

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | | |
|-------|------------------------------------|-----|
| 1 | WHAT IS PROPOSED AND WHY | 1-1 |
| 1.1 | PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AND LOCATION | 1-1 |
| 1.1.1 | Overview | 1-1 |
| 1.1.2 | Major structures to be Constructed | 1-1 |
| 1.1.3 | Current land use | 1-2 |
| 1.2 | NEED FOR THE PROJECT | 1-5 |
| 1.3 | PROJECT OBJECTIVES | 1-5 |
| 1.4 | PROJECT BACKGROUND | 1-6 |
| 1.5 | THE PROPONENT | 1-7 |

FIGURE 1: 1 PROPOSED MAJURA PARKWAY ALIGNMENT, INDICATING MAJOR STRUCTURES AND CRITICAL CHANGES TO EXISTING ROADS AND ACCESS POINTS 1-4

1 WHAT IS PROPOSED AND WHY

1.1 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AND LOCATION

1.1.1 OVERVIEW

Roads ACT proposes to construct a four lane dual carriageway road approximately 11.5 kilometres in length through the Majura Valley on the east side of Canberra. The proposed 'Majura Parkway' will significantly improve connectivity and efficient functioning of Canberra's arterial road network by providing a continuous freeway grade link between the Federal Highway in the north and the Monaro Highway in the south at Pialligo. This is expected to significantly reduce travel times in the area and to attract vehicles away from roads through northern and central Canberra.

A new single carriageway will duplicate the existing Majura Road between the Federal Highway and Mount Majura Road in the northern section. South of this point, a new dual carriageway will follow a separate alignment to the west of the existing road until it connects with the existing Monaro Highway south of the Molonglo River. This route selection has been based on extensive environmental, heritage, economic and engineering studies and a complex planning and decision making process. The central and southern sections of the existing Majura Road will be retained for local access.

Pre-construction activities for the Majura Parkway will commence during 2009/2010. This includes design and potentially some ground preparation works. The final construction timing is dependent upon budget allocation but is tentatively due to commence in 2013 and will be completed over a 3 year period.

The parkway will require major improvements around 2030 and is expected to have an effective life of around forty years.

1.1.2 MAJOR STRUCTURES TO BE CONSTRUCTED

Each carriageway will include two 3.5m wide traffic lanes with sealed 2.5m wide outside shoulders and 1m wide inner shoulders beside the median. The width of the corridor has been designed to allow for potential future engineering services to be installed if required. North from Fairbairn, a grassed central median of varying width will separate the carriageways, while a central concrete barrier is proposed to suit the narrower road corridor adjacent to RMC Duntroon.

The wide shoulder also provides for on-road cycling, including cyclist lanes at intersections where left turn lanes are provided for motorists and special interchange treatments that enable cyclists to cross safely. A separate off-road cycling lane is not included as part of the proposal.

Overpasses at Fairbairn Avenue and Morshead Drive and dual bridges over the Molonglo River will connect the Majura Parkway with the existing Monaro Highway and relieve congestion at critical intersections with east-west traffic. The additional lanes and grade separated entry and exit points from the Parkway will also increase traffic safety compared with the existing two lane single carriageway Majura Road. Bridge construction will include two pylons mid river. Retaining walls are required at some locations in the southern section due to space limitations.

Road widening and intersection upgrades will improve performance at the Dairy Road / Morshead Drive Roundabout, Monaro Highway / Morshead Drive / Pialligo Avenue intersection and other locations. A southbound entry from Pialligo Avenue across the

existing Sylvia Curley Bridge will provide access to the Monaro Highway and to the water ski area on the south bank of the Molonglo River.

A shared access underpass is provided in the southern section to provide safe passage between RMC Duntroon and Oval 1 at Hopkins Drive. Cyclists can access shared paths to the airport or city along the lake by exiting onto Fairbairn Avenue from the north or at Morshead Drive from the south or the reinstated footpath on Sylvia Curley Bridge. Morshead Drive North will be closed to traffic.

Other exit/ entry points, over and under passes and service roads are proposed to facilitate safe access between the new Parkway, the existing Majura Road, local rural and commercial properties, a range of recreational and institutional facilities and Canberra Nature Park. These include:

- a grade separated interchange that will provide safe access to the Australian Federal Police training facility and Girl Guides property and may also be used as a crossing point to access Majura Pines
- a service road starting a short distance north of the AFP interchange and underpass that will connect to Mount Majura Road and serve the properties in the area.

For the main carriageway, the posted speed limit will be 80km/hr at each end of the project (Federal Hwy interchange, and Fairbairn Ave/Pialligo Ave interchanges), and 100km/hr through the central area. The ramps will have a posted speed of 60km/hr.

Energy efficient overhead lighting is provided at intersections. No traffic signals are proposed on the Parkway itself, but signals are included at the exit and entry ramps intersections with Morshead Drive and Fairbairn Ave. The intersections at the AFP interchange do not include traffic signals, but have been designed to allow for future upgrading to signals if required.

Wire rope barriers will be provided in the buffer or median where these are required under ACT and Australian safety standards. Some sections in the northern section may require kangaroo exclusion fencing. Several properties also require building treatments or noise barriers to mitigate the impacts of traffic noise.

1.1.3 CURRENT LAND USE

Most of the alignment is currently zoned 'Broadacre', except where the road passes through the Molonglo River corridor. Although the road has been mentioned in planning maps since the 1970s, official rezoning based on the final alignment will be required. A rezoning application under Part 5.3 of the Planning and Development Act 2007 will need to be prepared to accompany the Development Application for approval of the proposed Majura Parkway.

Existing landuses along the proposed road corridor include:

- Department of Defence (Royal Military College (RMC) Duntroon, Australian Defence Force Academy (ADFA), Campbell Park and Majura Training Area)
- Canberra International Airport and associated commercial developments
- ACT Government (Majura Pine Plantation and Canberra Nature Park)
- National Capital Authority (designated areas)
- recreational groups such as the Canberra Rifle Club, Sporting Shooters Association and the ACT Water Ski Association

- community groups such as ACT Girl Guides Association (Innabaanya)
- rural leases and various residential properties (including one ACT Housing property)
- businesses such as Mt Majura Vineyards & a truffle farm.

A number of current lessees and recreational and institutional facilities will be directly impacted by the development due to: withdrawal of land (around 90 hectares in total); loss of property access; bisection of properties; and loss of amenity due to visual, noise and other impacts associated with construction works and operation of the new road.

Possible environmental risks include:

- degraded landscape character, including visual intrusion from key vantage points
- reduction in ecological values including clearing and fragmentation of critical habitat, loss of threatened and endangered species, construction noise near nesting areas, and spread of weeds and disease
- degraded aboriginal and European cultural and other heritage values
- noise, vibration, air pollution (dust) and traffic disruption during construction work
- changes to hydrology in the catchment resulting in localised flooding, erosion and sedimentation
- reduced land and water quality from bridge and road construction activities in and near waterways, contaminated runoff and spills from construction activities (including stockpile and work sites) and road operation, erosion from exposed soils and exposure of acid sulphate rock
- water and energy consumption during construction (eg dust suppression, plant and equipment operation, vehicle use) and ongoing operation (eg lighting)
- waste generation, including litter from work sites, overspecification of materials, energy involved in production of materials and construction works, disposal of decommissioned road and associated structures in the future.

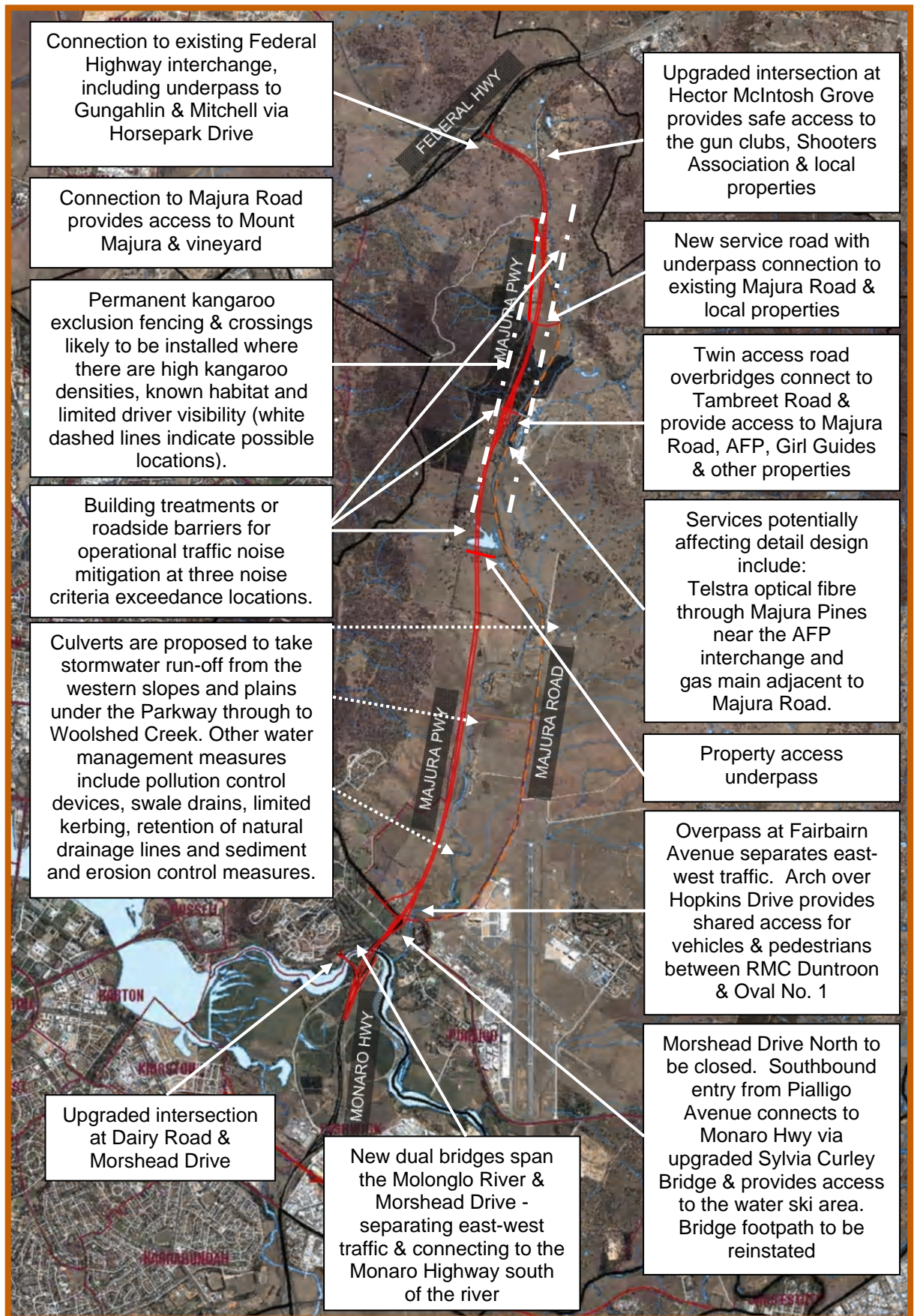


Figure 1: 1 Proposed Majura Parkway Alignment, indicating major structures and critical changes to existing roads and access points

1.2 NEED FOR THE PROJECT

The need for Majura Parkway was first identified in 1970 as a key component of Canberra's peripheral road system. This system is designed to provide efficient traffic movement between town centres and other destinations, such as Queanbeyan and Canberra Airport, without impacting unduly on residential areas.

Traffic in the vicinity of the Canberra Airport has increased considerably over the last few years with the continued growth in Gungahlin and increased employment at the airport. The roads in this area play an important role for the ACT economy, the surrounding New South Wales (NSW) region and nationally given the importance of the Monaro Highway as a freight route connection to the Federal Highway.

The Parkway will considerably improve the traffic flows on the road network in the area between Duntroon and the Canberra Airport. At this location five major arterials converge (Majura Road, Pialligo Avenue, Monaro Highway, Fairbairn Avenue and Morshead Drive). The affected area also extends North up to the Federal Highway as the proposed Majura Parkway runs parallel to the west of the existing Majura Road.

The existing Majura Road is a single carriageway road and is a key link between the Federal Highway and areas to the south of Canberra. It is also a designated heavy vehicle bypass and is used by over dimensional vehicles. It is currently experiencing heavy congestion, particularly in peak hours and does not have capacity to cater for further traffic growth.

The accident history of Majura Road area from Fairbairn Avenue to the Federal Highway shows that 210 accidents occurred between 2003 and 2008, of which 21 resulted in injuries and 189 resulted in property damage. A number of traffic accidents (including fatalities) have occurred more recently. Many kangaroos have also been killed along Majura Road. These conditions are expected to worsen in the future.

Further increases in traffic volumes are expected with the planned expansions in Gungahlin, ongoing development in the surrounding NSW region, employment predictions, and freight movements at the airport as outlined in its master plan, and further development in the Majura Valley. Relieving traffic pressures in the vicinity of the airport and the Majura Valley is therefore an important initiative that will benefit the region.

1.3 PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of Majura Parkway is to facilitate the movement of traffic from Gungahlin and the Federal Highway to Canberra City and other destinations to the south without impacting unduly on the residential environment of North and Central Canberra.

The project also aims to:

- relieve traffic congestion in the Pialligo area and the Majura Valley that has increased significantly over the last few years and is predicted to rise dramatically as Gungahlin expands and the Majura Valley area develop further.
- as well as its metropolitan functions, enable traffic from Sydney and other northern destinations to the Monaro region to bypass Canberra. These functions are currently served by Majura Road, which does not have the capacity to accommodate the future traffic volumes that will arise as Gungahlin increases in population
- serve as a major freight road locally and interstate.

Some other benefits that will be achieved upon full implementation of the parkway include:

- increased traffic safety due to additional lanes and grade separated entry and exit from the Parkway
- safer on-road cycling facility
- increased accessibility for local traffic to existing and future developments in the Majura Valley from Majura Road
- more efficient functioning of Canberra's arterial road network
- less congestion along the existing Majura Road and the roads in Pialligo area,, including a reduction in vehicle fuel burn and greenhouse gas emissions
- opportunities for public transport services, including provision for a possible future very high speed train (VHST)
- protection of important natural and cultural heritage features of the Majura Valley.

1.4 PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Majura Parkway was first identified in *Tomorrow's Canberra* 1970 (Ref.1) as a component of Canberra's peripheral road system. This system is designed to provide efficient traffic movement between towns without impacting unduly on residential areas. Subsequent planning studies, including *Metropolitan Canberra* 1984 (Ref. 2), the *Gungahlin External Travel Study* 1989 (GETS, Ref. 3) and the *Canberra Spatial Plan* 2004 (Ref. 4), have retained the Parkway as a key component of the primary road network. It is shown as a proposed road in both the National Capital Plan, with which arterial roads in the ACT are required to conform, and in the Territory Plan.

While the Spatial Plan represents a significant departure from the Y-Plan in seeking to achieve a more compact form for Canberra, one of its goals is to retain ease of movement and facilitate good travel connections, in recognition of the very high value that Canberrans place on the ease within which they can get around the city. The Plan states specifically (p. 58) that '... Majura Parkway will be provided as Gungahlin continues to develop'.

Some early planning for the Majura Parkway was undertaken by National Capital Development Commission (NCDC) in the 1970s and 1980s. The decision to construct the road to provide access for Gungahlin residents to Canberra City and other southern destinations was reinforced through the 1988-89 Gungahlin External Travel Study (Ref. 3), which involved a major public consultation exercise. This study addressed several major road options for providing efficient road access from Gungahlin to Canberra City and the other towns of Canberra. These options included the Majura Parkway, the John Dedman Parkway (now known as Gungahlin Drive Extension or GDE), Monash Drive and a major upgrade of Northbourne Avenue. Based on the views of 30 community groups and several institutional stakeholders, which considered environmental, social and traffic engineering issues, the preferred option was considered to be a combination of the Majura Parkway and GDE.

Both the Territory Plan and the General Policy Plan of the National Capital Plan make provision for the future construction of the Majura Parkway, although in neither plan is the location of the road firmly established.

Chapter 3.6 contains a detailed analysis of engineering considerations and alternatives which were investigated as part of the design process.

1.5 THE PROPONENT

Roads ACT are the proponent for the proposal.

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