

Widening and upgrade of Longworth Avenue, Wallsend

Overview

City of Newcastle (CN) sought feedback on a proposal to improve traffic flow and reduce congestion by widening and upgrading Longworth Avenue, Wallsend.

Longworth Avenue is a key connection from Minmi and Fletcher into Newcastle and to the Newcastle Link Road. In February 2022, Council committed to upgrading Longworth Avenue to reduce congestion, increasing the width of the road to two lanes in each direction, and making changes to some intersections to reduce bottlenecks and improve safety for all road users.

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 via:

- completing our online survey
- emailing a written submission
- calling us by phone
- attending the drop-in information session



The engagement took place from 26 June to 31 July 2023.

Proposed upgrades

Key changes include:

- Longworth Avenue will be widened to allow two lanes of traffic in each direction (North and South), with clearway restrictions in place during peak travel times. In order to allow room for two lanes of traffic, on-street parking will only be available during non-peak periods.
- Right-hand turns from Longworth Avenue onto Bean Street, Cameron Street and Maitland Street will no longer be available. Bean Street and Maitland Street will become left turn in and left turn out only.
- Landscaping and street trees will enhance the look and feel of the area, whilst existing bus stops will be retained along Longworth Avenue with new shelters to be constructed.

Number of submissions

170 survey responses

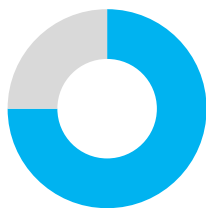
2 email submissions

21 information session attendees



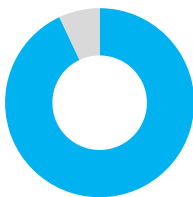
Frequency of travelling along Longworth Avenue

Use Longworth Avenue daily



75% of respondents said they travel along Longworth Avenue daily

Use Longworth Avenue at least weekly



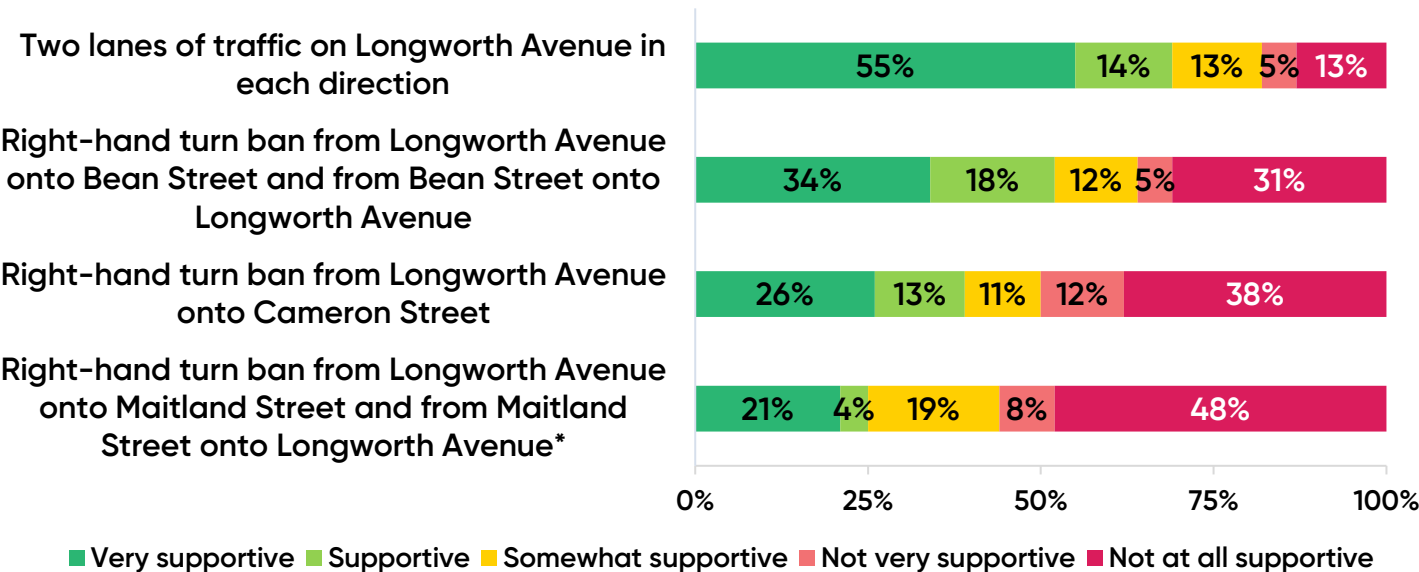
93% of respondents said they travel along Longworth Avenue at least weekly

Base: Survey respondents (N=168)

Level of support

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 lanes of traffic on Longworth Avenue in each direction	82%
Right-hand turn ban onto Bean Street	64%
Right-hand turn ban onto Cameron Street	50%
Right hand turn ban onto Maitland Street*	44%



Base: Survey respondents (N=170)

*Base size varies (N=52). Based on feedback received once the survey was already open, this question was added to better understand the level of support for the right-hand turn ban at Maitland Street.

What we heard

Positive comments



The main themes were:

- That the upgrade would help ease traffic congestion and improve traffic flow.
- The upgrade is much needed/well overdue.
- Longworth Avenue is a main thoroughfare and requires two lanes in each direction.

26% provided one or more positive comments about the proposed upgrades.

The main themes were:

- The upgrade is needed to manage traffic congestion (20%)
- Support for two lanes of traffic in each direction (8%)

Concerns



The main themes were:

- That the upgrade would not do enough to reduce traffic congestion and would result in a flow on effect, increasing traffic on other streets.
- Impact on Wallsend Health Campus staff/visitors due to access and loss of parking. Several respondents were concerned about access for emergency vehicles.
- Impact on local residents due to loss of parking, increase in traffic and noise, feelings of isolation and having to take alternative routes.

57% provided one or more concerns about the proposed upgrades.

These included:

- Flow on traffic impacts (21%)
- Impact on local residents (15%)
- Impact on Health Campus staff/visitors (15%)
- Need a longer-term solution (8%)
- Loss of parking (6%)
- Concerns about noise (5%)
- Concerns about speeding (1%)
- Impact to businesses (2%)
- Loss of footpath (1%)
- Concerns about water drainage/flooding (1%)
- Not enough detail/concerns about land acquisition (1%)

Negative comments



The main themes were:

- Right-hand turn bans not being supported.
- The proposal will not ease congestion and other solutions should be explored.
- Longworth Avenue was not designed for two lanes of traffic in both directions.

8% provided one or more negative comments about the proposed upgrades.

What we heard

Suggestions for improvement



60% provided one or more suggestion for improving the proposed upgrade.

The main themes that emerged were:

- The need to extend the road widening along Minmi Road, particularly the pinch point at the Bunnings roundabout where two lanes of traffic are required to merge into one lane.
- Fixing the roundabout which connects Longworth Avenue and Newcastle Road which causes traffic build up during peak hours.
- Alternative solutions to allow some right-hand turns e.g. from Longworth Avenue onto Cameron Street, Cowper Street onto Longworth Avenue, and Minmi Road onto Cowper Street. Suggestions included lane configuration, time restrictions for right hand turns, improved traffic signals or a roundabout.
- Improvements to surrounding roads and intersections which would have an increase in traffic diverted from the upgrade e.g. Tillie Street, Wilkinson Avenue, Abbott Street.

Theme	Percent
Extend upgrades to Minmi Road	20%
Fix roundabout connecting Longworth Avenue and Newcastle Road	16%
Provide alternative routes for Hunter Expressway and Fletcher traffic	6%
Allow right hand turns at Cameron Street	6%
Pedestrian upgrades needed e.g. to cross near health facility and Newcastle Road	6%
Allow right-hand turns at Cowper Street and Longworth Avenue/Minmi Road intersection	5%
Roundabout/signals needed along Tillie Street	3%
Improvements needed on Abbott Street	3%
Two permanent lanes without clearways	3%
Slip lane/s to turn left onto Newcastle Road at roundabout	3%
Widen the road	3%
More support for active transport e.g. add cycle lane	3%

Other suggestions with two mentions included:

- The addition of right-hand turn bans at John Street and Braddon Street
- Replacing traffic signals with a roundabout at Cameron Street intersection

Community drop-in session

During the community drop-in session, the project team provided an overview of the Longworth Avenue project and proposed upgrades.

Community members were then able to ask questions. The main topic of discussion was the impact to local residents including access, alternative routes, noise, speeding, drainage/flooding, trees and questions about land acquisition.

Residents also wanted to know more about alternative options that had been explored and further upgrades that were planned to ease congestion for the Western Corridor.

Impact to Wallsend Health Campus staff was also mentioned, however, the discussion was primarily focused on the impact to residents.



Other submissions

Two written submissions were received via email.

One submission commented that the right-hand turns are not the problem, and that if any changes are made on Longworth Avenue a right hand turn only lane should be installed. The submission mentioned that congestion is caused by traffic heading to Maryland and builds up all the way to the Wallsend roundabout. The impact of having to take alternative routes was also mentioned.

Another submission commented that allowing access to Wallsend Health Campus via Nash Street would only cause significant congestion for hundreds of staff and ambulances at an uncontrolled intersection of Nash Street and Cameron Street.

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.