

# Widening and upgrade of Minmi Road, Wallsend

## Overview

City of Newcastle (CN) sought feedback from the community on a proposal to improve traffic flow and reduce congestion by widening and upgrading Minmi Road, Wallsend – a key connection from the suburbs of Wallsend, Minmi, Fletcher and Maryland into Newcastle and to Newcastle Link Road.

In February 2022, Council committed to upgrading Minmi Road to reduce congestion, increasing the width of the road to two lanes in each direction, and making changes to some intersections to reduce traffic bottlenecks and improve safety for all road users. Upgrades to the greater western corridor are being delivered in stages.

Stage 1 upgrades Longworth Avenue, Wallsend between Newcastle Road and Cameron Street.

**Stage 2 (this project) upgrades Minmi Road, Wallsend between Maryland Drive to west of the Summerhill Road roundabout.**

## Proposed upgrades

### Key changes include:

- Two-lane traffic in both directions, with separated parking lane on one side of the road (eastbound towards Maryland Drive).
- Improved cycling and pedestrian connections.
- Right turn lanes in and out of Anna Place, McNaughton Avenue and the Service Station.
- No right turn into and out of Mount Street.



View facing west along Minmi Road



View facing east along Minmi Road

## Purpose of the engagement

We sought feedback from the community to understand their level of support towards the proposal and identify any concerns.

## Engagement activities

The community were able to provide feedback by:

- completing our online survey
- attending a drop-in information session
- contacting CN directly via mail, email or phone.

**The engagement took place from 20 October to 17 November 2023.**

## Communication & promotion

**4,633 visits** to the Have Your Say webpage

**11,300 flyers** distributed to properties within Fletcher, Maryland, Minmi and Wallsend

**25,109 total reach** on social media

**2,573** e-newsletter subscribers

## Number of submissions

**600** survey responses

**6** email submissions

**70** estimated attendees across two drop-in information sessions

A summary of feedback from the online survey is shown over the next few pages.

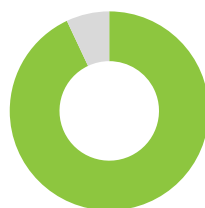


### Responses by suburb

93% of survey responses came from the following four suburbs (Fletcher – 50%, Maryland – 32%, Wallsend – 8% and Minmi – 2%).

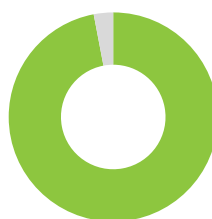
## Frequency of travelling along Minmi Road

### Use Minmi Road daily



**91%** of respondents said they travel along Minmi Road daily

### Use Minmi Road at least weekly



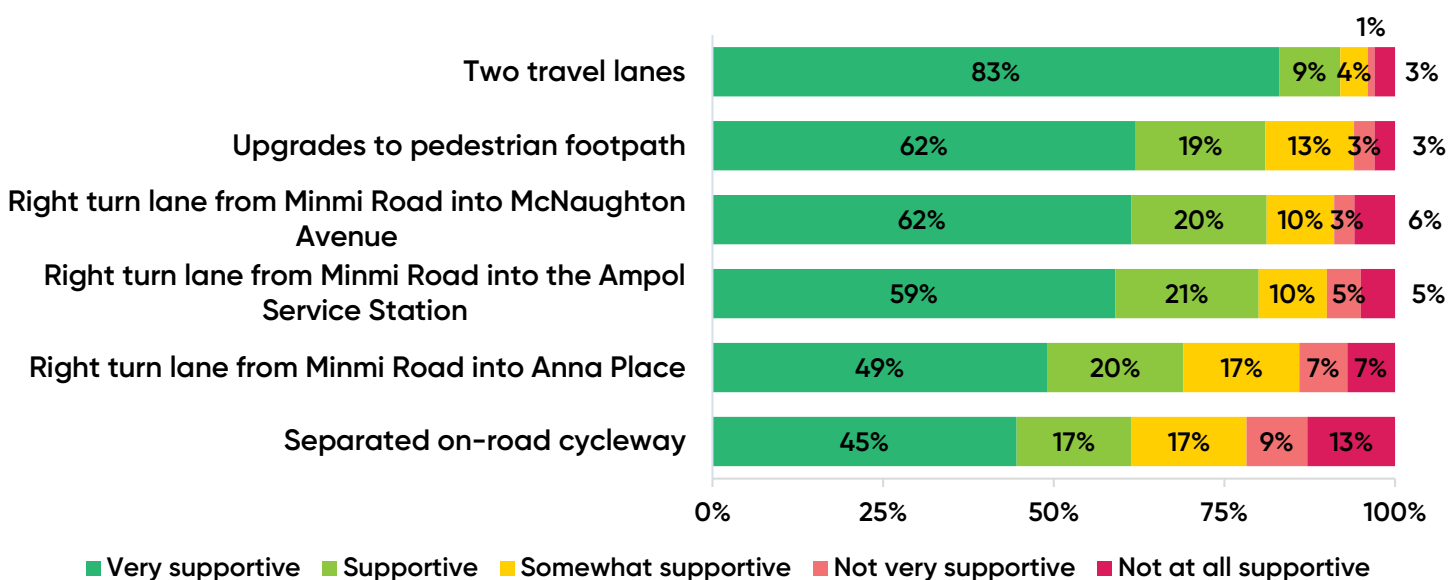
**97%** of respondents said they travel along Minmi Road at least weekly

Base: All survey respondents (N=600)

## Level of support for eastbound upgrades

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of support for each of the proposed changes from 'very supportive' to 'not at all supportive'.

Proposed change	At least somewhat supportive
Two travel lanes	97%
Upgrades to pedestrian footpath	95%
Right turn lane from Minmi Road into McNaughton Avenue	91%
Right turn lane from Minmi Road into the Ampol Service Station	89%
Right turn lane from Minmi Road into Anna Place	87%
Separated on-road cycleway	78%

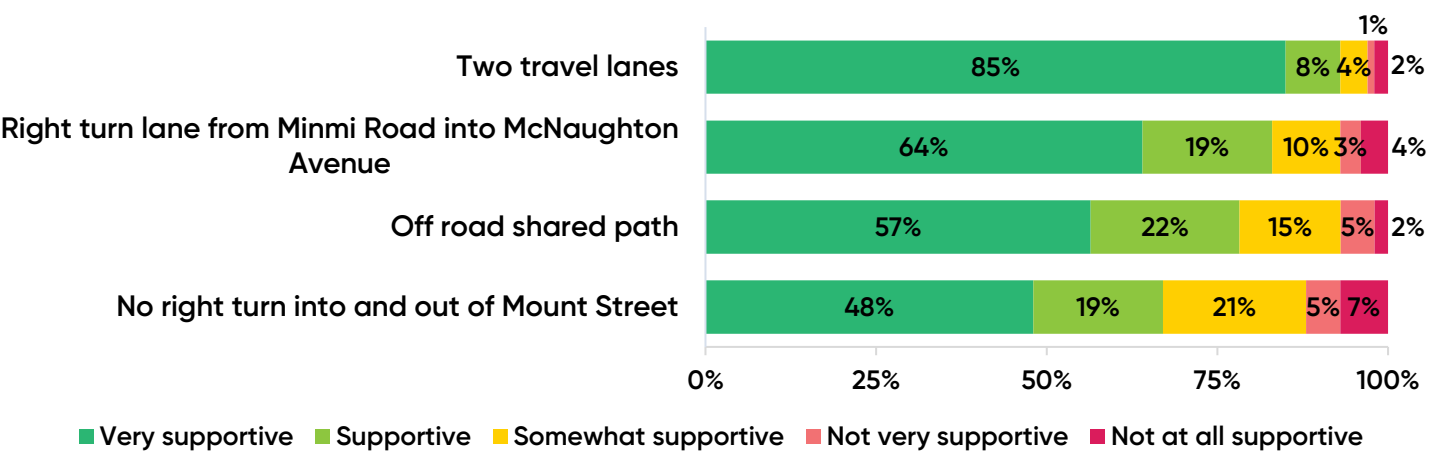


Base: All survey respondents (N=600)

# Level of support for westbound upgrades

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of support for each of the proposed changes from 'very supportive' to 'not at all supportive'.

Proposed change	At least somewhat supportive
Two travel lanes	97%
Off-road shared path	93%
Right turn lane from Minmi Road into McNaughton Avenue	93%
No right turn into and out of Mount Street	88%

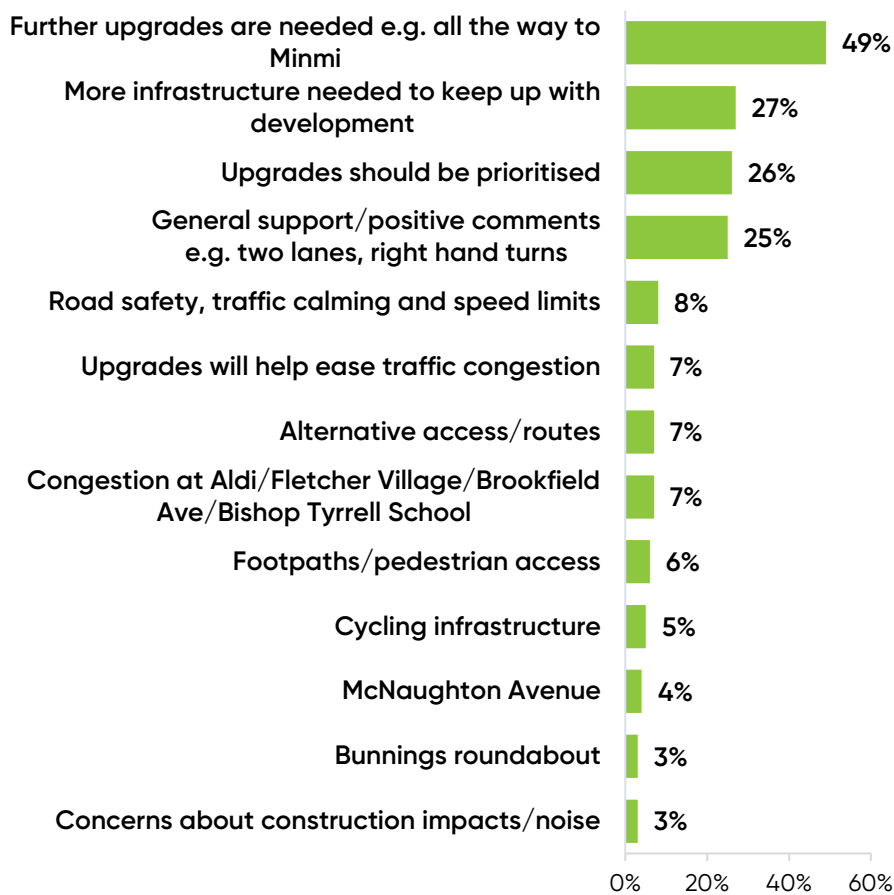


## Key themes

Comments were categorised to identify recurring themes.

The main themes were:

- Further upgrades are needed e.g. two lanes in each direction all the way from Wallsend to Minmi.
- More infrastructure is needed to keep up with development in Fletcher and Minmi – predominately roads, but also footpaths and public transport access.
- Upgrades should be prioritised to ease congestion for the western corridor and improve safety for all road users.
- General support for the proposed upgrades to provide two traffic lanes in each direction and right-hand turning lanes to improve traffic flow and avoid traffic being backed up.



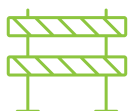
Base: All respondents who provided a comment (N=582)

## Key themes (continued)

Other responses included:

- road safety, traffic calming and speed limits
- the proposed upgrades will help ease traffic congestion
- the need for alternative access/routes
- congestion along Minmi Road between Brookfield Avenue and Maryland Drive (west).

These are explored in more detail below.



### Road safety, traffic calming and speed limits

Respondents commented that right hand turn lanes would help to ease congestion, improve safety and reduce the risk of accidents. Some intersections were said to be currently dangerous such as the right hand turns from McNaughton Avenue and Anna Place onto Minmi Road, and the merge into one lane near the service station.

There were also some concerns about footpath and shared path users with vehicles turning right. It was suggested that where the shared path crosses minor side streets, it should retain priority with road markings and a raised crossing so that drivers slow down and give way. Additional pedestrian crossings are also required to improve access.

Some respondents were also concerned about right hand turns out of the service station.



### Proposed upgrades will help ease traffic congestion

Support was provided for the proposed upgrades to help improve traffic flow and ease congestion, particularly in peak times/school hours when travel times are said to be considerably longer.



### Alternative access/routes needed

Several respondents mentioned the need for alternative access or roads to reduce the traffic along Minmi Road but also in case of emergencies, evacuation and road incidents. Suggestions included providing other access points to Newcastle Link Road and Cameron Park, links to Sandgate and the Inner City Bypass.

Additional routes such as a new road from the Summerhill Road roundabout to Newcastle Link Road and joining Boundary Road to the Summerhill Road roundabout were also suggested.



### Congestion between Brookfield Avenue and Maryland Drive (west)

This section of Minmi Road between Brookfield Avenue and Maryland Drive (west) contains several shops (Aldi and Fletcher Village), schools (Bishop Tyrell College and Glendore Primary School), sporting fields and housing estates such as The Outlook, Sanctuary Estate and Fletcher Green. It was commented that congestion is particularly heavy during morning and afternoon peak times and for school drop-off/pick-up.

Several respondents commented that two lanes of traffic in either direction are needed in this section. There are also some intersections causing bottlenecks or safety concerns such as the Maryland Drive and Churnwood Drive intersection, Kurraka Drive, Brookfield Avenue and Warkworth Street.

- **Maryland Drive and Churnwood Drive intersection** – the traffic lights need dedicated signals for right hand turns from Churnwood Drive onto Minmi Road and Minmi Road onto Churnwood Drive, as well as sequencing to allow sufficient traffic to cross. This will help to reduce traffic congestion and reduce the risk of traffic incidents.
- **Kurraka Drive/Brookfield Avenue** – traffic lights or roundabout needed near The Sanctuary. It can be difficult to enter/exit The Outlook and Sanctuary housing estates during peak times due to the single lane of traffic being backed up.
- **Warkworth Street** – some respondents were concerned about the project increasing the number of illegal right hand turns being made from Warkworth Street onto Minmi Road. Addition traffic congestion is caused along Minmi Road by vehicles turning left and continuing to the Summerhill Road roundabout to do a u-turn.

## Key themes (continued)



### Footpaths/pedestrian access

In addition to comments about the road being widened all the way to Minmi, footpath/pedestrian access is also required along the entire length. Better pedestrian access is needed to connect activity centres such as shops, schools, childcare centres, and bus stops. Additional safe crossing points for pedestrians are also required. There were some concerns about the proximity of pedestrians to the road, unprotected from traffic.



### Cycling infrastructure

It was commented that cycling infrastructure in the area is extremely important, and that the cycling infrastructure should continue the whole way along Minmi Road. A path for cyclists separated from traffic is important to provide active transport links and encourage more cycling in the area. Cycle lanes should be off the road where possible to make cycling safer and more enjoyable, particularly for school students and less confident riders. Cycle lanes should also be separate from the parking lane.



### McNaughton Avenue

Some were concerned with turning right out of McNaughton Avenue during peak times e.g. waiting for a sufficient gap in the traffic and cars speeding down the hill travelling westbound. Additional time is also needed for cars to match their speed to those travelling along Minmi Road. Multiple respondents suggested traffic lights or a roundabout would make the McNaughton Avenue intersection safer.

A left turn lane would also help to reduce traffic congestion as often traffic queues behind cars waiting to turn right onto Minmi Road.



### Bunnings roundabout

The Bunnings roundabout is another frequently mentioned pinch point along Minmi Road, with respondents wanting to see two lanes through the roundabout. Minmi Road should be two lanes from the Bunnings roundabout all the way to Minmi. It was said that widening the Bunnings roundabout to then merge into one lane does not achieve the full potential of increased lanes. This section should be widened to allow for a left turn lane into Cowper Street.



### Concerns about construction impacts/noise

There were some mentions about increased traffic congestion while construction occurs, increasing travel times for road users, potential detours and impact on residents. It was requested that work takes place outside of peak times.



The following themes had fewer mentions but are explored below given they are key changes as part of the proposed upgrade.

### Anna Place

It was commented that it is currently difficult to exit Anna Place at most times of the day and can be dangerous turning right into Anna Place from Fletcher due to being stopped in the middle of the road on a blind corner. The protected right hand turn into Anna Place will be a significant improvement. Anna Place in peak hours should have a left turn only lane.



### Service Station

Feedback was provided about the driver frustration and road safety issues with the current merge lane outside the service station. Some drivers are also attempting to turn right out of the service station causing safety issues. It was suggested that no right turn out of the service station would be the safest option and that drivers can do a u-turn at the Summerhill Road roundabout to return eastbound.

### Mount Street

Some residents were concerned about not being able to turn right out of Mount Street, turning right into Mount Street was less of a concern. There were also some concerns about being able to turn right out of McNaughton Avenue which is the proposed alternative route.

## Key themes (continued)

Themes with fewer than 3% of mentions are shown in the table below.

Base: All respondents who provided a comment (N=582)

Themes with fewer mentions	Percent
Developer contributions	2%
Warkworth Street intersection	2%
Maryland Drive east/service station	2%
Anna Place	2%
Kurraka Drive/The Sanctuary Estate	2%
Improve the Newcastle Link Road roundabout	2%
Access for emergency vehicles	2%
Bus stops/public transport access	2%
Maryland Drive and Churnwood Drive intersection	1%
Parking	1%
More traffic lights/traffic light configuration	1%
Right turn into/out of service station not supported	1%
Mount Street	1%
Summerhill Road roundabout	1%
Woodford Street	1%
Retention of trees	1%
Improvements to intersections at Douglas Street/Cameron Street/Tillie Street/Wilkinson Avenue/Sandgate Road/Cowper Street	1%
Right hand turns not supported	1%
Not enough space	<1%
Upgrades are not needed	<1%
Don't support cycle infrastructure	<1%
More consultation	<1%

## Other submissions

### 6 written submissions were received via email.

One submission commented that there should be left turn only out of the service station. The safest option for those wanting to turn right is to use the Summerhill Road roundabout and do a u-turn.

Another submission commented on the difficulties turning right out of McNaughton Avenue and suggested that it should be left turn only onto Minmi Road during peak hour. It will become even more difficult with four lanes of traffic.

Two submissions were against the upgrades. One suggested that the newer housing estates should feed into Newcastle Link Road to the Hunter Expressway, whilst the other suggested that congestion was not an issue past the lights turning into Maryland.

One submission sought clarification about the configuration of on-street parking and the cycle lane.

The other submission welcomed the upgrades to help ease congestion, however, made some suggestions for improvement including removing the eastbound turning lane on Minmi Road into McNaughton Avenue and turning it into a merge lane for vehicles turning right from McNaughton Avenue onto Minmi Road westbound. It was commented that the absence of a merging lane would limit the effectiveness of the intersection. The submission made a request to plant replacement mature fig trees on the southern side of Minmi Road and semi-mature trees on the northern side to provide shade and reduce heat. CN should develop a construction management plan and provide proactive communication to residents about works, impacts to residents and traffic management during the works.



## Community drop-in sessions

Two community drop-in sessions were held during the public exhibition period.

- Saturday 4 November 2023 from 11am–1pm at Wallsend Library
- Thursday 9 November from 4pm to 6pm at Fletcher Village

The purpose of these sessions was to provide an opportunity for community members to speak to the project team, ask questions about the proposed upgrades and provide feedback.

We heard from approximately 60 people.

### Key themes that we heard included:

- Support/positive comments about the proposed upgrades including two lanes of traffic and right-hand turning lanes.
- Further upgrades needed with two-lanes in each direction all the way to Minmi.
- Concerns about traffic congestion near Fletcher Village, particularly with new developments being approved. It was commented that upgrades to this section should be prioritised.
- Questions about other planned upgrades further up Minmi Road towards Fletcher and Minmi, and when the works proposed as part of this stage would be completed.
- Support for improved cycling and pedestrian infrastructure. Better pedestrian access is needed near the Fletcher Early Learning Centre.
- Road safety concerns e.g. right hand turn out of the service station is dangerous. Potential for traffic incidents due to right hand runs e.g. McNaughton Ave onto Minmi Road, right turn out of the service station and illegal right hand turn from Warkworth Avenue onto Minmi Road.
- Phasing of traffic signals contributing to congestion by not letting enough cars through.
- A left turn only lane should be considered for McNaughton Avenue and Anna Place to help ease congestion and avoid traffic build up from cars waiting to turn right.



## Next Steps

Thank you to everyone who had their say. The project team will review all feedback received during community consultation and use this to inform the final concept design. The concept design will then be presented to the Newcastle City Traffic Committee and Council for approval, before proceeding to detailed design.