BIG BUILD ROADS

What you've said

Watson Street Interchange

DECEMBER 2023

Community and Business Consultation Summary

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Australian Government

VICTORIA
State Government

We're progressing planning for an upgrade to the Watson Street Interchange.

As part of our planning, we're investigating solutions to:

– provide direct access off the freeway for northbound travelling vehicles and on the freeway for southbound travelling vehicles
– cater for population growth and increased vehicle movements
– reduce congestion and improve travel times
– improve road safety
– improve accessibility for residents living in Wallan East to the Wallan township.

Consultation

From 17 July and 6 August, we asked for community and business feedback to help inform our planning and shape the development of design options for the upgrade to the Watson Street Interchange. Thank you to everyone who took the time to provide feedback.

4,114
UNIQUE VISITORS TO THE ENGAGE VICTORIA WEBPAGE

876
SURVEYS COMPLETED

112
MAP PINS PLACED ON THE INTERACTIVE MAP

100,622
REACHED VIA SOCIAL MEDIA ADVERTISING

88
COMMUNITY MEMBERS SPOKEN WITH AT THE TWO COMMUNITY POP-UP INFORMATION SESSIONS

What you've said

Feedback has provided important local insights, helped us understand how people currently use the interchange as well as Watson Street and the surrounding road network. People also shared their views on safety, traffic flow and what we should consider in our planning. We also heard how businesses operate and use the interchange and the local road network.

It will be fantastic to not have Watson Street and the Northern Highway so congested in the mornings to leave Wallan.

With the amount of new housing going up in the area, this is a must.

The addition of a full diamond interchange at Watson Street and Hume Freeway in Wallan should be of the highest priority. The population of Wallan has grown exponentially in recent years, and it's important that local infrastructure is upgraded to accommodate this growth.

ℹ Key themes

Community survey

98% of community respondents support an upgrade of the Watson Street Interchange and **98%** also supported improvements to Watson Street.

– **82%** of respondents rate the existing Watson Street Interchange as poor or very poor, **13%** as fair and **5%** as good or very good.

– **87%** of respondents experience traffic congestion when accessing the Hume Freeway at the Watson Street Interchange.

– When asked what improvements they would like to see to Watson Street the majority of respondents said improved road surface and line markings.

– **44%** of respondents said they feel unsafe or very unsafe when accessing the Watson Street Interchange, **39%** feel neither safe or unsafe and **17%** feel safe or very safe.

– **46%** of respondents rate the existing walking and cycling conditions in the area as poor or very poor, **34%** as fair and **20%** as very good or good.

– When asked what walking and cycling improvements we should consider in our planning (multiple choice), respondents said improving off-road walking and cycling paths (**29%**), upgrading the existing pedestrian overpass (**26%**), installing signalised pedestrian crossing (**16%**), installing a pedestrian underpass (13%), installing on-road cycling facilities (**11%**) and **5%** said other.

– When asked what we should consider in our planning from an environmental, landscaping and streetscaping perspective (multiple choice), respondents said landscaping, including planting along the roadside (**28%**), minimising impacts to wildlife (**26%**), minimising vegetation and tree removal (**17%**), streetscaping and urban design including public art (**12%**), recognition of cultural heritage (**11%**) and other (**6%**).

Business survey

94% of business respondents support an upgrade of the Watson Street Interchange and **88%** support improvements to Watson Street.

– **76%** of respondents think that an upgrade to the Watson Street Interchange would have a positive impact long term on their business and its operations.

– **71%** of respondents rate the existing travel conditions at the Watson Street Interchange as poor or very poor, **18%** as fair and **11%** as very good or good.

– When asked if the business has any concerns about the Watson Street Interchange (multiple choice), respondents said traffic flow (**24%**), safety (**19%**), variability in travel time (**19%**), poor lighting (**16%**), road user behaviour (**11%**) and poor signage (**11%**).

Planning timeline

February 2019

Australian Government announced $50 million of funding for upgrades to the Hume Freeway between the M80 Ring Road and Lithgow Street in Beveridge

November 2022

Victorian Government announced up to $130 million in funding, inclusive of the 2019 Australian Government contribution

Early 2023

Planning commenced including the development of a business case

17 July to 6 August 2023

Community and business engagement program

2023 to 2024

Business case planning and development

Early 2024

Business case complete

Interactive map and social media feedback

– Strong support to upgrade the Watson Street Interchange and Watson Street as the current traffic conditions are very poor (primary concerns are journey reliability and condition of the road).

– Additional entry and exit ramps at the Watson Street Interchange are needed.

– Consideration needs to be given to improving the road surface, upgrading lighting and providing adequate drainage on Watson Street.

– Requests for walking and cycling improvements to be included as part of the upgrade.

Next steps

Feedback received is being used to inform our planning and the development of a business case. The business case is currently being developed and will be complete in early 2024.

We will continue to provide the community with updates and information as our planning work progresses.