

**SUBJECT: LMM 28/05/19 - LOWER HUNTER FREIGHT CORRIDOR
PRIORITISATION**

MOTION

That City of Newcastle:

- 1 Notes with disappointment recent reports that the Lower Hunter Freight Rail Corridor from Fassifern to Hexham ‘appears uncertain’¹ after the approval of a motorsport park at Wakefield by the Hunter and Central Coast Regional Planning Panel;
- 2 Notes that the NSW Liberal Government has previously announced \$14 million in the 2018-19 Budget, \$11.8 million in the 2017-18 Budget and \$14 million in 2016-17 Budget, a combined total of \$39.8 million over the last three Budget cycles, to undertake detailed planning for the Lower Hunter Freight Corridor;
- 3 Noting that Budget Papers reveal that the NSW Government has spent only \$1.59 million of these committed funds, seeks clarification from the NSW Government regarding their commitment to delivering the Lower Hunter Freight Rail Corridor, which they advise² will:
 - i. Provide essential rail capacity for passenger and freight train growth across the broader rail network.
 - ii. Increase the efficiency and reliability of the rail network by separating the majority of freight and passenger rail services on the congested area between Fassifern and Newcastle;
 - iii. Enhance urban amenity and liveability in the Newcastle region by removing most of the freight trains from within the urban area and at the Adamstown and Islington Junction level crossings.
- 4 Notes that according to Infrastructure Australia the Lower Hunter Freight Corridor has been identified as one of seven key transport corridors that’s protection could save Australia \$11 billion;
- 5 Writes to the Premier, the Planning Minister and the Transport Minister calling on the NSW Government to expedite the preservation of the Lower Hunter Freight Corridor, complete the technical investigations for the project, and deliver this project, as promised over successive Budget cycles;
- 6 Invites the Regional Manager and Coordinator General, Hunter Region, Transport for NSW, to update Council regarding the Lower Hunter Freight Rail Corridor and other significant transport infrastructure projects affecting the Newcastle Local Government Area (LGA) including, but not limited to, the M1 Pacific Motorway extension to Raymond Terrace and the Rankin Park to Jesmond – Newcastle Inner City Bypass Project.

BACKGROUND:

The Newcastle Herald’s coverage of NSW Budgets shows that the NSW Government announced \$14 million in the 2018-19 Budget, \$11.8 million in the 2017-18 Budget and \$14 million in 2016-17 Budget, a combined total of \$39.8 million over the last three Budget cycles, to undertake detailed planning for the Lower Hunter Freight Corridor from Fassifern to Hexham, over the last three budget cycles.

¹ <https://www.theherald.com.au/story/6115105/motorsport-park-on-a-collision-course-with-freight-bypass/>

² <https://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/projects/current-projects/lower-hunter-freight-corridor>

Despite this, on 11 May 2019, the Newcastle Herald reported that the Lower Hunter Freight Corridor ‘appears uncertain after the approval of a motorsport park at Wakefield’ following the Motor Park’s green lighting from the Hunter and Central Coast Regional Planning Panel.

Budget Papers reveal that, to date, the NSW Government has spent only \$1.59 million of the funds they have committed towards this project.

Despite a commitment of **almost \$40 million since 2016**, it is extremely disappointing to note that a Transport for NSW Statement issued on 11 May 2019 advised that:

“TfNSW is currently undertaking preliminary investigations to assess options for the LHFC. When these investigations are complete, we will consult with the community and stakeholders on any corridor options,” a spokesperson said.

“Engaging with the community is critical to the corridor preservation process. The development at Wakefield is located within a broad study area. TfNSW is working with council and the applicant to minimise impacts on a future corridor.”

Funding committed toward the Lower Hunter Freight Corridor

Budget	Funding commitment
2016-17	\$14 million
2017-18	\$11.8 million
2018-19	\$14 million
TOTAL	\$39.8 million

NSW budget hit and miss for Newcastle as government keeps planning key transport projects

Michael Parris | **19 June 2018**

The *Herald* reported on Tuesday that the government would spend \$6 million investigating faster trains from Newcastle to Sydney to cut the journey from three hours to two.

It will also **spend \$14 million on planning for a new Lower Hunter freight rail corridor from Fassifern to Hexham**, a key infrastructure project which could help alleviate traffic congestion at the Adamstown railway gates.

Mr MacDonald said the funding would help the government continue to assess the project’s feasibility but “by no means is it in the bag”.

“I’m just grateful that we’re off and running with planning money, and then you’ve got to make the case,” he said. “It will be in the hundreds of millions of dollars if it gets to the launch pad.”

<https://www.theherald.com.au/story/5476556/nsw-budget-hit-and-miss-for-newcastle-as-government-keeps-planning-key-transport-projects/>

NSW budget 2017: What's in it for the Hunter

Brodie Owen | **20 June 2017**

- **\$11.8 million to continue work on the Lower Hunter Freight Corridor between Hexham to Fassifern**

<https://www.theherald.com.au/story/4741598/nsw-budget-2017-whats-in-it-for-the-hunter/>

NSW Budget 2016: \$14 million for Fassifern to Hexham rail by-pass

Ian Kirkwood | **21 June 2016**

ONE of the most important infrastructure projects on the Hunter's wish list is closer to reality after the 2016 budget **allocated \$14 million to the Hexham to Fassifern rail link.**

The surprise announcement was listed as one of only three new major works for the state being undertaken by Transport for NSW.

A spokeswoman for Roads, Maritime and Freight Minister Duncan Gay said the rail bypass, now formally known as the Lower Hunter Freight Corridor, would take most freight trains out of suburban Newcastle and Lake Macquarie.

As well as easing rail noise and pollution for people living near the main northern rail line, it would dramatically ease road congestion at the Adamstown and Clyde Street, Islington, rail gates, where motorists spend long periods of time waiting for trains of more than a kilometre in length to trundle through at slow speed.

The project has been on planners' radars for decades, and as recently as April, when a fire on a freight train caused passenger train delays, the government said it would still take "one or two years" to identify corridors and to consult stakeholders.

Mr Gay's spokeswoman said Transport for NSW was making progress on "preliminary corridor investigations in preparation for public consultation, which would commence in 2016/17 following cabinet approval".

"Following public consultation, a preferred corridor would be identified and an application for corridor protection would be submitted to the Department of Planning and Environment," the spokesperson said.

The \$14 million allocated this financial year was for "continuing investigations, public consultation, and activities such as identifying and acquiring suitable environmental offset lands".

The spokeswoman said the bypass had "received strong local support for years, including from local councils and the Hunter Business Chamber".

Chamber president Ross Taggart and Property Council of Australia Hunter director Andrew Fletcher both welcomed the budget commitment, saying it was a key project for the region. Despite the budget allocation, Treasury officials said on Tuesday that no final decision had been taken on the project.

A "business case" was being worked up by state bureaucrats. with the final decision on proceeding resting with the Cabinet, led by Premier Mike Baird. A 1998 Transport Department report cited recently by Newcastle City Council put the cost, back then, at \$100 million.



Lower Hunter Freight Corridor

Reviewed 19 Jul 2018

We are currently undertaking preliminary investigations to assess options for the Lower Hunter Freight Corridor rail line.

Key benefits

When built the Lower Hunter Freight Corridor would:

- Provide essential rail capacity for passenger and freight train growth across the broader rail network.
- Increase the efficiency and reliability of the rail network by separating the majority of freight and passenger rail services on the congested area between Fassifern and Newcastle.
- Enhance urban amenity and liveability in the Newcastle region by removing most of the freight trains from within the urban area and at the Adamstown and Islington Junction level crossings.

We are currently undertaking preliminary investigations to assess options for the Lower Hunter Freight Corridor which will enable a future dedicated freight rail line to be constructed between Fassifern and Hexham; bypassing Newcastle while improving regional and interstate links. Preservation of the Lower Hunter Freight Corridor is an Action in the NSW Freight and Ports Strategy, the State Infrastructure Strategy and a 'high priority initiative' in Infrastructure Australia's Infrastructure Priority List.

Overview

Establishing long term strategic freight corridors is essential for increasing capacity to meet future demand which will provide greater separation of freight and passenger movements on the rail network and improve the rail service reliability.

When built the Lower Hunter Freight Corridor would:

Provide essential rail capacity for passenger and freight train growth across the broader rail network.

Increase the efficiency and reliability of the rail network by separating the majority of freight and passenger rail services on the congested area between Fassifern and Newcastle.
Enhance urban amenity and liveability in the Newcastle region by removing most of the freight trains from within the urban area and at the Adamstown and Islington Junction level crossings.

Next steps

When the technical investigations are complete, Transport for NSW will consult with the community and stakeholders about the Lower Hunter Freight Corridor.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Transport for NSW's map of the Lower Hunter Freight Corridor

