



Heavytree Gap Planning Project

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is this project about?

The Heavitree Gap Planning Project is about planning for the upgrade and duplication of the Stuart Highway through Heavitree Gap. The project will investigate options for improving traffic flow through the Gap for all road users including cars, trucks, bicycles and pedestrians.

Why is the Government doing this? The Gap is not that busy and doesn't flood very often. Aren't there other more important projects to work on?

While the existing road is sufficient to cope with current traffic demand, it is important to undertake forward planning so that when the need arises, a viable, well considered design is available for implementation.

In 2016, the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics undertook transport modelling to predict future traffic conditions for Alice Springs in 10 and 20 years.¹ The study revealed that additional lanes will be required to some sections of the road network in order to maintain a safe and efficient network.² This includes duplicating the Stuart Highway through Heavitree Gap.

Where will the road be built?

It is too early to predict what the preferred design option will be, including where or how it may be built.

This long-term planning study will look at the preferred options to increase the capacity of the Stuart Highway through Heavitree Gap. This project is about working with the community on ideas that might be viable to widen the road, when the need arises.

Are you going to build an overpass or a tunnel?

A number of design options will be considered as part of this planning study, in consultation with the Alice Springs community. Heavitree Gap is a unique site whereby it provides passage through a narrow gap in the MacDonnell Ranges for transport (national rail and highway), utilities, pedestrians and the Todd River. It is highly constrained and as such, any design options will need to carefully consider environmental and cultural heritage of the surrounding area.

Throughout the course of the planning study, a range of engineering solutions will be considered and put to the community for public input and comment.

If they build an overpass how big will it be?

It is too early to predict what type of design solution may be adopted and possible dimension.

How will the project be funded?

This planning project is fully funded by the Northern Territory Government. The final cost for future work will depend on the option identified as the preferred design solution.

¹ This analysis was based on a medium growth scenario identified in the 2009 *Alice Springs Land Use Study*.

² 2016 *Alice Springs Regional Traffic*, internal report to the Department of Transport, Jacobs, September 2016.

A pedestrian ramp was built in Alice Springs and it was found to be dangerous and was removed. Will this be another project like that?

No. This is a planning study and the preferred option will be developed in consultation with the Alice Springs community. This will be achieved with extensive stakeholder engagement to identify the needs of all road users including cyclists, motorists and pedestrians. Engaging early with key stakeholder groups and the wider Alice Springs community will help to make sure that the design solution is suitable and sustainable.

The Department and engineering consultant SMEC will consult with the Alice Springs Town Council, Alice Springs Cycle Club, Tangentyere Council, residents, nearby businesses and Town Camps and other stakeholders.

How will people walk safely across the road if it is bigger and wider?

A key objective of the planning study is to ensure that the preferred design solution is suitable for the needs of all road users, including pedestrians, cyclists, cars and heavy vehicles. Their needs will be factored into the consideration of design options.

When will the construction take place?

Traffic modelling shows that the road through the gap may need to be double the size by 2025 to allow for the increase in traffic. It is important to recognise that this may change with shifts in the social and economic environment. This may also influence the date of construction. At this stage, planning for the project is for concept designs only. Construction will occur in the long term, when the need arises.

Surrounding Environment

Are you going to excavate the Gap, MacDonnell Ranges or the River to make the road wider?

There is no intention to excavate the Gap, MacDonnell Ranges or the River. The preferred design solutions will be limited to the project area where existing infrastructure lies. The project is guided by the following objectives:

- A viable infrastructure solution for the future duplication of the Stuart Highway through the Gap, given all the constraints;
- An all-weather connection through the Gap to cater for the future needs of all road users (eg heavy vehicles, pedestrians, cyclists, cars etc);
- A solution that achieves improved freight productivity, road safety, travel efficiency and amenity;
- Infrastructure solution that is aesthetically sympathetic to the MacDonnell Ranges, Todd River and the natural surrounds of the Gap;
- No further constriction to the Todd River

Until a preferred design solution is proposed, it is too early to determine what works will be required.

What will you do to maintain the sacred sites and environmental qualities in the Gap?

Archaeological investigations will be undertaken to identify any remnant items or areas of significance within the study area for removal or protection.

The Department will work with the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority to identify and protect sacred sites through its statutory functions under the Sacred Sites Act (NT). The Department will also work with Alice Springs organisations and community members to identify areas of significance close to Heavitree Gap as part of this planning study.

Until a preferred design solution has been identified, it is too early to make an assessment about the potential environmental and cultural impacts of a proposed infrastructure project. Once a design solution is identified and concept plans are developed, the Department would then follow administrative procedures governed by the Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority.

Will you be resuming private land for the project?

No. The land in the immediate vicinity of Heavitree Gap is zoned as main road, railway and conservation and is classified as crown land.

Will there be any roads closed as a result of the project?

Not as a result of this planning study.

Are you going to cut trees down in the Gap or the River to make the road wider?

Until a preferred design solution is proposed, it is too early to determine if there will be any trees that will be identified for removal or relocated.

Construction

When will construction work start on the project?

This is a planning project for the development of concept designs only. Construction will occur in the long term, when the need arises.

Cyclists + Pedestrians

Will there be any paths for pedestrians and cyclists?

A key objective of the planning study is to ensure that the preferred design solution is suitable for the needs of all road users, including pedestrians, cyclists, cars and heavy vehicles. Their needs will be factored into the consideration of design options.

How will you make the road safe for pedestrians and cyclists?

The department will also consult with community members and organisations to ensure that a safe design solution is identified for all road users, including pedestrians and cyclists.

The project team are guided by a range of standards and guidelines published by Austroads. This includes the *Guide to Road Design Part 6A: Paths for Walking and Cycling* which provides guidance on the design of paths for safe and efficient walking and cycling, both within the road corridor and outside it.

In a safe road system, suitable road infrastructure is one factor that keeps road users safe. Road users must also act in a way that does not compromise their own and other's safety. The department has, in the past, delivered road safety education programs specific to community groups where a change in road behaviour is required. This can be implemented if and when the need arises.

Intersections

Will there be any changes to existing intersections in the design options?

Until a preferred design solution is proposed, it is too early to determine if there will be any changes to existing intersections.

Consultation process

Will you be consulting with the traditional owners of the Gap?

Yes. Consultation is planned with Traditional Owners.

How can I have my say on the project?

There are several ways you can be involved.

Visit one of our displays stalls at Alice Plaza or Yeperenye Shopping Centre. Check our website for dates and times.

Fill in our interactive online survey at haveyoursay.nt.gov.au.

Email projects.tipd@nt.gov.au with your thoughts or questions about the project. Email submissions are welcome at any time throughout the duration of the consultation process.

Call us on 08 8924 7118 to speak with the Stakeholder Engagement Manager.

The project team will also be meeting with key stakeholders as part of the planning for this project, including Alice Springs Town Council, Tangentyere Council, Alice Springs Flood Mitigation Committee and Town Camps.

After I have filled in the survey or sent an email, what will be the process from here?

Your submission will be reviewed by the project team and considered as part of the planning for this project. Survey responses will be collated and analysed as part of the Stakeholder Engagement Report. Submissions made by email will also be included in the Report. A final report on stakeholder engagement will be published at dipl.nt.gov.au.

More questions?

You can submit your questions via email to projects.TIPD@nt.gov.au

You can also speak with a representative of the project team by contacting the Stakeholder Engagement Manager, Casey Lovelock on **08 8924 7118**.

Check haveyoursay.nt.gov.au for more information.

