

Meeting Notes

Project:	Sapphire to Woolgoolga Upgrade Project	Reference:	1093.40.GE
Location:	SPECIAL MEETING OF WOOLGOOLGA CFG WOOLGOOLGA BOWLING CLUB	Date:	16 July 2002

Present: Apology: Copy: Name:

NORTHERN CFG (Woolgoolga Area)			
✓			Graham Ashton
✓			John Beales
✓			Mark Beard
✓			Gregory Benson
✓			Jasmer Bhatti
	✓		Roslyn Dunbar-Wells
✓			Ron Gray
✓			Karrena Joass
✓			Kevin Knott
✓			Steven Moody
	✓		Phillip Pearce
✓			Des Saunders
✓			Bruce Scanlon
✓			John Tozer
✓			Robert Watson
✓			John Langhorn
PROJECT TEAM			
✓			Wes Stevenson RTA
✓			Bob Higgins RTA
	✓		Robert Kook RTA
✓			Tim Paterson Connell Wagner
	✓		Rosemary Russell Connell Wagner

✓		Bruce Penman	Connell Wagner
✓		Barry Hancock	Connell Wagner
✓		Andrew Smith	Pramax Communications
✓		Bill Wood	Coffs Harbour City Council
	✓	Rick Bennell	Coffs Harbour City Council
✓		George Stulle	Coffs Harbour City Council
✓		Jo Gardner	PlanningNSW
Recorded By: Pramax Communications			Total Pages: 12
Subject: Special Meeting			

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Meeting opened 5.55 pm
- 1.2 Andrew Smith apologised for non-attendance at previous meeting due to illness.

2. MATTERS ARISING

- 2.1 Andrew advised that tonight was a special meeting, arising out of issues that had been voiced on previous occasions. Some of the key issues to be examined were how we operate as a CFG and how to provide meaningful input into the strategic process. He handed out information - previous Minutes, etc and advised there was no need to adopt those tonight as this was an Extraordinary Meeting. There was general agreement among members to bring Minutes to next meeting instead.
- 2.2 Andrew Smith displayed an overhead: "Revised Charter as at 11/12/01" - "Pacific Highway Upgrade - Sapphire to Moonee". Members were given handout to be read in conjunction with the overhead.
- 2.3 Andrew Smith: This group was formed as a representative group to try to have different interest groups from the community so that you could look at information and make comment on it. Charter was set up by Council's Steering Committee and defines the way in which we operate.
- 2.4 Andrew then read out the Preamble, Aims and Terms of Reference.
- 2.5 CFG member: You have got a couple of bullet points (he read from the Charter). "Advise RTA....." etc. I think one of the problems that I can see is that we get a lot of good information from the RTA and the Project Team but it is rather difficult to provide meaningful feedback without the opportunity of being able to take that away, digest it, and take it back. Sometimes, with the maps, etc, it was the first time we had seen them. I think members of the Project Team would agree that no professional would be expected to provide meaningful input with only a few minutes to provide the information. (There was general agreement to this among members)
- 2.6 Andrew Smith: Let us make sure you are happy with the Charter as it stands.
- 2.7 CFG member: I think members of the CFG have expressed some dissatisfaction with the process - 1) What is Connell Wagner's view? 2) What is the RTA view, as

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to the process that has gone on to date? It could be the key to the whole problem.

- 2.8 Bob Higgins: It would be great to get all issues out and then discuss so we know how much time we have got.
- 2.9 CFG member: Is it really necessary to read all through the Charter?
- 2.10 Another CFG member: I have a few concerns that I have highlighted:
- 2.11 (The member read from the Charter). I think most of us feel that any exchange of information during the CFG meetings so far has been pretty one-sided. The information we are trying to convey to the RTA is not really taken on board. Quite often we start to discuss something and more often than not the discussion is shut down or terminated or moved on to something else.
- 2.12 Andrew Smith: What I would really like us to do is to accept and agree to the Charter, and then debate the issues that come out of it. The first point is we need to get some agreement: Is there anyone here who is not familiar with the Charter.
- 2.13 CFG member: It seems reasonable but I must say, you saying we must agree on the Charter seems to be a small avenue for you to use later on and say "it's not in the Charter". I would like to see flexibility to say "this is the Charter", but it must have flexibility.
- 2.14 Andrew Smith: I agree. All I want to do is confirm that we have a Charter that defines our Terms of Reference and that you as individuals accepted a particular role.
- 2.15 CFG member: Personally I am happy with the Charter. I am not happy with the compliance with the Charter.
- 2.16 Andrew Smith: Any other comments?
- 2.17 CFG member: I think there is a major misunderstanding. We as a group have got to accept that we are not the ones who make the decisions. Another member agreed: We are not here to make the decision on where it is going. We have got the guidelines. We have heard that it can be flexible. We are just here for the input.
- 2.18 Another CFG member said our views are not taken into account. It makes it a farce.
- 2.19 Another CFG member: There is a feeling that there is a hidden agenda by the RTA.
- 2.20 Another CFG member said she believed the community did not understand that the CFG could only "voice", we cannot make the decisions or vote on them. The buck will stop with us in the community long-term, because we live here.
- 2.21 Another CFG member said he believed most of the CFG felt they had been trying to get the community view across and it had not been listened to. An example: the overwhelming community view is that Options B and C are not viable but you still keep on plugging about Options B and C. ... Further, Option A, the feedback we get back are the engineering problems and the greater cost. Until the last meeting, there was no information about the upgrade for Option D.
- 2.22 Another CFG member: The feedback I am getting is quite different to that, in fact it is varied. The feedback is that most people I speak to don't want to see the existing highway re-developed. Apart from that it is quite varied.
- 2.23 Another CFG member: The way I see it, a lot of people are trying to push their own barrow. However, until recently we had no information on D at all. I have heard people saying that this is the only route. You cannot say that without having all the information that you need.

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- 2.24 CFG member: The public still has not got that information.
- 2.25 Andrew Smith: I think tonight we need to try and identify some of those things and see what we can do to agenda some of those things. You need *informed* debate, not half-information.
- 2.26 CFG member: I think that is a very good point. I think a definite problem is overload of information handled at the meetings but nothing that we can take back to the community. We need to take something concrete back to the community.
- 2.27 Tim Paterson: I would be interested to ask what sort of information you need that we are not giving you.
- 2.28 CFG member: I think last meeting we discussed you providing us with some maps on where the highway is going, etc. I thought we could be given something to have a look at and discuss that.
- 2.29 Tim Paterson responded that information provided was often extremely sensitive and often not the only option. It therefore was inappropriate for CFG members to take such concept plans back to the community.
- 2.30 CFG members then indicated it was not their intention to take such information to the community but for their own personal use so they could study them in their own time and provide feedback.
- 2.31 A CFG member believed it should be as open a process as we can get and there was a need under the charter to keep the community informed. How do we disseminate information to the community if we are not given the information? We have to be able to take it away. It is to be an open process. Otherwise we are not achieving the aims of this group.
- 2.32 CFG member: One of the major problems is - there is a strong perception that you (RTA) know where you are going; and we don't; and you are sort of leading us. I voiced this at the first meeting. I have come to the conclusion that if you did not know where you were going, you would not be doing the job you are doing. We cannot become RTA.
- 2.33 Bob Higgins responded that the project team was going along on the journey with the CFG and often the CFGs were getting information before the Steering Committee received the same information along with feedback from the CFGs. So where we are heading is that we do have to get a preferred route.
- 2.34 CFG member: I am not being critical but what I am saying is there is a perception that you know what it is, but are not telling us.
- 2.35 Bob Higgins: We do *not* know what the final outcome is. The steering process is to try and get a *preferred route*.
- 2.36 CFG member: Does the RTA have a preferred route?
- 2.37 Bob Higgins: No.
- 2.38 Tim Paterson responded that the project team could offer a process of elaborating on the techniques and processes used to give an objective view. He asked what some members thought was the "hidden agenda".
- 2.39 A CFG member indicated the provision of costings was considered important. There was no time frame for at least some indicative costings.
- 2.40 Tim Paterson responded that the intention is that they have to be there when we go public with the Options. Bob Higgins: We don't even have them at this stage. He

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also indicated that as a result of feedback at the last meeting, concepts and therefore costs would have changed.

- 2.41 CFG member: At the very first meeting I was completely unbiased, with no hidden agenda. But there is one thing that is obvious to me, that there is substantial opposition to 'B' and 'C'. If credibility is to occur to the community, there should be an announcement made straight away that B and C are scrapped, and then discussion as to where it can go. So what credibility does this body have when it is still being discussed? Therefore you have committees like this, which takes notice of public opinion; or, you don't have community consultation at all - and the politicians, public servants, engineers, etc, work out what is best for the community.
- 2.42 A CFG member said it is not only the local community who is to pay for the road, it is *all* of the ratepayers of New South Wales.One of the difficulties is the feedback for Option A is very simple. B and C are obviously more complex. But by far the most complex is the existing highway. He raised the importance of providing an interchange for Emerald Beach if not now then soon. Another CFG member said the views of local people should be taken into consideration because they would have to live with it.
- 2.43 Further discussion ensued about concerns regarding feedback on Option D and the need for further input to be made by the CFG on the option.
- 2.44 Bob Higgins and Tim Paterson responded that nothing had been locked in from the previous meeting of the CFG on Option D.
- 2.45 CFG member: Did you say the Peer Review has stopped work on Coffs Harbour?
- 2.46 Bob Higgins: It is suspended. All the resources from down there have now been brought up to this job.
- 2.47 Cr Bill Wood then told the meeting that the CFGs were critically important to the process. There had to be mutual trust too. The information often provided was raw data and privileged information and not suitable for public consumption. While it was important for the members to have information they could take back to their groups for feedback, it also was important that information that was confidential was kept confidential.
- 2.48 A CFG member said there was a concern about giving the data out but the CFG was concerned about getting responses and there was a need for more frequent information releases.
- 2.49 Jo Gardner responded it was difficult to understand why the community thought the Steering Committee would spend millions of dollars funding the Options if it knew what the Option was. She asked: What is the process by which we can allow you to provide input? Trust also was needed. The identification of a preferred option was complex and would happen based on a range of criteria.
- 2.50 CFG member: We have been told a number of times that you are legally required to go through the process. That is why so much money is being spent on going through the Options.
- 2.51 Jo Gardner: Those legal requirements are not there to waste money. Why would we spend this money if there was really a preferred Option? Is it a good thing that Options are being explored and that Options are not just based on cost?
- 2.52 CFG member: You are legally required to, that is why you must look at the other Options.
- 2.53 Tim Paterson: Unless we have the Options defined and have all the information and

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studies to identify all those options, how can we come to an objective solution?

- 2.54 CFG member: I am terribly disturbed about one of Jo's comments, "it did not matter what 90% of the people thought, you are going to do it anyway". Are we wasting our time? We have had Woolgoolga say, "We did not want Options D and C", and you are going to tell us "damn them"?
- 2.55 Jo Gardner: No. It is about making the best decision when all of the Options have been equally looked at and weighted. There will always be people in the community who do not like the decision.It may be a consequence that the community might not like it, but we will certainly take the community view into account. We are currently exploring four Options. We will continue to explore those because there are criteria for dealing with the Pacific Highway through New South Wales.
- 2.56 CFG member: Might I suggest, if your criteria turns out to be something that 90% of the community are against, you had better re-define the criteria.
- 2.57 Bob Higgins: It would be silly of us not to consider those views. But there is a whole range of other views as well. We need to consider everyone's views. The cost views. The environmental factors. When the next paper comes up, the community can make their comments.
- 2.58 Further discussion ensued about the diversity of community opinion.
- 2.59 CFG member: I was not suggesting that you know the answer. But the criteria that you have to consider. The weighting you have used if 90 per cent is against.
- 2.60 Tim Paterson: We will use a whole lot of different weightings including the community weightings. That is a vital part of the process.
- 2.61 Bob Higgins: What is important is that the community puts their views, all the information is then on the table, the costs, the environmental, the social concerns, impact of traffic, all of those things, so the community can make an informed comment.
- 2.62 A CFG member suggested more frequent meetings might be an answer.
- 2.63 Another CFG member said he believed cost was a significant issue because government departments and Connell Wagner have a responsibility in the spending of public money. He also said he had a problem that it is not about a popular vote and asked how the Steering Committee reached its decisions, is it not the majority view?
- 2.64 Jo Gardner: You have taken my statement out of context. Based on the information that was there; the community has determined two Options it doesn't want. It's not just about wiping B and C. What I am saying is that it's not about a policy vote, it's about looking at *all* the Options and making a decision. *All* of the options and inputs will be considered, but it will be based on an informed decision-making process *including* the view of the community. We are talking about doing detailed work in order to come to that decision-making process.
- 2.65 Cr Bill Wood said Council commonly voted but the Steering Committee was a completely different situation. He said there had never been a vote taken in the Steering Committee about whether this Option was to be pursued or whatever. The Steering Committee, like the CFG members, did not have all the information at this stage.
- 2.66 CFG member: Public opinion closed before the upgrade Option D was released to the public. I cannot see how you can get a true public impression. When you said all factors are taken into consideration, they're not. The Far Western bypass was

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discarded primarily on costing. What we are saying is that if it does not meet other criteria why waste time and money pursuing them further? What we agreed at the first CFG Meeting was a media release after the CFG meeting. The releases have not come out after each CFG meeting. This has led to a decrease in public opinion and public confidence as to what is going on.

- 2.67 Cr Bill Wood: We recognise that as an issue that we need to address.
- 2.68 CFG member: I think the consultants need to explain to the CFG the difference between "cost" and "cost benefit". People do not understand what "cost benefit" actually means.
- 2.69 Jo Gardner: In terms of the far western and the cost benefit - the amount of benefit to be given - said that it could not ever stack up there with benefits for the level of investment. In every one we do, we look at the benefits and what is the cost. With the far western, usage, time travel, etc, did not stack up. That is what I have said happened.
- 2.70 Tim Paterson: No development happens if it is not viable. The first test is whether it is fundable or affordable. There was so little benefit and so great a cost. We are saying that it does not deserve further attention.
- 2.71 Bob Higgins explained that the far western decision was a strategic-type decision. The numbers still don't stack up.
- 2.72 Tim Paterson: We think they all are worth having a look at. But the far western was strategically in a different ball park.
- 2.73 CFG member: It said, "all things are considered before any decision is made."
- 2.74 Jo: I was talking in terms of the four options that are currently on the table. We will equally take account of social implications, community views, environmental, economic, all of those. That is what I am talking about. The far western issue is true. The cost far exceeded the benefit.
- 2.75 CFG member: I am talking about the *process* of the decision.
- 2.76 Andrew Smith suggested perhaps there was a need to adequately explain the decision-making process and the various weightings, firstly to this group, and then to the community.
- 2.77 A CFG member said the evidence that has been presented and the working documents do not support the fact that a lot of social and economic factors have been quantitative.
- 2.78 Tim Paterson: The short answer is that it is not there. We have had this discussion a few times over. That was a whole sweeping investigation: the environmental issues, traffic issues, etc. We did study packages to study each one of those. That is exactly the process that has been stalled pending completion of the Peer Review. Are there options that stand that first step of possible infrastructure investments? That is why the far western was disbanded. It was a decision of the Steering Committee - we did not see first test investment merit in the Central and Outer schemes. Given that community feedback was let's go forward and examine all the issues and see what has merit, that was the next stage. We had been through the fundamental test. So you are right. It is not there. It had been on target. The Peer Review had been initiated and that is well advanced. But that is one of the fundamental things that I assume the Peer Review is addressing.
- 2.79 Bill Wood: It will happen. Those essential issues have to have a vote.
- 2.80 A break was then taken. A CFG member pointed out that he *was* at the previous

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meeting - even though the Minutes showed him as an apology.

Meeting resumed.

- 2.81 Andrew Smith then went through the issues recorded on the flip chart (See Appendix) and asked if there was anything else that had not been tabled?
- 2.82 A CFG member said he believed there were a number of instances where the Steering Committee had not complied with the Charter and not one where the community focus group had not complied with the Charter.
- 2.83 Andrew Smith then revisited the issues raised including that the CFG members wanted to do their job properly and make sure the community viewpoint was factored in to the decision-making processes. He pointed out that the CFG was not the only means for the community to provide input. The CFG also had indicated that it needed to have an understanding of how the ultimate decision is made. How is the community view factored in along with social, technical, environmental and other issues? How do we believe the community is going to be adequately consulted?
- 2.84 CFG member: Once Option D is reasonably developed to be made public, what is wrong with releasing the four Options and the Steering Committee just putting it to the vote to see what the community really prefers? A, B, C or D?
- 2.85 Tim Paterson: The intention was for all the options to go public in August.
- 2.86 CFG member: Once fully developed what is wrong with a vote to find out what the public wants?
- 2.87 Tim Paterson: The whole idea of going public is to invite submissions. We are not here as an electoral office, we are here to analyse issues and get feedback. They are the criteria we will use for the decision.
- 2.88 CFG member: It is just a suggestion.
- 2.89 Jo Gardner: Let us put it on the board for consideration.
- 2.90 CFG member: I have always believed the real test of public opinion is some form of poll.
- 2.91 CFG member: Could it be run in conjunction with the State election in March?
- 2.92 Tim Paterson: Is the vote for Woolgoolga or Coffs Harbour or New South Wales?
- 2.93 CFG member: The northern area. The people who are involved.
- 2.94 Tim Paterson: Who is the vote for?
- 2.95 CFG member: What about the taxpayers, freight-carriers, etc?
- 2.96 A CFG member said he believed information dissemination was a key issue and that the Project Team needed to address what level of information could be provided to the community. He also believed there was a community perception that no further submissions would be taken after the 10th of May and asked that this be addressed to show there will be opportunity for people to provide further comment.
- 2.97 Andrew Smith: So are you saying we need to put out more detailed information at this stage. (The members agreed)
- 2.98 A CFG member cited an instance of what he believed was a lack of communication regarding geotechnical investigations.
- 2.99 Another CFG member suggested more frequent information releases.
- 2.100 Wes Stevenson: I suppose there is a different understanding on what can be

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released. In the project development process some information comes together at a certain time and to release some information is out of step with that. I am wondering what sort of solid information we should get out.

- 2.101 CFG member: If we are doing that, are you going to be in a position to be able to say, for example, "last week we discussed possible implications of highway upgrade", and leave it at that, or does this open all sorts of questions from the community? Is that able to be done?
- 2.102 Tim Paterson: I am sure you are going to your groups and telling them that anyway.
- 2.103 Jo Gardner said a difficulty with putting out design work was that it could be misconstrued. Tim Paterson pointed out that sometimes a concept can be changed as information comes through from studies, etc, and people are not happy with changes being made.
- 2.104 CFG member: Unfortunately we don't have all the answers. We need to seek information from people in the Graham Drive and Sandy Beach area. As said previously, we cannot do our job unless a certain amount of information is forthcoming.
- 2.105 A discussion followed on providing information in a more schematic form.
- 2.106 Bob Higgins believed a "simple" concept could perhaps be worked up.
- 2.107 CFG member: It is providing a level of information that is not yet available, for example, seagull turns - very few people know what they mean. You will get much more meaningful input.
- 2.108 Bob Higgins explained what would drive decisions for types of intersections.
- 2.109 Jo Gardner: Another important piece of feedback is how far people will have to go to "get on" and "get off". To get *that* feedback will be very important.
- 2.110 One CFG member said if schematics were provided to the community, they will just assume that's going to happen. (Some members disagreed with that view).
- 2.111 Jo Gardner: We want to help by giving you enough information to help. It is in a schematic way because it is "work in progress".
- 2.112 CFG member: Are we going to be given those schematic options for *all* Options, not just Option D?
- 2.113 Jo Gardner: It would have to be. The community would need to see the complexity of each of the Options.
- 2.114 Discussion followed on interconnecting roads and the timeframe for providing the schematics.
- 2.115 Jo Gardner: I take and accept that the feedback process has not been working as well as it could. In order to make it better, the reality is that it will delay the time frame. It is also likely to mean more meetings. There are also further cost implications and also implications to your time.
- 2.116 Bill Wood said the next step would be to arrange a Steering Committee Meeting as soon as practicable to examine the issues that have been raised this evening and report back on the way we see those issues being resolved.
- 2.117 Bob Higgins: I think there are some things that we can go away with tonight. One is that we proceed forward on something like this to demonstrate back that we are providing the information. That is something we will take away today.

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2.118 Andrew Smith then clarified what was discussed:

- Following our CFG meeting there will be information made available for CFG members to take to the community.
- We will also look at other ways to do more information releases in between the major ones.
- Project team feedback:- We have some discussions with things to happen regarding frequency of meetings and also how we make your feedback more effective, perhaps by giving you more time; and perhaps re-structuring the Agenda to provide more interaction.
- Information release. To clarify the decision-making process that is undertaken to arrive at a solution. There is confusion about "weightings" on different variables that have an impact on the project. That also needs to be conveyed to the appropriate community.

2.119 A CFG member suggested an information release should reiterate the role of this group, so the community has the perception that *we* do not make the decision.

2.120 CFG member: I look forward to the Council conducting a poll because policy vote rules.

2.121 Another CFG member: No. Just more information.

2.122 Another CFG member: I think what has been coming out of the meeting tonight was long overdue. I am happy with what came out of it.

2.123 Another CFG member: Me too.

2.124 Another CFG member: Just the issue of the time frames. I think we really need to keep the public up to date with what the time frames are. They need to know about it. And the fact that submissions are not over.

2.125 Another CFG member: You need to make sure that when you present a timetable like that, that people don't get the impression that work starts in January. I think that there is a real danger that people think it is all happening tomorrow.

2.126 Another CFG member: I applaud anything that gets a more open dialogue. Let us do our job and you can do your job.

2.127 Another CFG member: What could improve the running of the meetings is the Minutes out within 2 weeks. The Minutes should be sent out *at least* a day before the meeting to give us time to read through them. I will wait and see what happens about tonight as actions speak louder than words. I will wait before making the decision.

2.128 Another CFG member: I think the meeting was very worthwhile. I think a lot of good information came out from the CFG. Provided it is all followed up.

2.129 Andrew Smith thanked everybody for contributing in a positive way.

2.130 Wes Stevenson: Someone asked how the RTA thought the meetings were going. I had the same view they hadn't been getting anywhere. I think after tonight's efforts I am much happier and can see a way forward.

2.131 Discussion followed on when the next meeting would be held. Tim Paterson indicated it would take a few weeks prepare the schematics.

2.132 A CFG member requested information regarding Option D from last meeting.

2.133 Bob Higgins: This information is important. We are aiming to have it earlier rather

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than later.

- 2.134 Tim Paterson indicated there would now be a delay to the broad community release of preliminary concept engineering designs. The intention is to have one for A, B, C and D.
- 2.135 CFG member: Is there going to be a media release as a result of tonight's meeting? What sort of information should it include?
- 2.136 Tim Paterson: "Where We Are Going" needs to be re-stated. We probably cannot state that for a few days. It was agreed that this and the role of the CFG needs to go out as soon as possible.
- 2.137 Further discussion followed on the schematics and the need to present them at a meeting of the CFG before wider feedback from the members' communities.
- 2.138 CFG member: When will costings be available?
- 2.139 Tim Paterson: We will have to deflect from that in order to do this. The intention is still that the cost estimates were intended to go out with the broad public release of the Options.
- 2.140 Jo Gardner: They will provide that advice as part of the re-schedule.
- 2.141 There then was general agreement that the next meeting would be held on Tuesday, August 6, 2002.

3. CLOSE OF MEETING

Meeting closed at 9.00 pm.

Next meeting: Tuesday, August 6, 2002

APPENDIX

Issues taken from the floor

SPECIAL CFG – WOOLGOOLGA GROUP

Woolgoolga Bowling Club, Woolgoolga

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1. Sufficient time for feedback → need more time for hard copy
2. RTA appraisal of process
3. Information exchange one-sided
4. Role of CFG:
 - Information dissemination → how, what
 - “take-home” information
 - more time to consider
5. Statutory requirements
6. Value of community views → hidden agenda?
7. CFG seen as accountable by community
8. Information to broader community
 - From CFG → how to improve
 - From Project team
9. How is RTA responding to feedback from Community Focus Group?
10. How important are costings to final decision?
11. Credibility of process is affected adversely by further investigation of options B & C
12. How do we determine “community view”?
13. More detail needed on existing highway upgrade (D option)
14. Meeting frequency → long time between CFG meetings
 - need more regular meetings with information taken away for consideration
15. How can you get a true public perception before detail on option D is presented?
16. Media releases following CFG meetings still not happening
17. Meaning of “cost” vs. “cost benefit”
18. Define sets of information for distribution:- confidentiality
19. More regular information releases → perhaps monthly
20. Timeframes information → media ASAP
 - explain submission process is on-going
21. Minutes earlier
22. Public opinion
 - Poll
 - More detailed information to be disseminated