridor>

This report undertook more detailed investigations into the ONIC alignment, identifying a corridor required to be at least 230m wide, to accommodate road, rail and services utilities infrastructure.

In 2015 Main Roads WA released the draft Dongara to Northampton Corridor Alignment Selection Study that considered a range of alignment options to enable triple road-trains to travel south from their current termination point at Carnarvon to continue through to north of Perth. This strategic freight objective would require several realignments to bypass Northampton, Geraldton and Dongara and the study was tasked with identifying the final corridor.

Options 4, 5 & 6 related to the northern section between Northampton and Geraldton, and passed through the Shire of Chapman Valley, of these Option 6 was the ONIC alignment as identified in the 2011 Greater Geraldton Structure Plan.

Options 1, 2 & 3 related to the southern section between Geraldton and Dongara and were located within the Shire of Irwin and the City of Greater Geraldton.

Council resolved at its 16 September 2015 meeting as follows:

“That Council make submission to Main Roads WA regarding the Dongara to Northampton Alignment Selection Study as follows:

- 1 Council is supportive of Option 6 (i.e. the Oakajee-Narngulu Infrastructure Corridor alignment between Morrell Road and the North West Costal Highway).*
- 2 Council urges Main Roads WA and the Department of State Development to adopt the Option 6 section (i.e. the Oakajee-Narngulu Infrastructure Corridor alignment between Morrell Road and the North West Costal Highway) as Stage 1 for both land acquisition and construction as this will serve to immediately provide, in conjunction with Morrell Road, a short-term Geraldton Outer Bypass.*
- 3 That the land acquisition phase of the corridor project commence upon finalisation of the alignment definition phase, and not be delayed by identifying future road reservations in local government planning schemes as this will unnecessarily prolong the project and pass the financial burden of addressing claim for compensation onto the local government.”*

Preliminary feedback from Main Roads WA in 2017 indicated that it favoured Option 4 (an inland option running through Howatharra) and Council discussed this matter again at its 13 December 2017 meeting resolving as follows:

“That Council undertake the following actions:

- 1 Write directly to all landowners within the Shire of Chapman Valley that are directly impacted by, or adjoining, the Dongara to Northampton Corridor Alignment Selection Study alignment favoured by Main Roads WA and the Mid West Development Commission advising them of the study’s current status and the Shire’s alignment preference.*
- 2 Write to the City of Greater Geraldton, Shire of Irwin and Shire of Northampton to advise of the Shire of Chapman Valley’s actions in notifying impacted and adjoining landowners within its local government area, and inviting their consideration to do likewise.*
- 3 Write to the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (formerly Parks & Wildlife) enquiring as to their awareness that the alignment favoured by Main Roads WA and the Mid West Development Commission runs through 2 nature reserves under its management.*
- 4 Erect a sign on Nanson-Howatharra Road on the alignment favoured by Main Roads WA and the Mid West Development Commission advising of the study being undertaken and the lead agencies to contact for further information.*
- 5 Write to the Mid West Development Commission and request that it reconsider its support for the Option 4 alignment, noting that the Commission’s core role as defined by its own objectives is as follows...*
 - “• maximise job creation and improve career opportunities in the region;*
 - develop and broaden the economic base of the region;*
 - identify infrastructure services needed to promote economic and social development within the region;*
 - provide information and advice to promote business development within the region;*
 - seek to ensure that the general standard of government services and access to those services in the region is comparable to that which applies in the metropolitan area; and*
 - generally take steps to encourage, promote, facilitate and monitor the economic development in the region.*

...and that these objectives are best served by supporting Option 6 which promotes economic and social development within the Mid West region, and that support for an inland option which is alleged to provide the most efficient means to travel from one end of the Mid West region to the other, and bypasses Oakajee, is contrary to these Commission objectives.
- 6 Write to the Minister for Transport, Planning and Lands in thanks for the consideration of the Shire’s concerns in relation to the Dongara to Northampton Corridor Alignment Selection Study and the establishment of a Working Group to consider this study further.”*

As a summary, the Shire of Chapman Valley’s support in relation to Option 6 (i.e. the ONIC) was reached based upon the following:

- would impact on fewer landowners;
- impacted upon a lesser area of remnant vegetation (noting also that Options 4 & 5 would have run through 2 Conservation Nature Reserves);
- would impact upon fewer watercourses and tributaries;
- utilised existing road reserve where possible;
- less expensive to acquire;
- argument that Option 6 would be significantly more expensive to construct had not been provided, indeed the preliminary costings provided to the Shire indicated that Option 6 would be less expensive than Options 4 or 5, and costings relating to freight efficiency in support of Options 4 or 5 had not been provided;
- Option 6 was not significantly longer (possibly 5km at most);
- the majority of the Option 6 alignment between the Wokatherra Gap and the North West Coastal Highway had already been acquired by the State Government for the purposes of the Oakajee Industrial Estate Buffer;
- in the event that widening for additional passing lanes or dual carriageway was required the land either side of the Option 6 alignment was already under State Government ownership for a 10km section of Option 6 (from White Peak Road to Coronation Beach Road);

- the acquisition and construction of either Option 4 or 5 would not preclude the need for Option 6 to still be acquired and constructed to provide linkage between the Oakajee Port and Industrial Estate to the Narngulu Industrial Estate, Geraldton Port, iron ore mines and the wider heavy vehicle and rail network;
- Option 6 could form part of a staged construction of the overall corridor which would have more immediate cost and traffic flow advantages, Options 4 & 5 would not provide any linkage until constructed in their entirety as they are new alignments;
- Option 6 could resolve heavy vehicle traffic issues within Geraldton in a more timely manner than Options 4 & 5;
- Acquisition of Option 6 as part of this project had the accompanying benefit of providing greater certainty to potential investment and development in the Oakajee Industrial Estate that is currently isolated from rail, road and service corridors;
- Option 6 is along a general alignment that has been identified in planning documents since the 1970's and landowners who have purchased in vicinity of the alignment since that time would be expected to have given regard for this, Options 4 & 5 had not been previously suggested;
- Option 6 provided an improved means for residents of the inland and coastal sections of the Chapman Valley community to interact, Options 4 & 5 did not serve this function;
- Option 6/ONIC represented the final major piece of state acquisition for the Oakajee Mid West Development Project, with the overall aim being to establish an integrated port and industrial estate at Oakajee; supporting rail and infrastructure corridors to facilitate the development of the resources sector in the Mid West; and ensure the long-term prosperity of the region. Ensuring that the Dongara to Northampton Corridor alignment replicated the ONIC alignment was considered essential for the Oakajee Mid West Development Project. Without certainty and security over access into the Oakajee Port and Industrial Estate then the previous land acquisitions of the Oakajee Industrial Estate and buffer area were isolated and unworkable, and private enterprise would be unable to access the site which could lead to further incidents such as the socially divisive and unsuccessful application for Mining Tenement Miscellaneous Licence (for the purpose of transporting minerals) as previously lodged by Karara Mining Ltd, or provide an obstacle to potential project proponents (such as slurry pipeline or hydrogen proposals);
- Option 6 would also provide a strategic linkage for the Oakajee Port and Industrial Estate to the Narngulu Industrial Estate, Geraldton Port, iron ore mines to the south-east and north-east of Geraldton, and the wider heavy vehicle and rail network, and without it the Oakajee Industrial Estate was considered unlikely to develop to any significant level in the near future. Further to this, strategic industrial projects that do not require rail or port access could be encouraged to establish at the Oakajee site, rather than be lost to the Mid West region due to the Narngulu Industrial Estate being constrained by its cumulative emissions modelling. It might also be considered that logistics, transport, regional waste, energy and general industrial uses might consider the Oakajee Industrial Estate as a viable location were Option 6/ONIC to be in place and providing suitable road connection;
- the acquisition of Option 6/ONIC at the earliest possible stage would remove uncertainty for both landowners and private enterprise, as well as potential cost savings to the State Government. The acquisition of Option 6/ONIC would also remove statutory planning (in regards to development application assessment) and financial issues (in defending development decisions) for local government whereby landowners of private land may seek to lodge applications for development upon the alignment;
- in the event that Main Roads WA deem that the Dongara to Northampton Corridor requires construction of new sections of alignment to the immediate west of the existing North West Coastal Highway between Oakajee and Northampton (rather than widening/upgrade of the existing highway alignment) then this would resolve existing traffic safety concerns at the Howatharra and Isseka townsites for resident's vehicles exiting/entering from their properties by creating a slip-road arrangement upon the existing highway alignment.

On 25 September 2020 the Minister for Transport and Planning announced Main Roads WA's preferred alignment and this was Option 6 for the northern section, this being the alignment supported by the Shires of Chapman Valley and Northampton, and Option 1 for the southern section.

Main Roads WA are now inviting comment from Council upon the preferred corridor for the Dongara-Geraldton-Northampton Route Planning Study prior to 29 January 2021.

Council has previously confined its comment to the northern section of the proposed Dongara-Geraldton-Northampton Route Planning Study recognising that this section lies within the Shire of Chapman Valley over which it has a thorough knowledge of the planning history, transport issues, on-ground constraints and the impacted community.

The staff recommendation to Council therefore maintains this previous position, recommending that Council's comment again be confined to the northern section of the Dongara-Geraldton-Northampton Route Planning Study, and that comment in relation to the southern section would be more appropriately addressed by Main Roads WA in consultation with the Shire of Irwin and City of Greater Geraldton and other relevant parties.

STATUTORY ENVIRONMENT

The preferred corridor for the Dongara-Geraldton-Northampton Route Planning Study is not identified within the Shire of Chapman Valley Local Planning Scheme No.3, excepting the already operating sections of the North West Coastal Highway and Morell Road which are zoned 'Primary Distributor Road'.

It is not recommended that Council initiate any amendments ('rezonings') to its Scheme to recognise the corridor identified by the Dongara-Geraldton-Northampton Route Planning Study as a public purpose zoning, until, at a minimum, a formal commitment has been made by the State Government for the funding and acquisition of the alignment, and more preferably until the alignment has been acquired by the State Government and the zoning map can then correlate to the created cadastral boundaries. The reasoning behind this recommendation being that where privately owned land is zoned for an exclusively public purpose then the effected landowner can make a claim for compensation to the local government under Section 174 of the *Planning and Development Act 2005*.

POLICY/PROCEDURE IMPLICATIONS

Shire of Chapman Valley Local Planning Policy 16.190 'Development adjacent to the proposed Oakajee to Tallering Peak and Oakajee to Narngulu Rail Corridors' seeks to prevent incompatible development in vicinity to the ONIC which also forms the section of Main Roads WA's Dongara-Geraldton-Northampton Route Planning Study preferred alignment that runs through the Shire of Chapman Valley.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The FAQ section for the Dongara-Geraldton-Northampton Route Planning Study on the Main Roads WA website states that:

"This study is a high-level planning study ONLY. There is currently no funding available for detailed design or construction. Typically, funding for land acquisition only becomes available when a project is funded for construction by government. In exceptional circumstances, Main Roads may consider early acquisition but this will be considered on a case by case basis."

<https://www.mysaytransport.wa.gov.au/dongara-geraldton-northampton/widgets/251226/faqs#69244>

The State Budget that was announced in May 2015 included an allocation of \$10.3 million to commence compulsory land acquisition for the ONIC, this amount was later withdrawn.

The Shire of Chapman Valley has repeatedly expressed the view that whilst the purpose of the Dongara-Geraldton-Northampton Route Planning Study is to identify a preferred corridor that will have wider local, regional and state benefit, that the upshot of the study will be to 'draw a line on a map'. It is therefore essential that impacted landowners should not be left in limbo, and should be treated fairly through an immediately following land acquisition process, which provides a clear understanding as to the acquisition timeframe, the valuation/negotiation process and which state government agency is responsible for the acquisition process (with it remaining unclear for the ONIC section whether Main Roads WA, the Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science & Industry, or the Department of Planning will be responsible for acquisition in part or whole).

Long Term Financial Plan (LTFP):

The Shire of Chapman Valley Long Term Financial Plan was endorsed by Council at its 19 July 2017 meeting, given that Council is a commenting authority and not a decision making/delivery authority in relation to the Dongara-Geraldton-

Northampton Route Planning Study, it is not considered that this project would have impact upon the Shire's Long Term Financial Plan.

STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

The Dongara-Geraldton-Northampton Route Planning Study is driven by state freight network requirements and is therefore at a state planning level in that it is looking to enable triple road trains to get from one end of the Mid West region to the other. However, the study does also assist in resolving regional and local planning issues relating to current heavy vehicle traffic travelling through Northampton and Geraldton by creating an outer bypass.

The Dongara-Geraldton-Northampton Route Planning Study also addresses a key Mid West regional planning issue given that a section of Main Roads WA's preferred corridor would create the ONIC.

The ONIC is one component of the broader Oakajee Mid West Development Project which seeks to establish an integrated port and industrial estate at Oakajee; and supporting rail and infrastructure corridors to facilitate the development of the resources sector in the Mid West; and ensure the long-term prosperity of the region.

A road and rail bypass east of the Moresby Range and through the Wokatherra Gap around Geraldton has been identified in a series of State Government planning studies dating back to the 1970's, and the ONIC is also recognised in the following planning documents relevant to the Shire of Chapman Valley:

- Shire of Chapman Valley Local Planning Strategy (2008) prepared by the Shire of Chapman Valley.
- Moresby Range Management Strategy (2009) prepared by the Department of Planning;
- Moresby Range Management Plan (2010) prepared jointly by the Shire of Chapman Valley and City of Greater Geraldton;
- Oakajee Industrial Estate Structure Plan (2011) prepared by Development WA.

Strategic Community Plan/Corporate Business Plan:

The Shire of Chapman Valley Strategic Community Plan was endorsed by Council at its 15 November 2017 meeting and the "need for wider and safer roads" was raised by the community as a key challenge. The Strategic Community Plan also identifies "Bypass through White Peak Road reserve (ONIC) for improved safety and beach access" as a specific priority and aspiration in which the Shire has a role to "act on opportunity" and "advocacy".

CONSULTATION

In 2015 Main Roads WA undertook initial consultation for the Dongara to Northampton Corridor Alignment Selection Study including announcements, public displays and letter mail-outs.

Since that time Main Roads WA have met with Council, Shire of Chapman Valley landowners and the community group that was formed in response to this project at regular intervals.

Main Roads WA are now inviting comment upon the preferred corridor from 25 September 2020 until 29 January 2021

RISK ASSESSMENT

Measures of Consequence							
Rating (Level)	Health	Financial Impact	Service Interruption	Compliance	Reputational	Property	Environment
Insignificant (1)	Negligible injuries	Less than \$1,000	No material service interruption	No noticeable regulatory or statutory impact	Unsubstantiated, low impact, low profile or 'no news' item	Inconsequential or no damage.	Contained, reversible impact managed by on site response

VOTING REQUIREMENTS

Simple majority required

COUNCIL RESOLUTION/STAFF RECOMMENDATION

MOVED: Cr. Forth

SECONDED: Cr. Batten

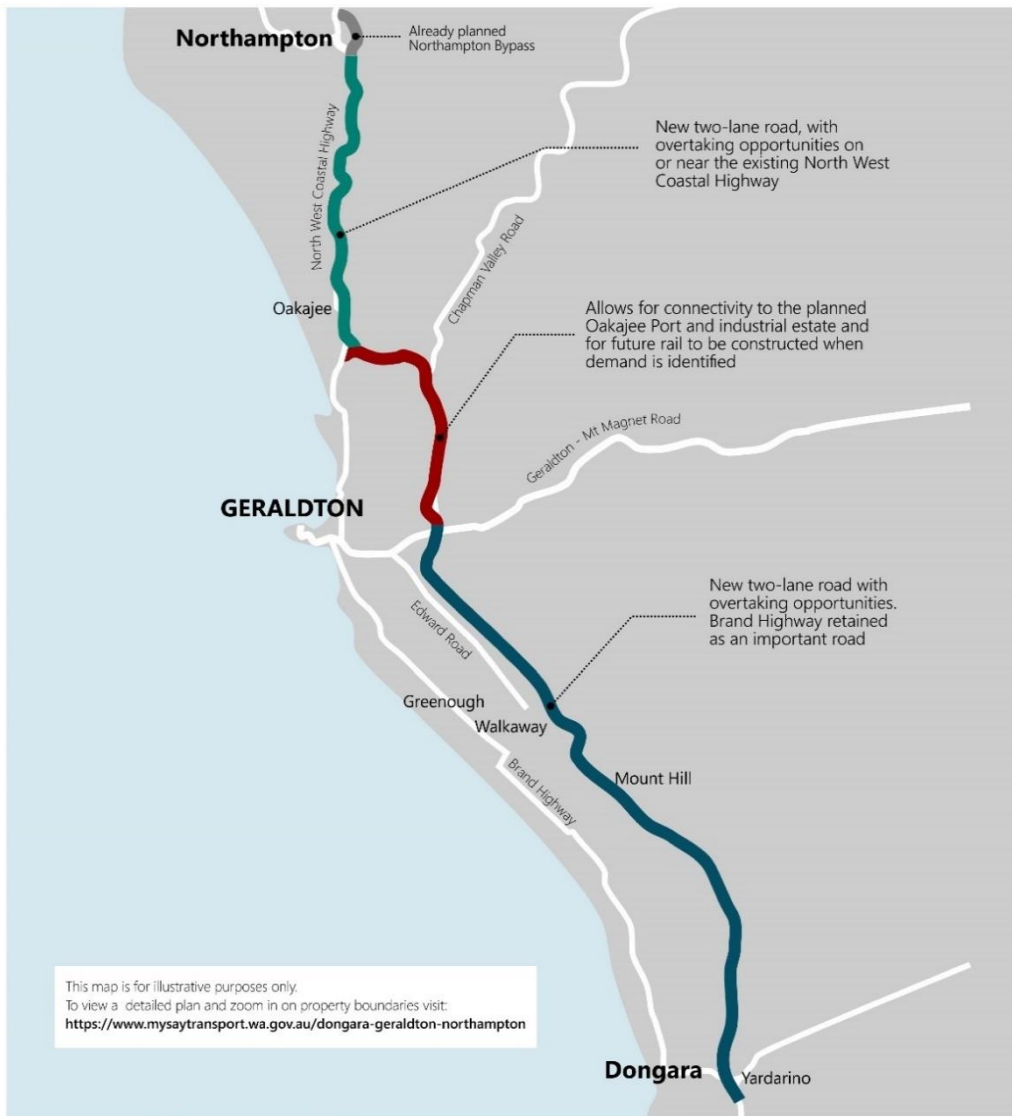
That Council:

- 1 Advise Main Roads WA that it supports the alignment of the Dongara-Geraldton-Northampton Route Planning Study as it relates to the Shire of Chapman Valley.
- 2 Request that the State Government upon finalisation of its preferred corridor proceed to the final alignment definition and land acquisition stages so that impacted landowners are provided with certainty on the valuation/negotiation process and associated timeframe.
- 3 Request that the State Government as part of the land acquisition process for the Dongara-Geraldton-Northampton Route purchase the entire road, rail and services corridor width relating to the Oakajee-Narngulu Infrastructure Corridor section to resolve this matter for landowners.

Voting F5/A0

CARRIED

Minute Reference: 11/20-05



Dongara to Geraldton

A new inland corridor starting near the Brand Highway / Midlands Road intersection which links up with the current Arthur Road alignment to the south of Geraldton. Further investigations will focus on ways to minimise impacts on existing lifestyle and heritage properties, manage floodplain interactions and consider suitable local road connections.

Central link

The northern link and southern options are linked by proposed new road infrastructure within the already planned Oakajee Narngulu Infrastructure Corridor (ONIC). Further investigations will focus on the road alignment in isolation from planned future rail, without precluding the rail option. This allows flexibility in planning and has no additional impact on landowners within the ONIC.

Geraldton to Northampton

A new road is proposed within a wider corridor near the existing North West Coastal Highway. Minor sections of the existing highway would be retained as local service roads. This corridor avoids major impacts on large farming properties and has the potential to be staged. Further investigations will consider management of services and access to properties. This route allows for Northampton Bypass to be delivered as an independent stage.