The Townsville Port Access Road is a 10km heavy vehicle route linking the Flinders and Bruce Highways with the Port of Townsville. The project is being delivered in stages with the first section, the Stuart Bypass, now under construction. Main Roads is progressing design for the second section of the road, the Eastern Access Corridor (EAC) with input from local residents, businesses and stakeholders.

The EAC will start on the Bruce Highway south of Townsville, approximately 600m south of the Visitor Information Centre and run generally northward to the port. Initially it will be constructed with two lanes and will include a bridge across the Ross River at the corner of Boundary Street and Benwell Road. It is expected that the EAC will be complete by early 2012.

Main Roads would like to take the opportunity to explain to the broader community how the current design fits in with Benwell Road and Boundary Street. Please note: the designs are only concepts and may change.

Here are some facts about the Eastern Access Corridor:

- Heavy vehicle traffic volumes on Boundary Street will be reduced as a direct result of the EAC.
- Access to Boundary Street from the EAC will be restricted: Vehicles travelling port-bound from the south or west will not be able to access Boundary Street via the EAC. Likewise, vehicles will not be able to access the EAC from Boundary Street.
- Heavy vehicles coming from the north will continue to access the Port of Townsville via Boundary Street.
- The EAC concludes near Boundary Street where it becomes Benwell Road. The Archer Street-Benwell Road intersection remains unchanged (pending development in the Nexus Business Park).
- There is a 585ha proposed environmental reserve on the southern side of Ross River. The sand spit on the southern side of the Ross River will form part of this environmental reserve. Pedestrians will have access to the area via a footpath over the bridge. There is no allowance for vehicle access to the reserve. Fishing will be permitted in the reserve, but dogs will not be allowed because of the potential impact on wildlife.
The TPAR environmental reserve explained

Since the early 1990s, there has been a growing awareness of the biodiversity, fisheries productivity and cultural heritage values of the extensive wetland and dunal coastal resources that are found south of the Ross River mouth. As such, both the Federal and Queensland governments have endorsed the establishment of a 585ha environmental reserve for the area.

Why is it important to manage the area?
Archaeological research has discovered a diversity of Aboriginal heritage sites south of Ross River mouth, along with more recent history, like remains of World War II Bunkers.

The area is not just culturally significant: a large flying fox colony and the second largest Australian White Ibis nesting colony known in North Queensland are located adjacent to Ross River within the reserve (see photo).

The area is rich in its diversity of animals from the agile wallaby and northern brown bandicoot, to several species of snakes and lizards, and many species of migratory birds. Human activities such as pig hunting, disposal of abandoned and stolen vehicles, unrestricted off-road vehicle use, rubbish dumping and aquaculture has taken its toll on the area. Introduced species such as wild dogs, pigs and cats and feral weeds also damage the area.

How will the area be managed?
A management plan is being developed to address these issues and ensure the area remains worthy of the status of environmental reserve.

Main Roads will fund the management and development of the reserve for the initial five years. At the end of this period, financial responsibility will pass to a trustee.

Future access to the reserve will be from the new Townsville Port Access Road. Provision has been made for a car park near the southern approaches to the Ross River Bridge. This will be the principal public access point and other existing access points will be closed and fenced. It is hoped that environmentally friendly human pastimes can take place in the reserve, such as environmental educational activities, bird watching and walking.

The Environmental Reserve Management Biodiversity Plan is at draft stage and will be available to the public soon.

Who can I contact for more information?
Please contact the EAC community liaison consultants:
Phone: 1300 309 677 (recorded message); Fax: (07) 4772 6335;
Email: tpar@ebc.net.au; Website: www.ebc.net.au/tpar