

Transport
for NSW

Draft Central West and Orana

Strategic Regional
Integrated Transport Plan

Early Engagement Report



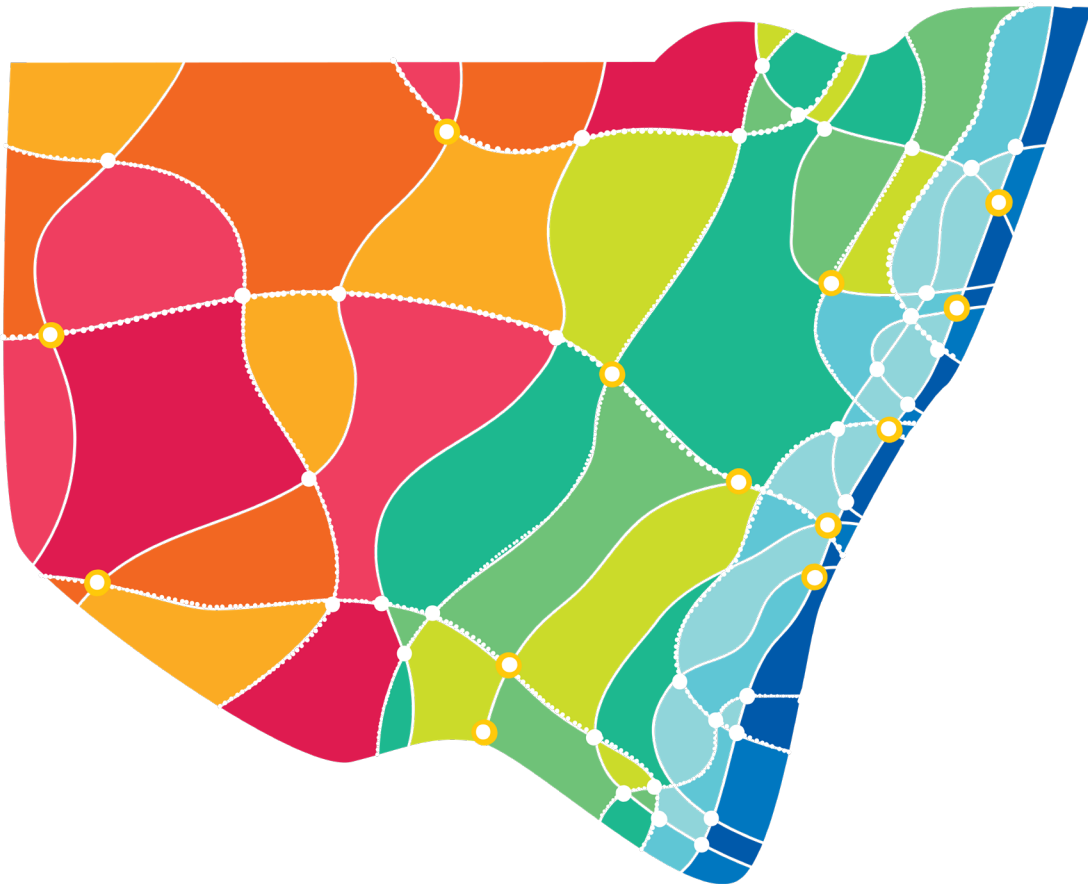
Acknowledgement of Country

Transport for NSW acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which we work and live.

We pay our respects to Elders past and present and celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal people and their ongoing cultures and connections to the lands and waters of NSW.

Many of the transport routes we use today – from rail lines, to roads, to water crossings – follow the traditional Songlines, trade routes and ceremonial paths in Country that our nation's First Peoples followed for tens of thousands of years.

Transport for NSW is committed to honouring Aboriginal peoples' cultural and spiritual connections to the lands, waters and seas and their rich contribution to society.



The Connected Communities Map represents Transport's dedication and care for connecting communities and people across New South Wales.

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Combine headers harvesting grain, West Region NSW

1. Introduction

The Draft Central West and Orana Strategic Regional Integrated Transport Plan (Draft Plan) is one of nine Plans being developed for Regional NSW. The Draft Plan will support community and transport needs across the Central West and Orana and will provide a 20-year vision of the key transport priorities for the region.

The NSW Government is committed to developing a suite of Strategic Regional Integrated Transport Plans (SRITPs) for the nine Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI) regions across Regional NSW.

They will offer an integrated planning approach to transport infrastructure and services in the regions, reflecting the changing needs and transport demands of regional communities and providing coordinated solutions.

The SRITPs will build on and enhance the work completed on the former Regional Transport Plans to better reflect the needs of regional communities and will include detailed evaluations of the communities' transport needs now and into the future.

The SRITPs will be developed with input from key stakeholders and the community in a staged engagement approach.

The Central West and Orana Strategic Regional Integrated Transport Plan is set to be delivered in 2026.

We are focused on capturing the heart of what makes the region unique, ensuring transport services and infrastructure support everyone who lives, works, or visits the region.

1.1 About the Central West and Orana

The Central West and Orana geographical area is home to the Wiradjuri, Wongaibon, Wailwan, Gamilaroi, Ngiyampaa, Dharug and Gundungurra peoples, and is currently home to about 290,000 people, making the region the fifth most populous in Regional NSW. It extends from the Central West to the Western Slopes and Plains of NSW and includes 19 Local Government Areas (LGAs) and 25 Local Aboriginal Land Councils (LALCs).

From a demographics perspective, the average age of the region's population is expected to increase over the next 20 years, with the proportion of people aged over 65 years expected to increase by almost 50 per cent by 2041. This will mean around 25,000 extra people aged over 65 will be living in the region. During this same period, the proportion of residents aged under 20 years of age, as well as between 20 and 65 years of age is projected to decline. Public transport and flexible transport services such as on demand or community transport will be important to the wellbeing of older residents by ensuring they have safe and reliable access to health services, shops and recreation, allowing them to age in place.

The Central West and Orana plays a key strategic role in inter-regional connections to major Australian ports and markets including Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Canberra and west to Adelaide and Perth. Improvements to the Newell Highway and the development of the Inland Rail corridor will provide stronger connections to Brisbane and Melbourne, opening up new export pathways for goods produced in the region and alternative hubs to Sydney.

The Central West and Orana region encompasses a network of ancient traditional Songlines that connect to other locations all around Australia. These Songlines contain many layers of knowledge and can be either physical, spoken or sung between members of a community while traveling along them. Many of our modern highways and roads constructed across the region follow the same paths as these ancient travelling routes, and some follow epic Songlines such as the Seven Sisters Dreaming track that is interwoven throughout Australia.

With more than 54 million tonnes of freight moving to and from the region in 2021, freight is a significant part of the regional transport task. The Central West and Orana plays a key strategic role in inter-regional connections to major Australian ports and markets including Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Canberra, Newcastle, Wollongong and west to Adelaide and Perth.

Local Government Areas



**Blue Mountains is a key stakeholder in the Central West and Orana SRITP, however is not included in the 19 identified LGAs in accordance with DPIE.*

19*

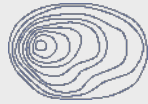
Bathurst
Blayney
Bogan
Cabonne
Coonamble
Cowra
Dubbo
Forbes
Gilgandra
Lachlan

Lithgow
Mid-Western
Narromine
Oberon
Orange
Parkes
Warren
Warrumbungle
Weddin



290,000

Approximate population of Central West and Orana making the region the fifth most populated in Regional NSW.



Home to the Wiradjuri, Wongaibon, Wailwan, Gamilaroi, Ngiyampaa, Dharug and Gundungurra people.

25

 Local Aboriginal Land Councils

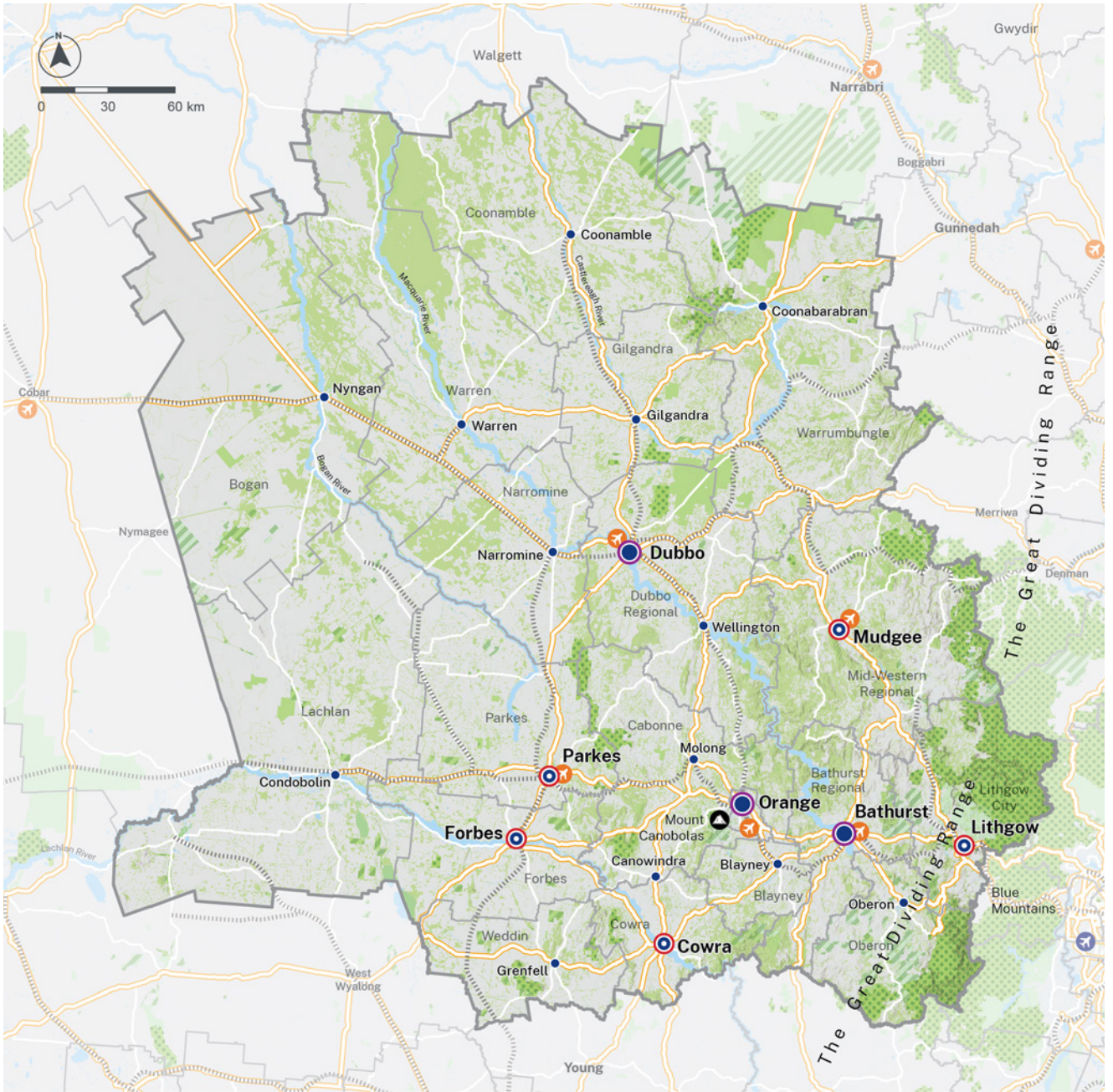
Newell, Barrier, Mitchell, Great Western, Oxley, Golden, Mid-Western, Olympic and Castlereagh highways.

9














 State highways within the Central West and Orana region.

1.2 Map of the region

The Central West and Orana region



KEY

-  Regional city
 -  Strategic centre
 -  Centre
 -  Mountain
 -  Regional airport
 -  Regional boundary
 -  Local government area
 -  State roads
 -  Regional roads
 -  Railway line
 -  High Environmental Value*
 -  National parks
 -  State forests
- * Includes NSW NPWS Estate. HEV dataset
 © State Government of NSW and NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water 2016.

2. Purpose of this report

This report outlines the early and staged engagement approach, as well as activities carried out by Transport for NSW (Transport) to seek feedback that has informed the Draft Plan from September 2024 until April 2025. This report also provides a high level summary of the themes captured during consultation with key stakeholders and community to date.

The Draft Plan has been developed with input from key stakeholders including Members of Parliament, local councils, and other representative groups. This includes feedback received through direct engagement, targeted meetings and workshops, in addition to previous engagement undertaken as part of the Central West and Orana Regional Transport Plan in 2022 - 2023.

The next phase of engagement will involve public exhibition of the Draft Plan, inviting the wider community to provide their feedback. Feedback received during public exhibition will inform the final plan which is expected to be complete in 2026.

2.1 Staged engagement approach

Transport is committed to consulting with the people, passengers, and communities it serves during the development of the SRITPs. Our plans will be outcomes focused and identify priority actions and initiatives that will both complement work being done by all levels of government and can progress into planning and delivery of initiatives in the region.

Engagement and consultation for the draft Central West and Orana SRITP is being delivered in a staged approach to ensure insights from key stakeholders and community can inform all stages of the Plan's development.

Key stakeholders identified for engagement on the Central West and Orana SRITP were categorised into three segments.

Segment 1: Program level stakeholders

- Statewide and not specific to the Central West and Orana region were contacted at a program level. Stakeholders include Unions, Freight, Country Women's Association, Government agencies, NSW Aboriginal Land Council
- Key engagement activities include formal letters inviting feedback and face-to-face engagement via meetings, briefings and workshops

Segment 2: Central West and Orana priority stakeholders

- Higher priority stakeholders specific to the region, some of which may be regional representatives of statewide stakeholders. Stakeholders include local Councils, Joint Organisations, LALCs, other Government and Non-Government agencies, peak bodies and advocacy groups
- Key engagement activities include formal letters inviting feedback and face-to-face engagement via meetings, briefings and workshops or drop-in sessions at various regional locations or online

Segment 3: Central West and Orana specific stakeholders

- Other stakeholders specific to the region. Stakeholders include transport operators, cycling groups, local producers, business and industry and community groups
- Key engagement activities include email invitation requesting inputs via the Have Your Say page

Stage	Objective	Dates
Development Stage (Stage 0)	Defining the vision and consider any previous consultation and insights	June 2024 (completed)
Targeted engagement (Stage 1)	Early engagement with Segment 1, 2 and 3. Re-engagement with key stakeholders to validate previous insights, including those who provided feedback previously on the Draft RTP, and invite further feedback to support insights and initiatives to formulate the Draft SRITP.	Aug 2024 – Mar 2025 (completed)
Public Exhibition (Stage 2)	Public exhibition of the Draft SRITP to the wider community for review and seek feedback and insights	Nov 3 – Dec 14, 2025 (Six weeks)
Final Release	Release of published SRITP and engagement summary of submissions report issued	2026

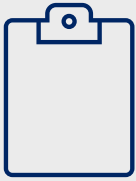

Transport is committed to ongoing engagement with key stakeholders, councils, communities and transport customers.

3. Previous engagement completed as part of the Draft Regional Transport Plan

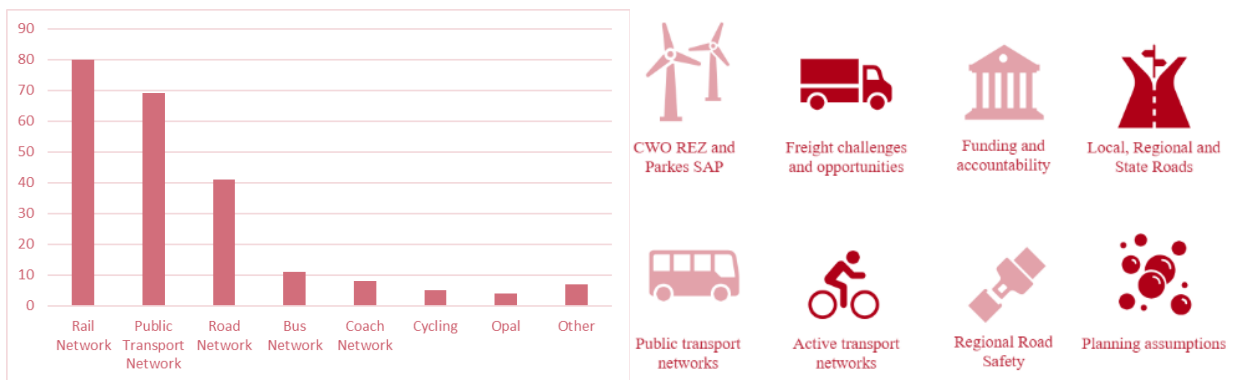
A significant amount of engagement was carried out in the Central West and Orana region during the development of the former Central West and Orana Regional Transport Plan (RTP). The Draft SRITP builds on the Draft RTP and feedback received during this engagement.

The Draft RTP was informed by direct engagement and workshops with key stakeholders, including representatives from local government, the Central NSW Joint Organisation, First Nations communities, peak bodies, and key NSW Government agencies including Department of Planning and Environment and the Department of Regional NSW.

The Draft RTP was placed on public exhibition from November 2022 until March 2023, with approximately 250 submissions received from various segments of the wider community, including industry, local interest groups, residents, visitors, business, and local government.

<p>Draft Regional Transport Plan online survey</p>  <p>250</p> <p>People completed the survey</p>	<p>Formal submissions on the former draft Regional Transport Plan</p>  <p>35</p> <p>Formal written submissions received</p>
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Some key themes during the previous engagement for the Draft Regional Transport Plan from councils and Joint Organisation specifically included:



4. SRITP targeted early engagement with key stakeholders

4.1 Objectives of early engagement – Stage 1

The purpose of this engagement was to leverage the detailed insights gathered during previous consultation and work with stakeholders to ensure the new Draft SRITP aligns with their priorities. During this engagement (Stage 1) we introduced the vision and purpose of the new SRITPs to key stakeholder groups in the Central West and Orana and sought to validate existing feedback and gain new insights to inform the new draft plan.

4.2 Target audience

The target audience for this engagement was key stakeholders across the region. Over 1000 stakeholders were identified in the Central West and Orana, many of whom were engaged during the Draft RTP. Stakeholders included, but were not limited to:

- NSW Government agencies
- State Members of Parliament
- Federal Ministers, Members of Parliament and Senators
- First Nation organisations and Local Aboriginal Land Councils
- Local councils
- Joint Organisations and Regional Leadership Executive groups
- Business and industry
- Freight
- Peak bodies
- Disability services and health
- Emergency services
- Energy and renewables
- Culturally and linguistically diverse community organisations
- Unions
- Local interest groups
- Community organisations or services.

4.3 Engagement tools and activities

A range of communication tools and activities were used during targeted initial engagement to encourage participation and allow stakeholders to give insights and feedback.

Engagement tool	Summary of activity
Have Your Say webpage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A NSW Government Have Your Say landing page for all SRITPs has been established with links to dedicated regional Have Your Say pages, including the Central West and Orana. • This page allows stakeholders to drop pins on an interactive map to offer suggestions and feedback on current transport issues, or ideas on transport solutions. This feature allows the user to be both specific with geotargeted search functions, as well as a free form “drop pin” onto a general location. This allows that type of submission to be both as specific and broad as the user would prefer. • The page also allows stakeholders to upload a written submission.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A series of QR codes designed into a postcard was developed linking to the Have Your Say page, to be included at any face-to-face opportunity, as well as a digital version embedded into presentations and briefings to stakeholders.
Communication and correspondence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bespoke letters and emails were sent to individual stakeholders from the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads and/or Regional Director Transport representatives. • These letters were tailored to stakeholders depending on whether they had previously been engaged or provided feedback for the RTP. • Letters and emails inviting stakeholders to provide their feedback via the Have Your Say page or invited them to attend a meeting with us. • A dedicated project email address for all SRITPs was established for the project team to communicate with stakeholders and allow for written feedback submissions.
Face-to-face workshops and meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face-to-face workshops introducing the SRITPs and follow up 1:1 online session have been carried out with several key stakeholders including councils. • Stakeholders were invited to face-to-face engagement opportunities across the region, including existing forums, road safety events and state network road opening events. • Segment 2 stakeholders were given the option to a follow up meeting with the project team following the briefing and the workshops held in Orange and Dubbo.
Online briefings and meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted online briefings and meetings have been carried out by request of several key stakeholders. • All stakeholders across the three segments have been engaged and given the opportunity to meet with Transport representatives via online briefings. • All segment 2 stakeholders and identified councils were invited and reminded of the opportunity to discuss the Central West and Orana SRITP for their region.

2		Face to face combined council workshops
More than 50+		Mayors, Councillors and council executive staff in attendance at workshops
More than 250		Ideas and suggestions during workshops and meetings
84		Pins on the Have Your Say portal
20		Local councils engaged
876		Key stakeholders engaged

5. Summary of SRITP early engagement activities

Transport for NSW is committed to consulting with the people, passengers and communities it serves during the development of the SRITPs. Our plans will be outcomes focused and identify priority actions and initiatives that will both complement work being done by all levels of government and can progress into planning and delivery of initiatives in the region.

5.1 Program wide stakeholders (Segment 1)

Transport carried out comprehensive engagement with stakeholders across the state who have an interest in all nine SRITPs. The main objective of this engagement was to introduce the SRITP program, enhance awareness, and explore ways to embed engagement with stakeholders in each region.

To achieve this, a variety of communication tools were used, including Ministerial correspondence, briefings, social and print media, and workshops.

5.1.1 Federal representatives

Federal Government representatives were engaged directly through the Minister's Office via a letter in July 2024.

As federal electorate boundaries cross SRITP boundaries, representatives were advised of all nine SRITPs. The letter from Transport offered representatives the opportunity to meet online or in person, as well as other ways to provide feedback and insights.

Stakeholder	Summary of engagement
The Hon Mark Coulton MP, Member for Parkes	Ministerial letter
The Hon Andrew Gee MP, Member for Calare	Ministerial letter
The Hon Michael McCormack MP, Member for Riverina	Ministerial letter

5.2 Central West and Orana key regional stakeholders (Segment 2 and Segment 3)

Engagement has been carried out with over 650 stakeholders specific to the Central West and Orana region, who were previously engaged in the Draft RTP process or were newly identified as stakeholders for the draft SRITP.

Transport engaged with over 65 specific stakeholders via email and sent letters introducing the SRITPs, inviting stakeholders to register for an online briefing or a face-to-face workshop with Transport at two regional locations including Dubbo and Orange. The letter also included details on how to provide feedback and insights, either through a formal submission or via the Have Your Say webpage.

5.2.1 State Members of Parliament (MPs)

State Members of Parliament were identified as key stakeholders and attended an online briefing with Transport representatives.

Stakeholder	Summary of engagement
Member for Dubbo, Dugald Saunders MP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • October 2024 –online briefing • Ministerial letter followed by Regional Director phone call
Member for Bathurst, Paul Toole MP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • October 2024 –online briefing • Ministerial letter followed by Regional Director phone call
Member for Orange, Phil Donato MP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • October 2024 –online briefing • Ministerial letter followed by Regional Director phone call
Member for Barwon, Roy Butler MP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministerial letter followed by Regional Director phone call
Member for Cootamundra, Stephanie Cooke MP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • October 2024 –online briefing • Ministerial letter followed by Regional Director phone call
Member for Blue Mountains, Trish Doyle MP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • October 2024 –online briefing • Ministerial letter followed by Regional Director phone call

5.2.2 Local councils

Transport completed the early phase (Stage 1) of community engagement for the Draft Plan in March 2025, after interactive workshops and follow up 1:1 sessions were held to address and validate the region's transport challenges. These workshops saw active participation from the Alliance of Western Councils, the Central NSW Joint Organisation, and their member councils.



Map of the Central West and Orana Region of NSW

The workshops included a series of interactive sessions where participants engaged in discussions, and group activities. Key topics covered included:

Current Transport Issues: Identifying and prioritising the most pressing transport challenges in the region.

Future Needs and Opportunities: Exploring potential options to meet future transport demand and respond to regional challenges such as increasing frequency and severity of environmental hazards.

Community Impact: Assessing how proposed transport initiatives could improve community outcomes for Central West and Orana residents.

Participants provided valuable insights and feedback, which has been instrumental in shaping the Draft Plan.



Council staff meeting with Transport Central West and Orana SRITP project team in Dubbo, NSW

The below is a summary of some key points captured during the October workshops and 1:1 engagement with Councils, the Western Alliance of Councils and the Central NSW Joint Organisation.

- Importance of endorsed plans and strategies for Regional NSW and the Central West and Orana region to provide transparency, increase certainty and improve confidence for council, industry and community.
- Criticality and vulnerability of connections between the region and Greater Sydney (particularly for the Central West region) and importance of north and south network road and rail networks, particularly for freight (Orana and Central West region).
- Impact of heavy vehicles on state, regional and local road networks, including where freight operators are forced to use alternative routes (e.g. during incidents)
- Challenges for councils in accessing funding through state (and state administered) programs, impacts of state budgetary cycles on council resources and stringency of road funding (particularly recovery funding) limiting opportunities for proactive road network improvement.
- Limited access to transport services for vulnerable users to essential services such as healthcare.
- Opportunity to improve Transport's communication with council, community and industry during incidents ranging from natural hazards like fires and floods to road closures due to vehicle incidents on key routes

5.2.3 Local Government Area Engagement

Stakeholder	Summary of engagement
Bathurst Regional Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft Regional Transport Plan submission • Letter to GM, David Sherley • Letter to Mayor Robert Taylor • Face to face workshop • 1:1 Follow up online briefing
Blayney Shire Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter to GM, Mark Dicker • Letter to Mayor Bruce Reynolds • Face to face workshop • 1:1 Follow up online briefing
Blue Mountains City Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter to CEO, Rosemary Dillon • 1:1 Follow up online briefing • Monthly coordination meeting with Transport
Bogan Shire Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter to GM, Derek Francis • Letter to Mayor, Glen Neill • Face to face workshop • Alliance of Western Councils face to face meeting
Cabonne Shire Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter to GM, Bradley Byrnes • Letter to Mayor, Kevin Beatty • Face to face workshop
Coonamble Shire Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter to GM, Paul Gallagher • Letter to Mayor, Daniel Keady • Face to face workshop

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alliance of Western Councils face to face meeting
Cowra Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft Regional Transport Plan submission • Letter to GM, Paul Devery • Letter to Mayor, Paul Smith • Face to face workshop • 1:1 Follow up online briefing
Dubbo Regional Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft Regional Transport Plan submission • Letter to CEO, Murray Wood • Letter to Mayor, Josh Black • Face to face workshop • Alliance of Western Councils face to face meeting
Forbes Shire Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft Regional Transport Plan submission • Letter to GM, Steve Loane • Letter to Mayor, Phyllis Miller • Face to face workshop • 1:1 Follow up online briefing
Gilgandra Shire Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter to GM, David Neeves • Letter to Mayor, Doug Batten • 1:1 Follow up online briefing • Alliance of Western Councils face to face meeting
Lachlan Shire Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft Regional Transport Plan submission • Letter to GM, Greg Tory • Letter to Mayor, John Medcalf • Face to face workshop
Lithgow Shire Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft Regional Transport Plan submission • Letter to GM, Ross Gurney • Letter to Mayor, Cassandra Coleman • Face to face workshop • 1:1 Follow up online briefing
Mid-Western Regional Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft Regional Transport Plan submission • Letter to GM, Brad Cam • Letter to Mayor, Des Kennedy • Face to face workshop • 1:1 Follow up online briefing • Alliance of Western Councils face to face meeting
Narromine Shire Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter to GM, Jane Redden • Letter to Mayor, Ewan Jones • Face to face workshop

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alliance of Western Councils face to face meeting
Oberon Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter to GM, Gary Wallace • Letter to Mayor, Andrew McKibbin • Face to face workshop
Orange City Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft Regional Transport Plan submission • Letter to CEO, David Waddell • Letter to Mayor, Tony Mileto • Face to face workshop • 1:1 Follow up online briefing
Parkes Shire Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft Regional Transport Plan submission • Letter to GM, Kent Boyd • Letter to Mayor, Neil Westcott • Face to face workshop • 1:1 Follow up online briefing
Warren Shire Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft Regional Transport Plan submission • Letter to GM, Gary Woodman • Letter to Mayor, Greg Whiteley • Face to face workshop • Alliance of Western Councils face to face meeting
Warrumbungle Shire Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft Regional Transport Plan submission • Letter to GM, Roger Bailey • Letter to Mayor, Kathryn Rindfleish • 1:1 Follow up online briefing • Alliance of Western Councils face to face meeting
Weddin Shire Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter to GM, Noreen Vu • Letter to Mayor, Paul Best • 1:1 Follow up online briefing

5.2.4 Local Aboriginal Land Councils

Local Aboriginal Land Councils (LALCs) within Central West and Orana were re-engaged following prior relationships developed through development of the Draft RTP and feedback received at that time informed the conversations about the Draft Plan.

Transport engaged with LALCs in the region via email, and online briefing and face to face engagement. A letter explaining the progression from RTP to SRITP and inviting the 22 LALCs across the region to attend an online session was sent in December 2024. An online session was held with Murrin Bridge and Condobolin LALCs in December 2024. Face to face engagement was carried out by Transport and meetings were held with the Three Rivers Assembly (TRA), Gulargambone, Gilgandra, Condobolin, Bathurst, Orange, Narromine, Wellington, Warren, Nyngan, Trangie, Coonamble (including Quambone), Peak Hill (including Parkes and Forbes), and Lake Cargelligo/Murrin Bridge, Cowra, Coonabarabran and Mudgee. These discussions with stakeholders included considerations of discrete Aboriginal communities and their needs in the context of the Central West and Orana.

Addressing the needs of and improving outcomes for Aboriginal people in the region is a key theme raised in feedback to date and a summary of issues and challenges raised is included in Section 6.1.1.

5.2.5 Regional representative groups

Several regional representative groups were identified as key stakeholders, and briefings and one-on-one meetings have taken place.

Stakeholder	Summary of engagement
Central NSW Joint Organisation (CNSWJO)	<p>August 2024 – Project Update with Transport for NSW</p> <p>August 2024 – Central NSW Integrated Transport Group monthly meeting</p> <p>October 2024 – Local government workshop with member Councils and executive in attendance at Orange</p> <p>November 2024 – CNSWJO Integrated Transport Group project update</p> <p>November 2024 – Central NSW Integrated Transport Group online follow-up briefing and listening session</p>
Alliance of Western Councils	<p>October 2024 – Local government workshop to member Councils in attendance at Dubbo</p> <p>November 2024 – Face to face presentation at Dubbo</p>
Mudgee Region Rail	June 2024 – online briefing and listening session
West Regional Leadership Executive	November 2024 – online briefing and presentation
Lithgow Community Power Project and UTS	<p>July 2024 – Lithgow City Council and Lithgow Community Power Project Meeting</p> <p>October 2024 - online briefing and listening session</p>
Newell Highway Taskforce Meeting	October 2024 – Monthly update and online briefing
Three Rivers Assembly	March 2025 - Aboriginal engagement team meeting
Central West and Orana LALCs	Tuesday December -2024 Online Briefing including Murrin Bridge and Condobolin LALC

5.2.6 Other key regional stakeholders

Other region-specific stakeholders, including local businesses, associations, community groups and interest groups, were engaged via email. An initial email was sent in September 2024 inviting over 660 regional stakeholders to provide feedback via the Have Your Say page. A follow up email reminding stakeholders to give feedback was sent in December 2024

Below is a summary of stakeholder meetings and online sessions that have been carried out.

Stakeholder	Summary of engagement
Segment 1 Stakeholders	Individual Letter
ARTC	GrainCorp
BusNSW	Country Women's Association NSW
Community Transport Organisation Ltd	NSW Farmers
Segment 1 Stakeholders	Consult Individual Letter
Australia Post	NRMA
Australian Energy Council	NSW Taxi Council
Bicycle NSW	NSW Tourism Association
Business NSW	Pedestrian Council of Australia Ltd
Disability Advocacy Network Australia	Shelter NSW
Housing Industry Association	
Segment 1 Stakeholders	Inform only Individual Letter
Australian Federation of Employers and Industries (AFEI)	Youth Tourism NSW
Australian Food & Grocery Council (AFGC)	Consult Australia (Built environment sector)
Australian Hotels Association NSW	Council of Australian Tour Operators (CATO)
Australian Institute of Marine and Power Engineers	Australian Electric Vehicle Association
Australian Public Transport Industrial Association (APTIA)	Energy Networks Australia
Australian Regional Tourism Ltd	Ethnic Communities Council of NSW
Boating Industry Association	GrainCorp
Caravan & Camping Industry Association NSW	Institute of Public Works Engineering Australia (IPWEA)
Clean Energy Council Australia	Local Community Services Association NSW
Community Housing Industry Association of NSW (CHIA NSW)	Timber NSW Ltd
Segment 2 Stakeholders	Online Briefing

Business NSW	October 2024 –online briefing and listening session
Department of Primary Industries & Regional Development -Regional Economic Development Central West	October 2024 –online briefing and listening session
Destination Central West	October 2024 –online briefing and listening session
Institute of Public Works Engineering Australasia (NSW & ACT)	October 2024 –online briefing and listening session
Jenolan Caves Reserve Trust	October 2024 –online briefing and listening session
Ministry of Health, Regional Health Division	October 2024 –online briefing and listening session
NSW Health	October 2024 –online briefing and listening session
Regional Development Australia -Central West	October 2024 –online briefing and listening session
Regional Growth NSW Development Corporation	October 2024 –online briefing and listening session
Service NSW Business Bureau	October 2024 –online briefing and listening session
Western NSW Local Health District	October 2024 –online briefing and listening session
Segment 3 Stakeholders	E blast
884 stakeholders comprising of Transport operators, cycling groups, local producers, business and industry and community groups	Email directing them to the Have Your Say website

This early engagement phase (Stage 1) of targeted engagement concluded in March 2025.

The majority of feedback and insights were received through stakeholder meetings, workshops and the Have Your Say website.

Refer to [Appendix C](#) for summary of the pins which reflect the themes heard in Section 6 of this report.

The draft Central West and Orana SRITP will be on public exhibition from 3 November to 14 December 2025. During this period, Transport will deliver a six-week community engagement campaign to maximise community engagement and gather feedback on the Draft Plan. Engagement activities include public drop-in sessions and consultations, online surveys, and stakeholder meetings to ensure diverse input, as well as opportunities for the wider community to have their say via the ‘Have Your Say’ engagement portal.

6. Key themes

This section outlines the key themes heard through feedback to date, which has informed the Draft Plan. Through consultation with regional stakeholders, we heard that improving access to transport options is vital to ensure equitable access to education, healthcare, employment, recreation, and for building business and social connections.

While there are many unique challenges and geographical constraints, stakeholders emphasised the need for an integrated transport network that supports private, public and active transport, and one that accommodates the diverse needs of communities within the region.

The objectives of the early engagement to inform the Draft Plan included:

- Collaborate and reconnect with key stakeholder groups previously consulted during the Central West and Orana RTP and seek feedback regional challenges and opportunities
- Gather feedback from key stakeholders on regional challenges and opportunities for the Draft Plan to respond to
- Leverage stakeholder insights to inform the narrative of the Draft Plan and accurately articulate the challenges and opportunities for the region prior to public exhibition of the Draft Plan.

6.1 Aboriginal outcomes



Aboriginal people can face unique challenges in accessing and using the transport network, and there are opportunities to partner with Aboriginal communities to co-design transport networks and services which improve Aboriginal people's access to transport networks which will support improved outcomes for Aboriginal people. Transport recognises each Aboriginal community within the region is unique; however, consultation has revealed several recurring challenges for Aboriginal people. Transport is fundamentally linked to many of the broader challenges raised by Aboriginal people in the region, including access to healthcare, education and employment.

The relationship between Transport's Starting with Country framework and delivering better outcomes for Aboriginal people is difficult to articulate to engaged stakeholders. Additionally, the relationship between Planning with Country and Aboriginal outcomes (including Closing the Gap) and improving road safety outcomes needs to be clarified.

Connectivity to and from Aboriginal communities is a major issue throughout NSW. There is a lack of active transport connectivity from some communities to town (to access goods, services and employment), public transport and cultural places. Due to many communities being outside of main town centres, public transport access is very limited.

As part of our early engagement, we heard from the Three Rivers Assembly and Central West and Orana's LALCs of Gulargambone, Gilgandra, Condobolin, Bathurst, Orange, Narromine, Wellington, Warren, Nyngan, Trangie, Coonamble (including Quambone), Peak Hill (including Parkes and Forbes), and Lake Cargelligo/Murrin Bridge, Cowra and Coonabarabran.

From this consultation, the Aboriginal community have concerns around limited transportation options, particularly for the elderly, and challenges with accessing support services. The primary issues highlighted are the lack of transport beyond Dubbo and Orange to metropolitan cities with higher order services like Sydney, which is critical for medical appointments and other needs, as elderly community members struggle to travel alone and family members are often unavailable during the week due to work commitments.

Key messages we heard:

- Equitable access to health, education, and other government services is critical for improving outcomes for Aboriginal communities. Ensuring these services are available and accessible is a priority for achieving better health and educational outcomes.
- Providing diverse transport options, including walking, public transport, and on-demand services, is essential for all trips. This is particularly important for remote Aboriginal communities, where equitable access to transport choices is necessary for day-return journeys and seasonal travel.
- The presence of diverse opinions within transport agencies, councils, and Aboriginal groups makes gaining consensus and developing a shared vision more complex. This diversity requires careful consideration and inclusive dialogue to achieve a unified approach.
- There is a need for transparency, consistency, and certainty in decision-making processes related to 'Planning with Country' and Aboriginal outcomes. Establishing clear and consistent processes for place and infrastructure naming is necessary to ensure fairness and respect for Aboriginal culture.
- Transport plays a significant role as a major direct employer of Aboriginal people and as a facilitator of Aboriginal tourism, which contributes to economic independence.
- There is a need for consolidated and common data related to 'Planning with Country' and Aboriginal outcomes.
- Engaging with Aboriginal culture and communities through initiatives like 'Walking on Country' is essential for fostering respect and understanding. This engagement should be integrated into planning and decision-making processes to ensure culturally appropriate outcomes.



6.2 Road safety and safe places

Road safety is a key concern for stakeholders and the wider community in the Central West and Orana region, and includes issues such as driver fatigue, reducing the road toll, speed zones, better road conditions and infrastructure, as well as personal security when using public transport or active transport options.

There is a high rate of fatigue and speed-related crashes in the region which exceeds state averages. Reducing fatalities and serious injuries on the road network, and prioritising solutions to achieve this, is considered essential for improving safety for all road users in the region. Stakeholders are keen to understand what Transport is doing to improve safety on the road network.

Key messages we heard about safety organised into themes:

Travel options

- Provide compelling travel options beyond private vehicles, including walking, bike riding, public transport (including on-demand) services, and community or peer-to-peer transport, including in the evenings and on weekends.
- Utilise modern, safer vehicles for public transport.

Education:

- Address speeding culture through education programs.
- Enhance enforcement on main, local, and regional roads, including transition zones.
- Campaigns to increase support for speed limits and speed enforcement.
- Regulate and patrol dangerous behaviours like tailgating and educate drivers about safe following distances.
- Improve heavy vehicle driver testing and licensing requirements to ensure necessary skills and knowledge.
- Educate drivers about risks associated with animal strikes, rural and regional driving conditions such as rain, dust and country animals (kangaroos, wombats, goats, livestock) and roadside vegetation impacts.
- Provide education and awareness specific to caravanning and towing.
- Address safety concerns around older vehicles through education about maintenance and newer, safer options.

Road safety and maintenance:

- Link road safety, disaster recovery, and maintenance funding to deliver better road networks.
- Consider bypasses for local placemaking and movement outcomes.
- Larger vehicles can pose risks to vulnerable road users like pedestrians and bike riders.
- Maintenance is a road safety issue, and speed limits should not be reduced to account for poor maintenance.
- Ensure consistent application of speed limits, including 40km/h zones around schools and on main streets.

Vehicle safety and technology:

- Prioritise fleet turnover and in-vehicle safety technology adoption for heavy vehicle fleets, e.g. fatigue management.
- Address resistance to in-vehicle safety tech for regular cars and motorists.

Motorcycling and pedestrian safety:

- Recognise motorcycling as a high-risk mode of transport and plan accordingly.
- Prioritise pedestrian safety in regional settings through infrastructure that supports safe and convenient walking routes.

Speed limits and network efficiency:

- Speed limits to be set in context to travel times on long distance/low travel roads.

- Support, where safe to do so, network efficiency outcomes on regional roads.
- Councils to continue to offer in-house road safety expertise, and to be consulted by Transport for speed zone reviews in their areas.

Communication and infrastructure:

- Address communication gaps between the regional rail staff and local councils to support infrastructure improvements.
- Ensure adequate street lighting for personal security, particularly in identified areas.



Road safety campaign – caravan weighing day in West Region



6.3 Public transport and connectivity

The Central West and Orana is currently served by a diverse range of public transport options including buses, flexible on-demand services, coaches, community transport and trains. Despite this, better public transport and connectivity is a recurring issue raised by key stakeholders, noting there are varied community and individual needs of urban, rural and remote LGAs.

Consultation has revealed there is a need for better access to, and increased services for bus and rail, improved connections between centres and improved timetabling. There are also a number of barriers to accessing public transport, including the availability and frequency of services, and the ability to use services, for example: booking a trip, using cashless payments or understanding their options with Regional Excursion Daily (RED) tickets.

Another consistent issue raised is that the region's residents are less familiar with public transport and experience few disincentives to car use.

Key messages we heard:

- School bus services are well-used and help to address socio-economic disadvantage.
- Cheaper and affordable air travel is crucial for regional growth as well as improved links needed between towns and their airports.

- Access to major cities including Canberra, Newcastle and Wollongong are often overlooked. Regional people are interested in and access services on major cities other than Sydney.
- Far western areas of the Central West and Orana have less access to services compared to eastern areas.
- Main centres in Central West and Orana are housing 80 per cent of the population, so public transport is crucial in these areas.
- Local bus stop infrastructure needs improvement, especially familiarity with branding.
- School bus services are to be included in planning as a critical service for Central West and Orana community and may need specific models outside of a template approach.
- Faster inter-regional access is needed.
- Public transport choices in regional cities may not suit rural centres. Request that each LGA has consultation when implementing a new public transport service.
- Request for corridor plans for Central West and Orana regions, that would segment and identify areas for public transport and connectivity.
- E-bikes need proper facilities and integration with public transport.
- Ageing volunteers impact community transport services as they are looking to retire and have no one to replace them.
- Pro-active resilience works needed for certain roads, raised by a number of LGAs that are subject matter experts in their local areas.
- More frequent rail shuttles and better integration at transport hubs.



Bathurst Railway Station



6.4 Active transport

A challenge noted by stakeholders in the region is enhancing active transport options. Bicycles, for instance, require dedicated, separated on-road facilities to ensure rider safety and prevent conflicts with motor vehicles. Community support for active transport, including walking and bike riding, is strong in the region. This positive attitude towards active travel indicates a readiness to adopt healthier and more sustainable travel options. Well-designed bus stops

can encourage walking by providing safe and accessible points for public transport connections.

Proactive resilience works on key roads are the region's response for improving safety and accessibility for all road users, including those using active transport modes. These works ensure that roads remain passable and safe under various conditions, supporting continuous use of active transport. By focusing on these areas, the Transport can create a safer, more convenient, and supportive environment for active transport, encouraging more residents to choose walking, bike riding, and e-biking as viable travel options.

Enabling mode shift to active transport provides health, environmental and economic benefits foster more resilient, equitable, inclusive and liveable communities.

Key messages we heard:

- E-Bikes need separated on-road facilities and integration with trains for longer journeys.
- Active transport is supported by the community, indicating a positive attitude towards walking and bike riding.
- Electric aviation should be considered as a viable opportunity for the medium to long-term.
- Proactive resilience works on key roads can improve safety and accessibility for active transport users.



Cyclists in Bathurst



6.5 Resilience

The Central West and Orana region of NSW has faced a series of natural disasters in recent years, such as bushfires, floods, storms, and a global pandemic. These events bring social, economic and environmental challenges, placing considerable strain on the region's transport network and disrupting travel for everyone on the roads. The effects linger in the community well beyond the events themselves. This is clear from the feedback provided by

local stakeholders in the region, who have felt these impacts firsthand and are eager to be better equipped for the future.

Key messages we heard:

- Parts of the transport network are susceptible to flooding, bush fires and severe weather events, with some routes lacking defined alternatives capable of handling high traffic volumes during prolonged closures of state road network. Where alternatives exist, they are regional or local roads susceptible to damage by heavy freight vehicles.
- Stakeholders expect the Central West Orana Renewable Energy Zone construction and operations to strain the region's road freight network. Suggest exploring the opportunity for local manufacturing of components to reduce reliance on imports, easing pressure on transport routes.
- The north-south (particularly the Newell) and east-west (particularly the Great Western Highway) road network is vital for transporting the region's freight but remains vulnerable.
- State, regional, and local roads (approved and alternate) suffer significant wear from heavy vehicles, exacerbating network damage.
- Bridges, culverts and causeways on road and rail networks, especially in flood-prone, low-lying areas, are critical to the network but are at risk, affecting connectivity.
- After closures, there's pressure to reopen networks quickly and safely, but this competes with the need to invest in long-term network improvements (betterment).
- Improved communications between Transport, communities, councils, and industry during incidents (e.g. natural hazards or road closures) is required to reduce frustration amongst collaborators. There is an identified need and opportunity to improve channels, visibility and accessibility of alternative routes with greater collaboration and timing of information.
- Councils face challenges in securing state funding in a timely and efficient manner and are constrained by program / funding criteria which limits funding flexibility, impacts council resources and affects achievement of long term local road improvements
- Recovery funding often prioritises "like-for-like" repairs over "betterment" or new infrastructure, constraining resilience efforts.



6.6 Freight

We heard the Central West and Orana plays a key role in the movement of freight across NSW and interstate including via key routes such as the Newell Highway from the Victorian border to the Queensland border. Over the next 20 years, the freight task for the Central West and Orana is expected to increase significantly, and a key theme raised by stakeholders is the opportunity to improve freight movement in the region through better transport infrastructure.

Key commodities for the Central West and Orana include coal, agricultural commodities, construction materials and forestry. Greater Sydney is currently

the primary destination for road freight whereas the Illawarra-Shoalhaven and the Hunter are the primary destinations for rail freight. Fuel is the largest inbound freight commodity.

The Central West and Orana plays a key strategic role in inter-regional connections to major Australian ports and markets including Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Canberra and west to Adelaide and Perth. Improvements to the Newell Highway and the development of the Inland Rail corridor will provide stronger connections to Brisbane and Melbourne, opening up new export pathways for goods produced in the region and alternative markets to Sydney. This will place a stronger importance on the Parkes Special Activation Precinct (SAP) as a logistics hub, which is within 12 hours of 80 per cent of Australia's population. It is likely that the amount of freight moving through the region will continue to grow as a result of these projects. Additional rail freight may come from new freight tasks, such as those associated with Parkes SAP.



Inland Rail in West Region

Key messages we heard:

- The Draft Plan must consider how all economies in the region connect, not just the larger LGAs, to support equal and sustained growth.
- Inland Rail could boost rail freight and collaborate with existing and new intermodal terminals, easing demand on the road network.
- Agriculture (e.g. grain harvest) creates short, intense freight demands in traditional harvest seasons, followed by a slower season of movements outwards, requiring flexible transport planning.
- Large AB-triple vehicles, a prime mover towing three trailers, strain narrow regional roads (often just one sealed lane), which generally aren't equipped to withstand such loads.
- In general, we heard that allowing bigger vehicles on roads without upgrading them has caused problems – once access is given, it's hard to reverse, resulting in deterioration of the network over time.

- Smart cameras monitor state roads but calls for adopting this technology to regional and local alternate routes could improve freight movement insights. This theme also came up when discussing real vs. perceived impacts of heavy vehicles on roads.
- Partnering with industry was one idea from feedback that could enhance rest stop maintenance and facilities, benefiting heavy vehicle drivers and communities. Overall, rest stops are a focus of contention, with calls for more of them to be installed, and current ones brought up to modern standards
- Inland Rail, Intermodal Terminals (IMT), and Special Activation Precincts (SAP) offer chances to streamline freight operations. Similarly, to the Inland Rail potential, these hubs identified, offer an opportunity to sync with an ecosystem that boosts efficiency and eases the network for all motorists.



6.7 Land use planning

The Central West and Orana region is expected to continue to grow, and an effective use of land would support the delivery of successful places. We heard from key stakeholders that increased transport options are essential for providing well-located housing and employment.

A range of larger and smaller health facilities and tertiary education facilities serve the region and are more concentrated east of the Newell Highway. Due to the region's central location, the health and education services serve a catchment that extends west, north and south. Particularly the catchment of Dubbo's health service which extends into Far Western NSW. Next to Dubbo, the largest health services are found in Orange and Bathurst. Specialist health services and education opportunities still require residents to travel to Greater Sydney, Newcastle, Canberra or Wollongong.

The region is known for its high-quality agricultural produce, featuring both cropping and livestock, enabled by fertile and diverse soil types. Almost 70 per cent of the regions productive agricultural land is used for grazing. Food manufacturing businesses thrive off the region's agriculture, including food production and packaging. Coal mining remains the region's largest industry by Gross Value Added, making up 26 per cent of the regional economy, however, the extraction and export of coal from the region are expected to steadily decline over the next twenty years. Other major resources mined in the region include gold, copper and critical minerals such as lithium. Employment in agriculture, manufacturing and mining represents a significant proportion of the workforce at 20 per cent.

The Central West Orana Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) will deliver clean, affordable, and reliable energy, as well as creating around 5,000 jobs. The REZ will include infrastructure to generate, store and transport clean energy, including large scale wind and solar farms, batteries and transmission network infrastructure.

Key messages we heard:

- Explore opportunities for densification in existing centres as an alternative to or as part of the mix with greenfield development to

meet demand for housing and offer a mix of housing typologies for regional residents.

- Permit new housing developments to have direct access to the state/arterial road network.
- The objective for growth is clear, but implementation is challenging.
- Develop Electric Vehicle (EV) charging stations as activated shared places to dwell, with complementary services, such as food and entertainment.
- Transport is often a means to enable housing and other land uses.
- Lack of interagency communication can lead to infrastructure gaps in greenfield and existing communities.
- "Successful" places should encompass safety and vibrancy.
- Delivering green infrastructure in brownfield development is important but difficult.
- Increase variety of housing supply, including higher density in the Central West and Orana.
- Provide walking and cycling infrastructure connecting to meaningful destinations.
- Lack of available land for development is a constraint.
- The contributions cap for developers limits council's income.
- Lack of opportunities and incentives for the ageing population to downsize.



Dubbo Town Centre, NSW



6.8 Environment

Reducing the impact of transport on the environment has been a theme in engagement, however there are many challenges in how we achieve and respond to this in the Central West and Orana. Stakeholders are keen to understand how Transport will meet its commitment to reduce emissions by 50 per cent by 2030 and Net Zero emissions by 2050. Transport sector activities account for 19 per cent of NSW's emissions. However, by 2030 it is projected to be the largest single source of emissions.

Achieving net zero emissions in the transport sector will require a coordinated and determined change in the way that Transport operates and in the way that customers across NSW carry out their journeys. Promoting sustainable travel choices, such as increasing electric vehicle ownership and promoting low emissions freight and buses, are considered key to reducing the transport sector's impact on climate change. Feedback was also provided about the

need to increase public transport usage to reduce emissions and reliance on private vehicle transport.

During the engagement sessions, stakeholders highlighted that across the Central West and Orana region, the car is the dominant mode of travel, accounting for the majority of all trips to work. This was attributed to the ease of vehicle travel in regional centres where there is limited congestion and ample parking available. Stakeholders also noted the limited public transport options for local trips, as well as the flexibility that a private vehicle offers for point-to-point travel.

As the regional centres continue to grow and the population changes, stakeholders emphasised the increasing importance of attractive alternatives to private vehicle transport, particularly for those customers without access to a car. With an ageing population in the Central West and Orana, stakeholders stressed that multi-modal travel options will be crucial to support older people to age in place.

Stakeholders called on Transport to work collaboratively with councils to seek opportunities to enhance multi-modal connectivity both within and between villages, towns and regional centres. This includes improving infrastructure and services for walking, bike riding, rail, local bus and point-to-point transport.

There is an aim to increase electric vehicle uptake, however barriers such as limited access to charging stations in the region are perceived as a barrier to achieving this.

Key messages we heard:

- Consider using "minimise emissions" instead of "net zero" as long travel distances will always result in higher emissions compared to urban areas.
- Increase EV charging infrastructure to meet demand and enable businesses to accommodate chargers. This could create opportunities for commercial development.
- Electric aviation should be considered as a viable opportunity for the medium to long-term.
- Address concerns that road infrastructure may not be suitable for heavier electric vehicles.
- Invest in public transport services and bicycle networks to reduce reliance on private vehicles and associated emissions. Lack of funding is a key barrier.
- Explore ways to reduce embodied emissions in new infrastructure, such as using alternative materials or incorporating travel demand management.
- Develop and enforce plans to electrify commercial vehicles and freight.
- Improve collaboration between Transport agencies to fast-track delivery of emission-reducing initiatives.
- Consider the need for park and ride facilities to access major centres.



6.9 Economy

The Central West and Orana's economic output has historically been linked to its primary industries. Now, about 60-70 per cent of Gross Regional Product is generated by service industries such as healthcare, social assistance, education, and retail. With automation beginning to impact the job generating capacity of many primary industries, service industries will likely continue to be the largest employer in the region. Growth in service industries will be concentrated in the region's largest population centres.

We heard that enhancing the transport network is essential to support a thriving and diverse economy, including visitor economy, agribusiness and movement of freight. Retaining existing and attracting new businesses, including advanced transport technology, visitor economy, and supporting the region's local economy and jobs, is essential for sustainable economic growth, particularly as coal mining jobs decline.

Key messages we heard:

- The Draft Plan needs to reflect and understand the relationship between the economies within the region, not just focus on the larger LGA economies.
- Lack of housing for employees, particularly in more regional centres, is hampering the ability for industries to attract people and maintain/grow their operations.
- Opportunities to leverage Inland Rail to support higher rail freight mode share and connections with existing and potential intermodal terminals.
- Opportunistic opening of the road network to larger vehicles has created issues, as it is now difficult to restrict access, and investment in the road network has not kept pace with changes in permitted road users.
- Opportunities to partner with industry on the operation and maintenance of rest stops, while also providing better facilities.
- Opportunities to integrate Inland Rail and the freight network, including intermodal terminals and special activation precincts.
- The Central West and Orana region could be positioned as a test bed for future technology and innovation in NSW.
- Potential benefits of leveraging Inland Rail and improving road links to intermodals to increase other freight movements by rail to the Port of Newcastle.
- Retaining population, attracting new businesses and visitors is critical for the region's success, beyond just cheap land/housing
- Opportunity to support Aboriginal business and economic independence
- Investing in rail trail networks to promote bicycle tourism



Image of Camp Street Bridge and Lake Forbes.



6.10 Access to transport

Central West and Orana residents require regular access to a range of jobs, education, health, recreation, and social destinations and services. Co-locating these destinations and residential populations can help minimise the frequency and length of trips, while maximising the use of active and public transport. This integrated approach to land use and transport planning, as well as travel demand management, can help minimise transport externalities on the region's existing and future communities.

The market viability of local and regionally significant destinations is largely determined by the size of the populations they serve. For example, local primary schools may be viable in smaller regional towns, while high schools may only be viable where they serve a larger catchment.

Currently, good access to both local and regionally important destinations is limited to residents living in the region's main population centres. Only around 35 per cent of the region's residents live in areas with easy access to a variety of local and regional destinations. Furthermore, this accessibility is inequitably distributed, with LGAs containing large population centres (e.g. Orange) benefiting more than more rural LGA (e.g. Cabonne). Analysing the relative accessibility of destinations can help identify where increased proximity to services is likely to deliver travel demand management benefits, versus where improved rural mobility options are a higher priority.

The local community recognises the critical role the transport network plays in connecting people to essential services across the region. To meet the needs of all residents, regardless of age, ability or income, the community and local councils believe that the Draft Plan needs to recognise a variety of transport services and infrastructure that support multimodal travel options.

The Central West and Orana community has embraced flexible point-to-point transport options, such as taxis, hire cars and rideshare, which provide convenient travel choices, especially in areas with limited public transport.

The community is also eager to see the continued trialling of on-demand transport services to explore new, flexible approaches to meeting the region's evolving mobility needs.

Overall, the community is supportive of the collaborative efforts between Transport and local councils to develop an integrated, accessible and customer-focused transport system that serves the diverse needs of the region.

Key messages we heard:

- Some residents have less access to private vehicle mobility, and provision of higher order services in parts of the region (i.e. more rural areas) is not viable.
- Public transport services do not compete with private vehicle journeys for most local, regional, and state-significant trips, particularly in more rural parts of the region.
- Challenging topography is not limited to the Blue Mountains region, but various eastern parts of the Central West, including Bathurst and Orange.
- Active transport is generally supported by communities in the Central West and Orana.
- Cheap, competitive and accessible air travel is critical to regional access, attractiveness, and growth.
- Linking residents of Bathurst and Orange to Orange airport is important.
- Access to the ACT is often overlooked in favour of Sydney.
- The 'western' Central West and Orana region has far less access to regional destinations and services compared to the eastern areas, resulting in equity issues.
- Public transport service levels (e.g. one service per week) are insufficient to address equity issues or drive mode shift and public transport patronage growth.
- Fixed route/timetable bus services often do not meet service level or patronage expectations (e.g. failed trials in Cowra).
- Regional travel choices are limited compared to Sydney.
- Local bus stop infrastructure is often poorly designed and maintained.
- School bus services are critical, and alternative vehicle/service models may be needed if large buses are not viable
- Inter-regional access needs to be faster.
- Understanding resident and visitor trip purposes is important.
- Linking access equity to population demographics (age, disability, socio-economics) is necessary.
- Public transport links to regional destinations should be a priority.
- Public transport choices in regional cities may not be appropriate for more rural centres.
- Active transport options are supported by Central West and Orana communities, as long as the access to these options is widespread.
- Consideration of a Lithgow transport hub with a more frequent Orange to Lithgow shuttle, transferring to inter-city services.

7. Next steps

Feedback and insights from key stakeholders has informed the Draft Plan which will be publicly displayed for wider community feedback from 3 November to 14 December 2025.

Community consultation is an important part of the planning process and feedback will help develop and prioritise future transport initiatives. Initial consultation was completed in early 2025 and has informed the Draft Plan currently on exhibition.

Post-exhibition, the Draft Plan will be refined based on feedback from the community and key stakeholders. The final Central West and Orana SRITP is expected to be published in 2026.

To continue to provide insights and suggestions about how to improve transport in the Central West and Orana, visit <https://www.haveyoursay.nsw.gov.au/sritp/central-west-and-orana> to provide feedback or a submission

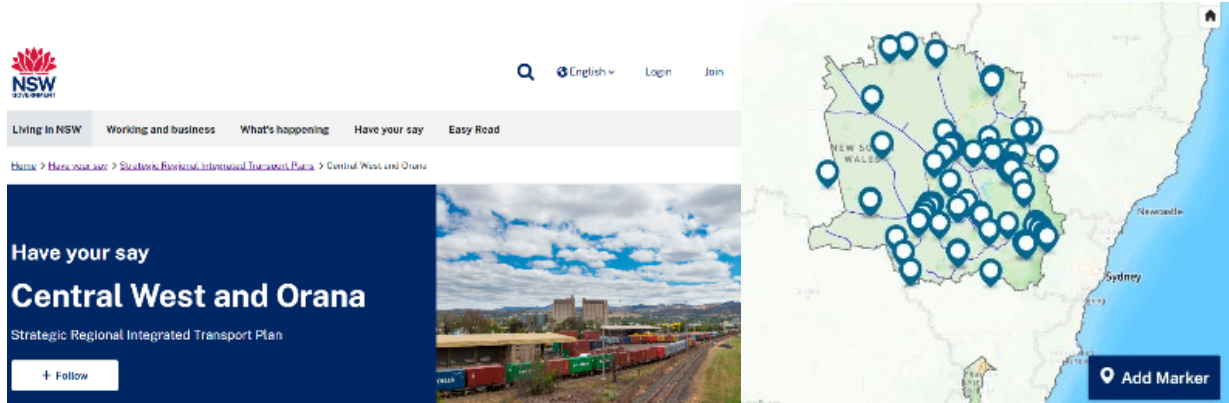


Transport services in Western NSW

8. Appendices

8.1 Collateral and engagement resources

Have your say website



Postcard



8.2 Appendix B – Program wide stakeholder engagement (Segment 1)

Type	Sub groups	Engagement method
Local government	LG NSW Mayors GMs	Existing briefings Letters Briefings
Government	MPs Senators Ministers Offices	Targeted briefings Letters
Cross border and Federal agencies	VIC, ACT, SA, QLD transport agencies	Regular briefings Formal submissions 1:1 briefings

Passengers and communities	Community groups / bodies Advocacy groups Aboriginal representatives	Have your Say Platform Virtual briefings / workshops Formal feedback Regional roadshow / face-to-face
Transport operators	Community Transport Public transport Peak bodies, (i.e. Bus NSW)	Have your Say Platform Virtual briefings / workshops Formal feedback
Industry & business	Industry representatives Peak bodies Chambers of Commerce	Have your Say Platform Virtual briefings / workshops Formal feedback Supported by targeted social media. Existing forums
Unions	Unions NSW	Existing forums Letters Submissions Briefings
Emergency Services	SES NSW Fire RFS Ambulance Police	Existing forums Targeted surveys EDMs

8.3 Appendix C – Non-government program wide stakeholder engagement (Segment 1)

Stakeholder	Method
ARTC	Letter, workshop
Australia Post	Letter - invitation to engage
Australian Electric Vehicle Association	Letter - invitation to engage
Australian Energy Council	Letter - invitation to engage
Australian Federation of Employers and Industries (AFEI)	Letter - invitation to engage
Australian Food & Grocery Council (AFGC)	Letter - invitation to engage
Australian Hotels Association NSW	Letter - invitation to engage
Australian Institute of Marine and Power Engineers	Letter - invitation to engage
Australian Public Transport Industrial Association (APTIA)	Letter - invitation to engage

Australian Regional Tourism Ltd	Letter - invitation to engage
Bicycle NSW	Letter - invitation to engage, follow-up email correspondence
Boating Industry Association	Letter - invitation to engage
Business NSW	Letter - invitation to engage
BusNSW	Letter, briefing
Caravan & Camping Industry Association NSW	Letter - invitation to engage
Clean Energy Council Australia	Letter - invitation to engage
Coalition of Peak Aboriginal Bodies	Briefing
Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association	Email correspondence, follow-up briefing
Community Housing Industry Association of NSW (CHIA NSW)	Letter - invitation to engage
Community Transport Organisation Ltd	Letter, briefing
Consult Australia (Built environment sector)	Letter - invitation to engage
Council of Australian Tour Operators (CATO)	Letter, briefing
Country Women's Association NSW	Letter, briefings
Disability Advocacy Network Australia	Letter - invitation to engage
Energy Networks Australia	Letter - invitation to engage
Ethnic Communities Council of NSW	Letter - invitation to engage
GrainCorp	Letter, briefings
Housing Industry Association	Letter
IPWEA NSW	Briefing
LBRCA	Forum
Local Community Services Association NSW	Letter - invitation to engage
Local Government NSW	Letter - invitation to engage
Maritime Union of Australia	Forum
National Road Transport Association	Briefing
NHVR	Briefings

NRMA	Letter, briefing
NSW Farmers	Letter, briefing, conference
NSW Ports	Briefings
NSW Taxi Council	Letter - invitation to engage
NSW Tourism Association	Letter - invitation to engage
Pedestrian Council of Australia Ltd	Letter - invitation to engage
Ports Australia	Forum
Qube	Forum
Rail, Tram and Bus Union	Forum
Regional Cities NSW	Letter - invitation to engage
Road Freight NSW	Briefing
Shelter NSW	Letter - invitation to engage
Timber NSW Ltd	Letter - invitation to engage
Transport Workers Union	Letter, submission
Unions NSW	Letter, briefings, forum
Woolworths	Forum
Youth Tourism NSW	Letter - invitation to engage

8.4 Appendix D – Have Your Say geotargeted feedback grouped by Local Government Area

Transport received more than 87 map pins with local transport insights and feedback. Comments highlighted a range of transport challenges and priorities across the Central West and Orana region.

Common themes included the need for improved public transport connectivity, particularly rail services, to connect regional centres with major hubs like Sydney, Canberra, Wollongong and Newcastle. There was a focus on improving road infrastructure, including duplicating or upgrading major highways, adding overtaking lanes, and addressing maintenance and safety issues on regional and local roads. There was an emphasis on the importance of active transport infrastructure like footpaths and pedestrian crossings, especially around schools and community facilities. Several comments called for better rest stops and fatigue management measures on key freight routes. Overall, the dominant issues are centred around enhancing transport accessibility, safety, and efficiency to support regional communities and economic development.

LGA	Summary
Bathurst	Addressing roads in the LGA, as well as the flow of traffic. It was identified that some causes of this were frequent changes to speed along key routes like the Great Western Highway and insufficient bridge access between East and West Bathurst.
Blayney	The submission from Blayney LGA related to the condition of the roads, and a callout for roads leading into major towns and centres to be repaired.
Blue Mountains	The Great Western Highway, which links Lithgow to Penrith, is seen as an area that requires improvement to better connect western and eastern New South Wales. The current highway limits access and opportunities for regional jobs, as well as access for people living west of the Blue Mountains to metropolitan areas. There are criticisms of the Great Western Highway's speed limits and the fact that it is predominantly a single-lane road. As the major thoroughfare into the regions or to Sydney, any disruptions or delays can create a significant bottleneck, including for residents trying to get home. The feedback calls for the prioritisation of a tunnel from Hartley to Penrith, with the original 11 km Hartley to Blackheath tunnel being the minimum consideration. This tunnel is intended to unlock the region for industries such as tourism, agriculture, and logistics. However, the proposed tunnel under Blackheath has received criticism, with analysis indicating that it would result in a negative economic cost to community. Overall, the sentiment from the Blue Mountains region is that road duplication and tunnels in the area are critical to improve connectivity and accessibility.
Bogan	N/A
Cabonne	Upgrades are identified to several local intersections and roads to improve safety for all road users, including pedestrians, heavy vehicles, and tourists. Specifically, the intersections in Eugowra and the Renshaw McGirr Way connecting Wellington to Parkes require upgrades and maintenance to address safety concerns. Requests call to include Manildra as a train stop on the weekly service to Broken Hill, as well as a need for better regional train services, such as running two XPT or equivalent trains simultaneously and utilising the new high-speed regional trains in Lithgow and Dubbo to better connect regional NSW.

Coonamble	N/A
Cowra	<p>The main feedback focuses on the need to address traffic issues at a railway crossing and busy intersections in the Cowra region. The railway crossing on Darbys Falls Road is causing significant delays for residents, despite being primarily used by an infrequent local tourist train. Upgrading the crossing to a barrier system rather than a STOP sign is suggested to improve safety and convenience.</p> <p>Busy intersections near shopping centres in Cowra, particularly on Darling St, are experiencing congestion and safety concerns due to their positioning before the town's traffic lights. Improved traffic management planning is required to reduce congestion and enhance safety in these areas.</p>
Dubbo	<p>There is a need to improve active transport networks and public transport services in the Dubbo region. Currently, the lack of dedicated active transport infrastructure is forcing pedestrians and bike riders to share the road with fast-moving vehicles, which raises safety concerns. Increased funding and support for active transport programs is recommended to enhance connectivity and delivery, such as Get NSW Active and Get Kids Active, with and dedicated support for councils, is suggested to improve delivery and connectivity.</p> <p>Dubbo requires a fast rail service to Sydney (Central) operating at least twice daily, with morning arrivals by 9:00 am and return trips in the late afternoon. The current XPT schedule often necessitates overnight stays in Sydney. A minimum of three trains a day from Dubbo is recommended, with two going through to Central and one connecting with a semi-express Blue Mountains train.</p>
Forbes	<p>Road safety education was the main theme from Forbes LGA, with the Newell Highway between Forbes and Parkes a key route for school buses. A significant safety issue has emerged with students not wearing seatbelts on school buses, particularly on high-speed routes like the Newell Highway (110km/h speed limit) between Parkes and Forbes, where 7 buses transport hundreds of children to Red Bend College School twice daily.</p> <p>A coordinated effort involving Transport, schools, bus companies, police, and NHVR is needed to enforce seatbelt use. A proactive approach, including teacher supervision on buses and strict enforcement, is crucial to ensure safety and prevent potential tragedies.</p>
Gilgandra	N/A
Lachlan	<p>Goobang and Gordon Streets in the Lachlan LGA, a low-income area with many low socio-economic status residents, lacks footpaths to get to services and shops, putting pedestrians at risk – especially children – who walk near traffic. Footpaths to Station Street and the Railway Hotel, plus well lit paths from Willow Bend and Boona Rd to key points, would benefit the LGA. A pedestrian bridge over the Boona-Cunningham rail line is vital to prevent risk to the public from frequent crossings.</p> <p>Lachlan Shire needs weekend and holiday bus services to improve access. The region's transport infrastructure, serving industry and residents despite a smaller population, requires well-maintained roads for connectivity across vast distances.</p>
Lithgow	<p>Within Lithgow, concerns focus on transport infrastructure and services failing to match the region's rapid growth, alongside critical safety and connectivity issues. Key points include the urgent need for enhanced rail</p>

	<p>services, such as reopening Wallerawang station, introducing a frequent "up and back" train service between Lithgow, Bathurst, and Orange, and establishing hourly Sydney to Lithgow connections to improve access to medical, educational, and economic opportunities while boosting tourism.</p> <p>Feedback has also highlighted the Great Western Highway's deficiencies, with the Bathurst-Lithgow stretch deemed unsafe due to frequent high-speed crashes, necessitating wire rope dividers, additional overtaking lanes, and speed reductions, while the Lithgow-Penrith section is criticised as a single-lane bottleneck constraining regional development. Suggestions from some advocate for a 45km Hartley-Penrith tunnel, though others oppose the costly Blackheath tunnel project due to its economic burden and questionable benefits.</p> <p>The Lithgow community has expressed concerns about the inadequacy of local bus services, which are viewed as infrequent, poorly timetabled, and lacking weekend coverage. The community is seeking a simpler, more reliable bus schedule to better meet their transport needs.</p> <p>There has been debate within the community about the proposed highway tunnels. Supporters believe the tunnels are vital for unlocking the region's industry potential, but critics have raised concerns about inflated maintenance cost savings, unreviewed cost estimates, and risks of budget overruns. Overall, the Lithgow community agrees that transport upgrades are crucial to address current bottlenecks, enhance safety, and support the region's future growth, emphasising the need for scalable, cost-effective solutions that effectively integrate the local rail, road, and bus networks.</p>
Mid-Western	<p>The feedback from the Mid-Western LGA focuses on a few main areas: improved regional connectivity, enhanced road safety, and better transport infrastructure to support the growing Central West, particularly around Mudgee. A key proposal is the "Mudgee Missile" - a passenger rail service modelled on the successful Bathurst Bullet, using Endeavour trains to shuttle between Mudgee and Lithgow. This would boost accessibility for locals, Sydney residents, and tourists to the fast-growing tourism hub, potentially aiding decentralisation.</p> <p>Road safety is a major concern, with submissions highlighting fatigue-related crashes on routes like Ulan Road and Bylong Valley Way. The community is calling for more rest stops, such as at Ilford and Coxs Gap, as well as addressing dangerous infrastructure, including a single-lane river crossing with poor visibility, a hazardous highway-school zone intersection in Mudgee, and inadequate overtaking options on Gollan Road and the Mudgee-Dubbo route. Submissions also calls for more to be done on road maintenance, which poses risks to existing Transport rail coaches, while suggesting a better timetable and freight component could justify rail reopening costs.</p>
Narromine	<p>The feedback focuses on the Newell Highway as a corridor between Parkes, Dubbo and townships in-between, noting the alarming crash statistics attributed to infrastructure insufficiencies such as limited overtaking lanes, no centre wire rope crash barriers, and a need for a speed reduction to 100km/h, further discussed with the frequency of heavy vehicles and road trains on the road. A request for a road safety action plan and support for a Parkes-Dubbo train service, which could offer a safer, well-patronised alternative to reduce highway dependency and enhance regional connectivity.</p>

<p>Oberon</p>	<p>There is identified critical need to improve transport connectivity and reliability in the Oberon region, particularly through the reinstatement of rail services and enhanced public transport options. The community has expressed negative sentiments towards the cancellation of key bus services, such as the Mt Victoria to Oberon coach and the Bathurst-Oberon route, which has severely limited employment opportunities, reduced access to essential services in Bathurst and Orange, and increased social isolation by making weekend trips to the city more difficult and costly.</p> <p>There is a strong case for reviving rail in the region, including the extension of the Oberon line to Crookwell, which would provide a more efficient and weather-resistant alternative to the current bus network. This would address the lack of weekend and holiday transport options, a significant concern given Oberon's popularity as a snow tourism destination.</p> <p>The community has also called for improved road management during peak visitor times, including better snow-clearing efforts and driver education, as the current conditions deter tourists who seek snow without skiing.</p>
<p>Orange</p>	<p>Orange feedback highlights the pressing need for enhanced transport services and improved infrastructure maintenance to address safety and accessibility concerns in the region. A key proposal is the extension of the Bathurst Bullet to include an early morning rail service from Orange to Sydney, which would improve connectivity for residents reliant on the state capital for work and essential services.</p> <p>Road safety is a major issue, with the Mitchell Highway/Forbes Road/Burrendong Way intersection identified as a dangerous area that would benefit with a large roundabout to manage rising traffic volumes and prevent crashes, particularly where crossing four lanes in a short distance is hazardous.</p> <p>Additionally, the submissions call out the poor condition of roads in the region, attributing the widespread disrepair to reduced budget allocations and limited grant funding. This has left the local council struggling to address escalating maintenance costs and pothole-ridden surfaces. The feedback emphasises a demand for continued local government road funding to ensure proper upkeep and strategic upgrades, alongside transport enhancements like the proposed Orange-Sydney rail link, to meet the identified growth in the Orange region.</p>
<p>Parkes</p>	<p>The primary concerns from the Parkes Shire submissions focus on the need for reliable public transport and enhanced road safety infrastructure to address connectivity, safety, and accessibility challenges in the region.</p> <p>Firstly, there is a lack of reliable public transport services, with calls for a weekday bus or train service between Parkes and Orange to support work, medical appointments, and training, reducing car reliance on Henry Parkes Way, improving safety, and cutting emissions. Similarly, the infrequent services to Forbes and Dubbo highlighting isolation and limiting access to essential services, particularly healthcare.</p> <p>Road safety issues are also a critical concern, with the Newell Highway/Ashburnham Road intersection needing separation of turning and overtaking traffic. Additionally, the lack of a pedestrian crossing on</p>

	<p>Reid Street near Parkes East Public School is endangering students crossing the busy arterial road.</p> <p>Active transport is a priority, with requests for better connectivity for walking and cycling paths, such as extending the Renshaw McGirr Way shared path and improving links from Broilgan Road's existing path to Parkes township across the new bypass.</p>
Warren	N/A
Warrumbungle	<p>Some strong feedback from Warrumbungle region is the inadequacy of the Golden Highway as a freight corridor and the pressing need for safety and infrastructure improvements to support the Central West Orana Renewable Energy Zone as well as existing commuters.</p> <p>Some submissions argue the highway is unfit for purpose, referring to narrow bridges, poor verges, insufficient overtaking and climbing lanes (especially between Merriwa and Uarbry), unsafe intersections without turning lanes, and a deteriorating road surface. These issues compromise the highway's capacity to handle increasing volumes and frequency of freight, including Oversize Over mass (OSOM) loads.</p> <p>The lack of truck pull-over stops is mentioned as a main contributor to traffic congestion, while inadequate advisory signage on bends heightens safety risks. There has also been a request from the submissions to continue to improve local consultation on these issues, ensuring the impact on current road users and freight deliveries is not neglected. Additionally, there's a suggestion for a daily transport service to Dubbo and back to places like Coonabarabran, indicating a need for better regional connectivity.</p>
Weddin	N/A

8.4.1 A detail breakdown of the interactive pin drop map below:

Road safety: Comments highlight significant road safety concerns across the region, particularly on major highways and arterial roads. Issues include high speeds, lack of overtaking lanes, dangerous intersections, and the need for safety upgrades like centre wire rope barriers. There are concerns about the frequency of crashes, fatalities and near-misses, especially involving heavy vehicles, trucks and buses. Improved road infrastructure, speed limit reviews, and better enforcement are seen as critical to improving safety outcomes.

Numerous high-risk road sections and intersections that require safety upgrades and interventions were identified. This includes the Newell Highway between Parkes and Dubbo, the Great Western Highway between Bathurst and Lithgow, and various local roads. Suggestions include adding more overtaking lanes, centre wire rope barriers, roundabouts, and reducing speed limits in problem areas. The comments emphasise the need for a comprehensive road safety action plan and increased investment to address the unacceptable crash statistics in the region.

Infrastructure upgrades: People identify the need for a range of infrastructure upgrades across the region, including highway duplications, new bridges, bypasses, intersection improvements, and enhancements to rail networks. Key priorities include upgrading major routes like the Newell Highway, Great Western Highway and Golden Highway to improve safety, capacity and efficiency. Unlocking regional freight movements and connecting regional centres to Sydney are seen as crucial. There are

also calls for reopening disused rail lines and extending existing services to improve public transport connectivity.

Public transport connectivity: Comments expressed a desire for better public transport services, including the reinstatement of rail links to regional towns, increased train and bus frequencies, and more direct connections to Sydney. There were requests for improved timetabling and service coverage, particularly on weekends and public holidays, to enhance accessibility and support regional communities. Comments suggest the lack of frequent and reliable bus and train services, especially for travel between regional centres like Parkes, Orange, Dubbo and Sydney makes it difficult for residents to access work, education, healthcare and other services. Suggestions include reinstating rail services to towns like Mudgee, increasing bus frequencies, and providing better connections between different modes of transport.

Maintenance and repair: Comments highlight the poor condition of local and regional roads across the Central West and Orana, and the need for increased funding and maintenance. Local and state roads are described as being in a "general state of disrepair", with potholes, degradation and damage requiring urgent attention. Sealing, re-surfacing, addressing flooding issues and improving safety are all required to bring the road network up to standard. The comments emphasise the impact this has on road users, the burden on local councils, and the need for increased state government funding and attention to address the backlog of road maintenance across the region.

Freight: The key freight-related issues identified included the need to improve the condition and capacity of regional road networks, particularly the Golden Highway and Newell Highway, to accommodate increasing freight volumes. Several comments highlighted the poor state of these highways, with concerns about narrow bridges, lack of overtaking lanes, intersections without turning lanes, and general poor road surfaces. There are calls for major upgrades and improvements to these key freight corridors, including the need for more and better rest stop facilities, to make them fit-for-purpose to serve the freight needs of the Central West and Orana region.

Additionally, there are comments advocating for the reopening of rail lines and restoration of passenger rail services in the region. Specifically, there are suggestions to extend the Oberon rail line to Crookwell to reopen it for both freight and passenger services, as well as calls for the reinstatement of a rail connection to Mudgee. Improving rail connectivity is seen as important to provide an alternative freight option and better passenger transport links for the region.

Active transport: A number of submissions highlight the need to improve active transport infrastructure and connectivity, particularly in regional towns and cities. Commenters identify gaps in pedestrian and bicycle networks, such as the lack of footpaths in areas with high pedestrian activity, including around schools and social housing. There are calls for the construction of new shared paths, footpaths and lighting to enable safer walking and cycling, especially in areas with vulnerable road users. Improved active transport links are seen as crucial for enhancing liveability, community health and reducing reliance on private vehicles.

Specific locations mentioned include the need for pedestrian crossings and paths around Parkes East Public School, as well as connections between residential areas and town centres in communities like Condobolin. Overall, the submissions emphasise the importance of prioritising active transport improvements to support more sustainable and equitable mobility options.

Coordination and consultation: A few comments suggested the need for better coordination and consultation between different levels of government, transport agencies, and local communities. This was seen as crucial for ensuring that transport planning and investment decisions reflect the specific needs and priorities of regional areas.

Discrete Aboriginal Communities: Several comments mention areas with Aboriginal communities. These comments note that there is a lack of footpaths and lighting in these areas, which puts

pedestrians, including many young people, at risk as they have to walk along the edge of the road. Comments suggest installing lit footpaths in these areas would greatly improve safety and accessibility for residents. Overall, comments highlight the need for better transport infrastructure and connectivity in remote and disadvantaged areas, particularly for vulnerable road users like pedestrians and school children. Improving footpaths, lighting, and safe crossing points could have a significant positive impact on the safety and accessibility of these communities.

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Transport for NSW
51-55 Currajong Street
Parkes NSW 2870