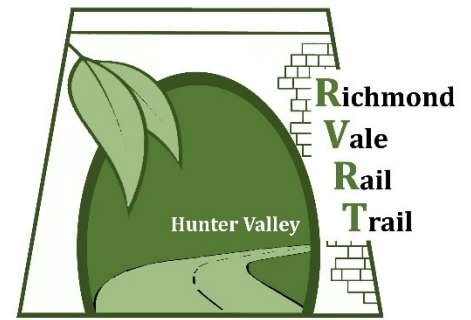


## Facebook Post – May 29<sup>th</sup> 2024:

<https://www.facebook.com/richmondrailtrail/posts/pfbid02zyBLYVyCAw9RDh9QpArv5HfErc7aobQ7X3SDpEp2DdXrudzxFPnTtpCxeAuExi5sl>

From Terry J. Lewin (RVRT Inc. President - RVRT Supporters' Group)

# An Opportunity to Optimise the Tarro-Beresfield Connections to the RVRT/M1 Extension:



Construction of the M1 Pacific Motorway Extension to Raymond Terrace is gathering pace and we have reached the point at which it is highly desirable to clarify and resolve any outstanding issues associated with shared pathway inter-connections between the RVRT, the M1 Extension, and the Tarro and Beresfield communities.

Responsibility for resolving these issues, finding the necessary grant funds, and constructing and managing these shared pathways ultimately rests with City of Newcastle Council ... but we are all in this together ... and without solid support from agencies such as Transport for NSW (TfNSW), other local Councils, National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), local business and community groups, and State and Federal governments, we are unlikely to achieve the desired community outcomes (and within a reasonable timeframe).

Here is roughly where things are up to (as of May 2024):

The finalised *Design and Landscape Plan* for the M1 Extension has recently been released (<https://media.caapp.com.au/dea4qw.pdf> – 161Mb), which identifies the Active Transport Links that will be “*Constructed by the Project*” (see **Picture 1**). These are essentially designed for **experienced riders** and allow for “... *the continuation and enhancement of key active transport links within the existing road configuration*” (Page 144). The broader M1 Extension outcomes include: improved traffic flow for motorists and freight using the National Land Transport Network; improved connections and accessibility to surrounding road networks and communities; and improved safety for all road users.

As illustrated in **Pictures 2 and 3**, the RVRT will facilitate connections to the M1 Extension and the New England Highway near the planned Tarro Interchange. This will allow experienced riders from the Maitland and Raymond Terrace areas to use the RVRT as an off-road, active transport (shared pathway) route to Shortland and Newcastle, crossing parts of the Hunter Wetlands National Park and avoiding the busy Hexham Straights section of the Pacific Highway (which is also currently being upgraded).

To optimise the RVRT’s benefits and ensure that it is **accessible by all potential user groups** (not just experienced riders), we need to resolve at least four issues:

- 1) Identify (and construct) the preferred and safest pathway route adjacent to the re-located Aurizon Access Road and under the M1 viaduct (to allow access to multiple connections and potential facilities);
- 2) Determine and provide the best way to cross the New England Highway and access Anderson Drive (e.g., constructing a new Shared Pathway Bridge, similar to the one at Jesmond);
- 3) Clarify the preferred shared pathway routes through Tarro and Beresfield, giving consideration to connections to local schools, parks and shopping areas, to ensure local as well as regional benefits [Our preference would be an off-road shared pathway across or around Tarro Park which connects

- with Railway Parade and Beresfield Station, so riders and walkers can access facilities and use public transport for one leg of their journey]; and
- 4) Provision of facilities adjacent to the RVRT – Aurizon Access Road interface and elsewhere (e.g., Parking, Shelter, Drop-off, Water, etc) to facilitate direct use of the RVRT shared pathway by all user groups [Potentially including re-purposing of parts of the former access road for parking]. Additionally, and in the longer-term, provision of better parking areas, playground facilities, and exercise circuits within Tarro Park would also be useful.

While the M1 Extension is not due to open until 2028, substantial progress has already been made (see **Pictures 4 to 7**), including initial work on re-location of the Aurizon Access Road (see **Pictures 5 and 6**), which will continue during June and July.

It simply makes **good planning sense to simultaneously resolve the identified RVRT access issues now** and to fully construct this section of the RVRT in tandem with the M1 Extension, if not sooner. An integrated Landscape Plan could then be delivered at this location (rather than a piecemeal approach), building on the existing M1 design elements and themes. Signage and promotional material could also be developed and displayed, relating, for example, to the Hunter Estuary and Wetlands, and to local Indigenous and Non-indigenous culture and heritage.

Unreleased findings from the Shortland and Tarro active transport project undertaken by the City of Newcastle in 2023 (see **Picture 8**) could also contribute to these deliberations and to priority setting.

It is also anticipated that (eventually) experienced riders will be able to complete a counter-clockwise loop around the northern segment of the Hexham Wetlands by utilising the M1 Extension’s Active Transport links, Lenaghans Drive, and the Minmi Junction to Tarro segments of the RVRT – and an even longer Wetlands Loop if the *Shiraz to Shore* Trail includes an additional Pipeline Trail link between Maryland/Wallsend and Shortland.

*Thanks to all of our RVRT supporters.*

CONSTRUCTIVE COMMENTS AND FEEDBACK WELCOME.

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**6.15 Active transport links**

The design has allowed for the continuation and enhancement of key active transport links within the existing road configuration. **A key element of these is the access to a wide shoulder within the Motorway alignment, facilitating access for experienced riders.** The design enables clear and safe access to existing active transport links at key points, including the following:

**BLACK HILL INTERCHANGE**

John Renshaw Drive and Weakleys Drive – access is provided off the highway heading north, as part of the shoulder lane on the slip lane. **Access to the highway from this intersection, heading north is also provided via a dedicated path adjoining the southbound overbridge BR01.**

A southbound link is also provided from the main alignment, connecting to the southbound slip lane, as well as Lenaghans Drive.

**TARRO INTERCHANGE**

The design facilitates access from Aurizon Access Road to, and from the M1 Pacific Motorway, as well as a link from the New England Highway heading southbound. **These connections both enable connection for the future Richmond Vale Rail Trail Path, as well as maintaining existing local connectivity.** The Project does not preclude the delivery of the Hexham Junction to Tarro active transport link (intersection of the Minmi to Hexham rail line corridor and pipeline corridor).

**TOMAGO INTERCHANGE**

**Local access links, mostly cyclist links are facilitated through the Tomago Interchange** at the surface intersection with Old Punt Road. Access to the M1 Pacific Motorway is facilitated from the northbound Pacific Highway to the M1 Pacific Motorway via a dedicated path adjoining Bridge BR06. Shared path access is provided to connect to the bus stops.

**HUNTER REGION BOTANIC GARDENS**

**Shared path access provided to connect to the bus stops.**

**Figure 148: Active Transport Links**

Extracted from Page 144 of the finalised *Design and Landscape Plan* for the Black Hill to Tomago section of the M1 Pacific Motorway Extension to Raymond Terrace - May 2024, Link: <https://media.caapp.com.au/dea4qw.pdf>

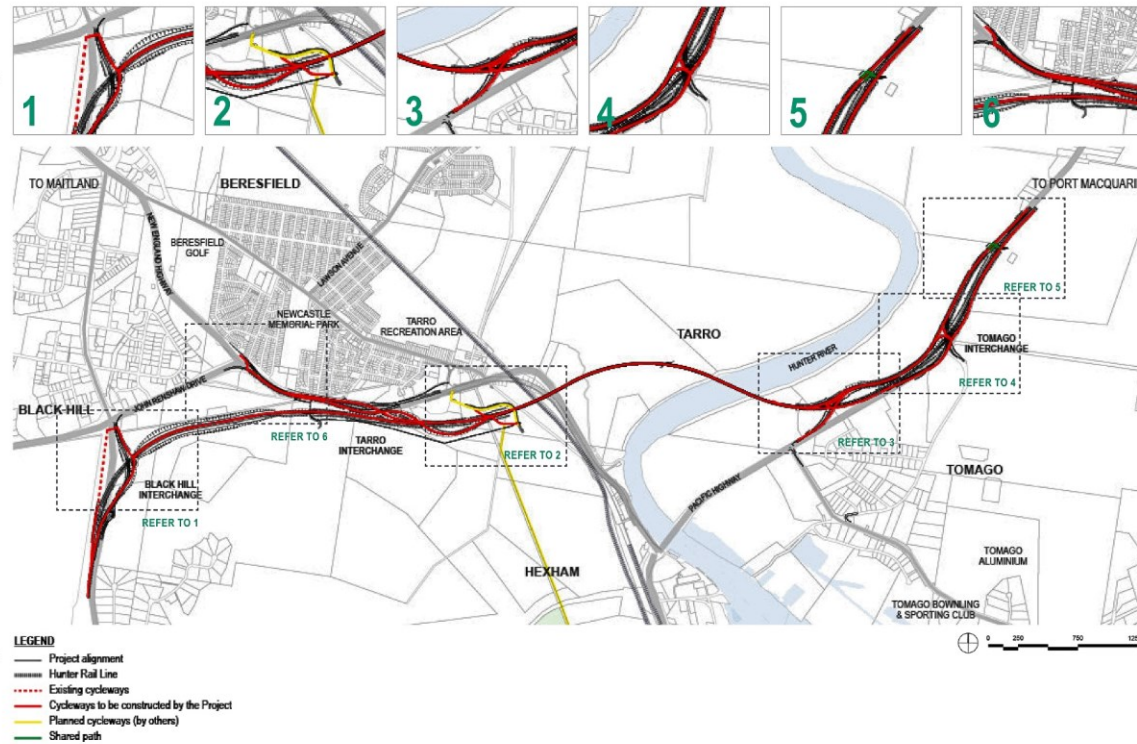
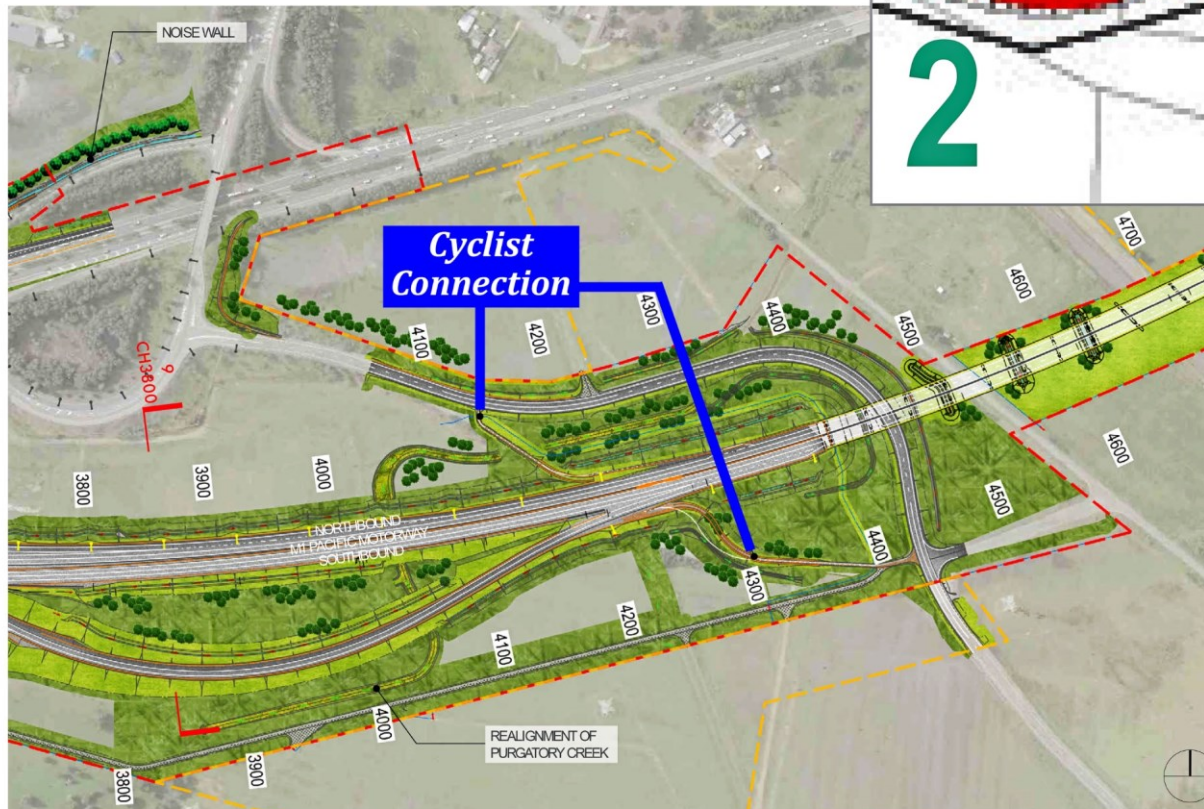


Figure 148: Active transport links

**Picture 1:** Active Transport Links across Black Hill to Tomago section of M1 Pacific Motorway Extension to Raymond Terrace (May 2024, Figure 148, Page 144; Link to *Design and Landscape Plan*: <https://media.caapp.com.au/dea4qw.pdf> - 161Mb). Tarro Interchange & Inset 2 have most relevance for the RVRT.

## Proposed Cyclist & RVRT Connections near Tarro Interchange

Below: Extract from Figure 35 - Concept Plan (5 of 10). These “Cyclist Connection” points will provide access between the RVRT and the New England Highway and M1 Extension to Raymond Terrace. Dashed Red Line - “Site Boundary”.



Above: Inset 2 extracted from Figure 148 - Active Transport Links. Red Lines - “Cycleways to be constructed by the Project”; Yellow Lines - “Planned cycleways (by others)”.

Picture 2: Proposed Cyclist and RVRT Connections near Tarro Interchange (from Figures 35 and 148). Approx. RVRT Path – See Yellow Lines in Inset 2.

Figure 105: Aerial view of BR06 - looking east [Partial Image, 1.5 magnification]

Extracted from Page 101 of the finalised *Design and Landscape Plan* for the Black Hill to Tomago section of the M1 Pacific Motorway Extension to Raymond Terrace - May 2024, Link: <https://media.caapp.com.au/dea4qw.pdf>



Figure 105: Aerial view of BR06 - looking east

**Picture 3:** Aerial View of Bridge 6 (BR06) - Black Hill to Tomago section of M1 Pacific Motorway Extension to Raymond Terrace. *Note:* Cycle paths from the RVRT will go under the viaduct and up the sides of the M1 Extension embankments [e.g., near centre, upper third of image].



**Picture 4:** Progress on Black Hill to Tarro Section of M1 Extension – May 26<sup>th</sup> 2024.



**Picture 5:** Near Re-located Aurizon Access Road Section of M1 Extension (Tarro) – May 26th 2024.



**Picture 6:** Partially Sealed Re-located Aurizon Access Road (Tarro) – May 26th 2024.





**Picture 7:** Bridge Piling Activities associated with Viaduct East of Re-located Aurizon Access Road (Tarro) – May 26th 2024.



**Picture 8:** Draft Richmond Vale Rail Trail (RVRT) alignment at Tarro – as shown in City of Newcastle’s Active Transport Project ‘Cycleway Improvements’ Survey (June 2023).