

Moruya Bypass Action Group Presentation to the Tuross Head Progress Association

Thursday 2nd June 2022

Who are we?

- MBAG formed in response to the announcement of the preferred bypass route by T4NSW in May 2021
- **diverse members of the Moruya community** who came together because we were concerned about the processes involved in the selection of the preferred bypass route and its impacts on productive farmland, local properties and businesses, the environment and the visual character of the Moruya and its **beautiful riverflats**.
- we believe that there has been a lack of transparency and genuine community consultation by T4NSW in selecting their preferred bypass route.

Some background

- the first anyone heard about the Moruya bypass was when Andrew Constance announced it during his election launch at Riverside Park in *March 2019*
- we heard nothing more until *March 2020* immediately after the black summer bushfires and when we had gone into lockdown with the arrival of COVID 19
- T4NSW held their first community consultation entirely on-line, there was no information about what was being proposed and no preferred corridor so most people were unaware of it. T4NSW received fewer than 150 responses.
- in *May 2021* T4NSW released a 100 page **Moruya Bypass Strategic Corridor Options Report** which was only available on-line. It described **5 shortlisted bypass options** and concluded by identifying T4NSW's preferred **Orange option**. Information about how the various route options were chosen and a detailed justification for the preferred option were not provided.
- the community had 1 weeks notice about the consultation sessions (2 information sessions and 2 information stalls) and were given 4 weeks to respond to the Strategic Corridor Options Report. The preferred bypass route was presented as a 'fait accompli' and most people felt it was a 'done deal'.
- in *July 2021* T4NSW began contacting landholders along their preferred Orange route to negotiate alignments through their properties and property acquisition.

What we did

- we wrote to T4NSW seeking more information about who was involved in the workshops to select the preferred Orange route and what methods were used to compare the short listed options and arrive at the preferred route.
- T4NSW granted us a 2 week extension and released a Frequently Asked Questions document which did not adequately answer our questions or provide the information we sought but which revealed that only one of their workshops included community representatives who were required to sign a confidentiality agreement before participating.
- we made a detailed submission to T4NSW noting that no technical assessments or costings had been undertaken to compare the short-listed options and that their preferred Orange route was chosen based on a very questionable 'values' assessment. We also noted that only 1 of the 5 workshops they held included community members and this consisted of 3 people who were not necessarily representative of our community. We again asked for additional information to be released to answer our questions and those of our members.
- we then wrote to Andrew Constance as our local member and Transport Minister, Paul Toole as the Minister for Regional Transport, T4NSW's Regional Director South East, Barnaby Joyce as the Deputy PM and Federal Infrastructure Minister and Fiona Phillips as our Federal member expressing our concerns.

- we prepared an amendment to a NOM being put to Council on the Moruya bypass requesting they write to T4NSW seeking the establishment of an independent co-design committee for the bypass which was passed unanimously.
- we started a petition which now has over 900 signatures.
- we have written newspaper articles, given radio interviews, set up information stalls at local markets, distributed leaflets and conducted a survey of local businesses which showed that 80% do not support T4NSW's preferred Orange route.

The preferred Orange route

- is an 8 km long, 5 m high **concrete land bridge** supported by piers every 35m.
- it originally began at the Moruya Industrial Estate (3 kms north of Moruya) crossed the Moruya River 2½ kms east of the town, and re-connected with the highway near Mountain View Road (3 kms south of Moruya).
- no on or off ramps are planned, so Moruya will be completely bypassed by tourists and travellers.
- we are particularly concerned that the preferred route does not provide direct access to the new Eurobodalla Hospital. In order to deliver patients to the new hospital from the north, where the largest population centres and patient numbers occur, the preferred route will require emergency vehicles to drive 3 kms past Moruya, then turn and drive 1.5 kms back towards the north, before finally turning into the hospital across a stream of southbound traffic from town.

A better alternative

- the people of Moruya have long spoken about a bypass but what they expected was a **shorter bypass** that begins at Larry's Mountain Rd, continues along existing paper roads and ends just south of Moruya TAFE.
- we believe that **Option E** on page 71 of T4NSW's Options Report is a better choice than the Orange route. It is only 4 kms long and starts just south of Larrys Mountain Road, crossing the Moruya River at the far end of Riverside Park and passing east of Moruya TAFE to join the Princes Highway just south of Bergalia St near the new hospital site.
- this route impacts fewer properties and agricultural land than the Orange route, it will also serve local businesses better because it is closer to town and will require less clearing and disruption to our fragile environment on the riverflats and surrounding hills.
- it meets all of the criteria that the Orange route does and outperforms it in terms of direct access to the new Eurobodalla hospital from the north and cost.
- it was short-listed by T4NSW who moved the start north to Shelley Road, and renamed it the Purple option.

The latest

- we have been waiting since July last year for T4NSW to release their promised consultation report summarising the outcomes of the second round of community consultation. During this time we met with politicians from both sides of parliament to raise our concerns and provided questions about the bypass for Justin Field MLC to put to the Minister for Regional Transport in Budget Estimates.
- finally at the end of last year, we received a commitment from T4NSW that they would consult more fully with the community and release the information we had been asking for about the selection process for the preferred bypass route.
- at the beginning of April T4NSW released their **Strategic Investigation and Design Workshops Report** documenting technical information and scoring for the shortlisted bypass routes.
- later that month they released further technical reports on noise, flooding and the environment and announced that they were seeking feedback on **3 shortlisted bypass corridors** – the Orange, Purple and Yellow routes.

- the Orange route now starts about 1 km north of the Moruya Industrial Estate near Percy Davis Drive and ends at Donnelly Road nearly 1 km south of Noads Drive.
- the Purple route also starts further north past the industrial estate
- the Yellow route is the longest and skirts Malabar Lagoon crossing the river near the Granite Quarry.
- 3 information sessions were organised on Noise/Traffic, Biodiversity/Landscape and Flooding and T4NSW have attended SAGE markets and Moruya Country Markets and will be at the Batehaven Markets next Sunday.
- T4NSW has also set up a Flood Focus group comprising technical consultants and community members. MBAG is represented on this group.
- feedback can be provided through an online survey and map and the closing date for submissions is 13 June (see handout or go to the MBAG website).
- we have read the technical reports, attended the information sessions and market stalls and are represented on the Flood Focus Group. On the basis of this, we will be preparing a submission and circulating it to our members as well as posting it on our website.

Conclusion

- we support the **Purple route** over the Orange and Yellow routes because it is the shortest and least destructive route that goes directly to the new Eurobodalla hospital and will have the least direct impact on people and property, productive agricultural land, the environment and local businesses. It is also less costly and uses fewer resources.
- However, if you believe that Moruya does not need a bypass at this time, please let Transport for NSW know. Many people are telling us that there are other priorities for our area right now, including the new Regional Hospital, bushfire recovery and fixing known blackspots as well as the road surface on the Princes Highway south to the border.
- we will only get one chance with a major project like this, so we need to make sure that T4NSW invests the time and resources to get it right. **Our town and our community deserve no less.**