



ROADS

WATSON STREET UPGRADE/HUME FREEWAY DIAMOND INTERCHANGE, AND NORTHERN HIGHWAY CAPACITY IMPROVEMENTS – WALLAN

Mitchell Shire Council is seeking a commitment from the State and Federal Governments to accelerate and fund the urgent construction of the interchange to the Hume Freeway including duplication and upgrades to Watson Street, and capacity improvements to the Northern Highway in Wallan.

THE ASK

For the Federal Government to partner with the Mitchell Shire and the State Government to urgently construct the southern orientated freeway on/off ramps at Watson Street to create a full diamond interchange with the Hume Freeway, complete the duplication and upgrades of Watson Street between Wallara Waters Boulevard and the Northern Highway in Wallan, and complete capacity improvements to the Northern Highway between the Hume Freeway and Watson Street, Wallan.

This project is expected to cost more than \$135 million.

THE ASK CONSISTS OF TWO PARTS:

1. STATE GOVERNMENT

To accelerate this significant infrastructure project as an immediate priority to ensure construction is completed before the nearby clay quarry opens.

2. STATE AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Provide the necessary funding to deliver this project as an immediate priority to meet growing demands and ease current pressure on the road network.

THE BENEFITS

The construction of a full diamond interchange at Watson Street will allow Mitchell Shire residents, tourists, businesses, and commuters direct access off the Hume Freeway when travelling to and from the southern part of the municipality. The inclusion of proposed shared pathways will provide a significant improvement for connecting pedestrians and cyclists to the Wallan Railway Station and Wallan East.

This project is a key element to providing greater accessibility and liveability to residents living in Wallan East, currently separated from the Wallan township due to being located on the eastern side of the Hume Freeway. The completion of the full diamond interchange will ensure better freight connectivity between the Hume Freeway and industrial estates located in Wallan East, assisting to reduce heavy vehicle use along High Street in Wallan.

The duplication of the Northern Highway from the Hume Freeway to Watson Street in Wallan complements the interchange, duplication and upgrades to Watson Street. It will allow improved access for Mitchell Shire residents when travelling from both the north and south. It will also facilitate the movements of traffic travelling through Wallan, particularly pending the construction of the Wallan Bypass.

Key benefits from the construction of this project are:

- > Alleviating growth pressures on Melbourne – connecting the northern growth corridor and beyond
- > Communities that are healthier, more vibrant and connected – better quality of life
- > Improved retention of economic wealth within local communities – vibrant town centres
- > Improved freight connectivity and efficiency - important national freight and commercial link
- > Free flow of traffic on the Hume Freeway



ROADS

WATSON STREET UPGRADE AND HUME FREEWAY DIAMOND INTERCHANGE – WALLAN

CURRENT SITUATION

Due to an increase in population growth and industry development in the Shire this has resulted in these major roads being unable to cope with current traffic volumes. The bottlenecks experienced along the Hume Freeway (traffic is banked up on the Hume Freeway) and Northern Highway impose long and frustrating commute times, serious safety concerns, traffic congestion, social isolation and costly delays for those travelling locally and long distance.

As an Interface Council incorporating both parts of metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria, Mitchell Shire has a range of infrastructure needs required to support its growing communities.

The Shire's population is expected to grow substantially over the next 25-30 years to over 270,000¹. This population growth is placing enormous pressure on the existing road network infrastructure throughout Mitchell Shire.

Wallan has a current population of approximately 13,000 people and is expected to grow to over 50,000² people within the next 25-30 years. Currently, residents experience difficulties travelling to Wallan from the south along the Hume Freeway as they must exit onto the Northern Highway to enter the township. The Northern Highway is not duplicated, and significant traffic delays and banking of traffic occurs at the exit from the Hume Freeway to the Northern Highway.

The significant growth in and around Wallan is already putting pressure on the current road network, posing serious safety risks to road uses. Our communities are increasingly concerned by traffic congestion already experiencing long commute times and frustrations in planning daily life journeys to be able to better participate in work, leisure, and family activities.

These issues will be further exacerbated once the clay quarry at 2330 Epping-Kilmore Road in Wallan is operating. There is serious concern that the current road network is not capable to absorb the increase in the volume of heavy vehicle trucks and traffic that will be created by the quarry.

Council is grateful to the State Government for its commitment to funding a business case, which is now complete. Council acknowledges the work to date by VicRoads to ensure the necessary project planning has been undertaken.

This project is ready to progress to the next stage requiring it to now be brought forward as a priority and completed before the quarry opens.

1. Mitchell Shire Council, "About Mitchell Shire", Accessed 12 February, 2019, www.mitchellshire.vic.gov.au/about-council/about-mitchell-shire.

2. Mitchell Shire Council, Wallan Structure Plan Executive Summary – March 2015 Modified (Amendment C108 – December 2015), Broadford: 2015. 6.