The Australian and Victorian Governments have announced a $50 million upgrade of the Princes Highway from Sale to the NSW border.

Joint funding of $50 million has been allocated for improvement works (not maintenance) on this important freight and tourism route.

Project overview
Planning for these works is now underway. With input from the community and stakeholders, VicRoads has identified improvement works that contribute to route safety, accessibility, efficiency and reliability for all modes of transport. Township works that improve the look and feel of local neighbourhoods and boost the local economy have also been identified.

While the full scope of works is still to be finalised, the works program will include:

- Construction and sealing of 80km of shoulder
- Installation of safety barriers at high-risk locations
- Lakes Entrance cycling/pedestrian and intersection improvements
- Cann River roundabout and associated works
- A west-bound overtaking lane to the east of Genoa
- Mount Drummer drainage works
- Intersection improvements at various locations
- Sealing of 18 rest areas
Stakeholder and community participation

Throughout March 2017, VicRoads held discussions with key stakeholders to identify issues of concern between Sale and the NSW border. Representatives from local government, emergency services, the freight industry, bus operators, the tourism sector and community organisations took part.

A series of community ‘drop-in’ sessions was held from March through to May, during which the broader community was invited to have its say. VicRoads held these sessions in Cann River (29 March), Orbost (12 April), Lakes Entrance (19 April), at the East Gippsland Field Days (Bairnsdale, 28 and 29 April), Bairnsdale (3 May) and Stratford (24 May).

The community was also able to have input via our online engagement platform, https://engage.vicroads.vic.gov.au, for a month during May and June. You can read this feedback, as well as see updates on the project, at https://engage.vicroads.vic.gov.au/princeshighwayeast

In total, 989 people participated in the community feedback process by attending a community drop-in session, logging into the EngageVicRoads website, sending an email, writing a letter or commenting via social media. Of those, 191 submitted formal feedback while a further 135 provided informal feedback via social media.

The feedback received over recent months has been considered along with input from key stakeholders and other technical information in planning the Princes Highway East upgrade works program.
What you told us

A review of community feedback identified intersection safety as the number one concern for road users on the Princes Highway East, with more than 15% of respondents identifying this as their primary concern. The communities of Bairnsdale, Twin Rivers and Lakes Entrance, as well as those travelling through these centres, were particularly concerned about this issue. As a result of the feedback, more than six intersections have been nominated for improvement.

The second key concern identified was the lack of overtaking opportunities – at times accompanied by driver impatience. More than 14% of those who provided feedback told us that this was their key concern.

Other significant issues raised included narrow roads and unsealed or narrow shoulders. These two issues combined were identified as the key concern by 15% of respondents. This was particularly relevant for those travelling or living between Orbost and the NSW border.

Rough pavement (7.5%), signage issues (7%), pedestrian and cyclist safety (6%) and road alignment (5%) were also significant issues. Other issues raised included speeding, a lack of traveller rest areas, road drainage, vegetation and wildlife hazards.

NOTE: Community input was a key part in the process of planning for this upgrade. However, some of the community feedback received was more relevant to other Princes Highway projects currently being planned by VicRoads and will be considered in relation to those projects. For example, feedback relating to issues on the Sale to Bairnsdale stretch has been forwarded to the VicRoads Safer System Infrastructure Program (SSRIP) Gippsland team, which is currently planning for $51 million of safety improvements in this location. This includes the construction of two new overtaking lanes. Similarly issues of concern relating to maintenance issues have been forwarded to the VicRoads maintenance team.

Top 3 issues by location

Bairnsdale
- Intersection safety
- Lack of overtaking opportunities
- Rough ride

Twin Rivers
- Intersection safety
- Signage
- Speed

Lakes Entrance
- Pedestrian and cyclist safety
- Lack of overtaking opportunities
- Rough ride

Orbost
- Signage
- Narrow road
- Lack of overtaking opportunities

Cann River
- Unsealed shoulders
- Narrow road
- Rough ride

Residents and road users were asked to identify their key concern along the length of the route. The community feedback highlighted the above issues at each of these locations.

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Making the decision

Funding for this upgrade is on the basis of improvement (not maintenance). In drawing up its proposed program of works, VicRoads has taken into account community and stakeholder feedback, technical information such as crash data and site inspections, as well as Transport Integration Act objectives and decision-making principles. These include safety, efficiency, reliability, inclusion, equity, transparency, value for money and a user's perspective.

Proposed works

The proposed program of works includes improvements addressing the major concerns raised by the community and stakeholders.

Intersection upgrades in 15 locations, including the construction of roundabout at the intersection of the Monaro and the Princes Highways at Cann River; and safety improvements at Bumberrah Road in Johnsonville, Swan Reach Road in Swan Reach and Veldens Road in Toorlool Arm

Construction of an overtaking lane east of Genoa (westbound)

Shoulder construction for 80km between Bairnsdale and the NSW border and associated pavement restoration

Safety barriers at high-risk locations

Signage improvements and line marking to ensure consistency

A cycling and walking path on the foreshore, pedestrian crossings and improvements to the Myer Street intersection in Lakes Entrance

Drainage works, rescaling and corner realignment at Mount Drummer

Sealing of rest areas in 18 locations

Installation of a Variable Message Sign gantry at a location to be determined

VicRoads is working with the State Government to finalise the works program. The full program of construction is expected to be completed by the end of the 2020/21 financial year.

Stay informed

Interested members of the community are invited to attend one of our drop-in sessions for an update on the proposed works. Representatives from VicRoads will be available to provide more details on the works.

Bairnsdale: Wednesday, 23 August, 9.30am to 10.30am, at the Community Kiosk (Nicholson Street)

Lakes Entrance: Wednesday, August 23, 11.30am to 1pm at the Coast Guard Centre (420 Esplanade)

Twin Rivers: Wednesday, August 23, 2017 4.30pm to 6pm at the Johnsonville Hall, (Princes Highway), Johnsonville

Cann River: Wednesday, August 23, 4pm to 6pm at the Cann River Community Centre (Princes Highway)

For email updates: Email gippslandprojects@roads.vic.gov.au and include Princes Highway East in the subject line.

Online updates: Log on to https://engage.vicroads.vic.gov.au/princeshighwayeast to access the latest information about this project.