



Atlas-Campaspe Mineral Sands Project

Modification 2

Workforce shuttle bus access route
State Significant Development Modification
Assessment (SSD-5012 MOD 2)

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1 Introduction

Tronox Mining Australia Limited (Tronox) has approval to develop the Atlas-Campaspe Mineral Sands Project (the project) which includes the Atlas-Campaspe Mine and Ivanhoe Rail Facility. The project is located approximately 80 kilometres (km) to the north of Balranald in the Balranald Shire and Central Darling Shire local government areas (LGAs). Construction of the mine has commenced.

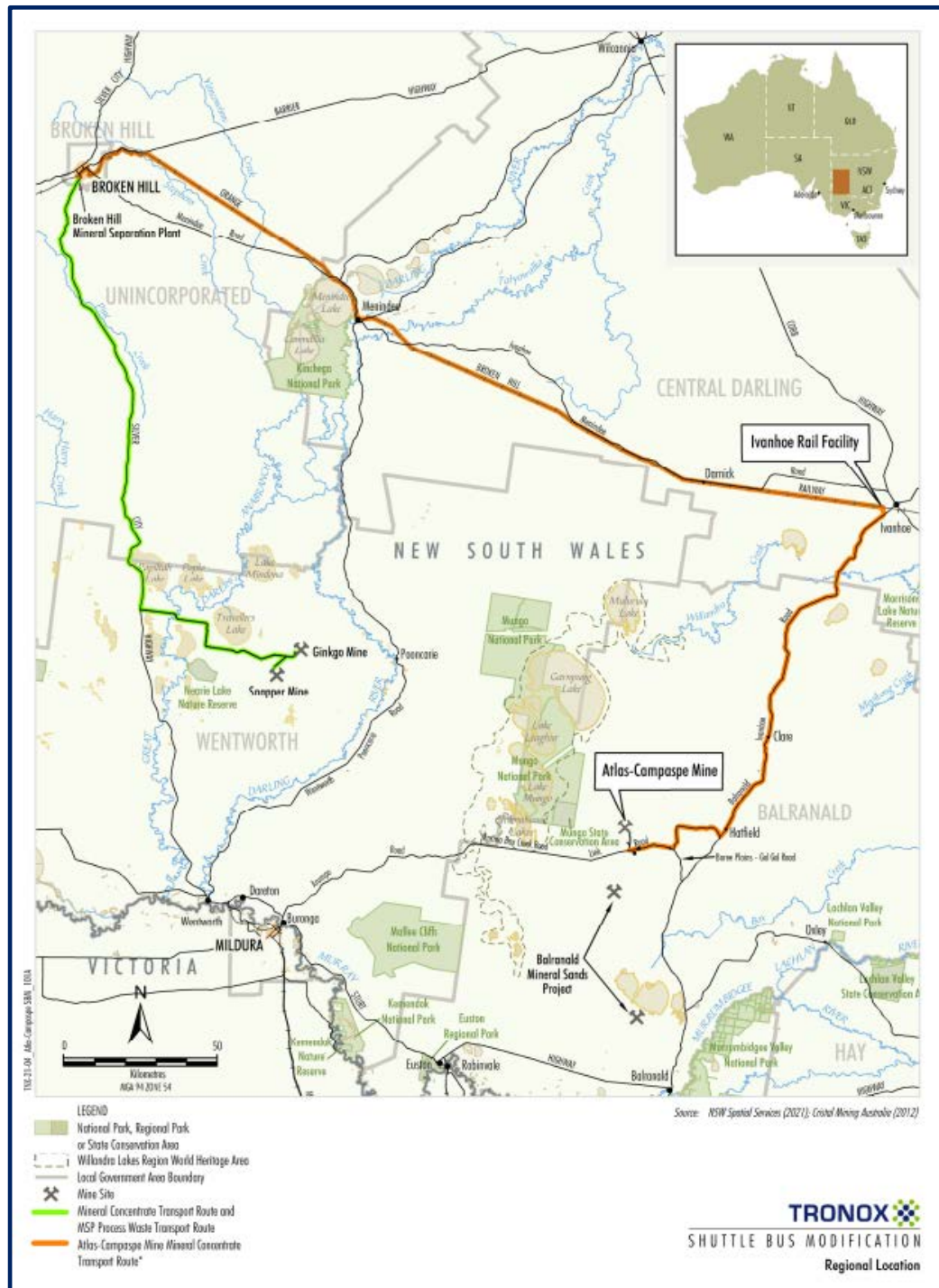


Figure 1 | Regional Context Map (Source: Modification Report)

1.1 Consent history

The project was granted development consent (SSD_5012) in June 2014 by the then Executive Director, Development Assessment Systems and Approvals as a delegate of the Minister for Planning. The consent permits the development of a mineral sands mining operation (the Atlas-Campaspe Mine) and the construction and operation of a rail loadout facility located near the township of Ivanhoe (the Ivanhoe Rail Facility).

The approval was modified in December 2019 (MOD 1) to allow an increase in the rate of mineral concentration production and road and rail haulage.

2 Proposed Modification

The development consent for the project includes a condition requiring project-related heavy vehicles to use only the approved road haulage routes to access the mine site. These routes are shown in green and orange in **Figure 1** above.

Following a review of the workforce transport arrangements for the project, Tronox is now proposing to use shuttle buses to transport the project workforce between the mine and the closest regional centre of Buronga/Mildura (located approximately 120 km to the south-west of the mine), and Balranald (located approximately 80 km to the south of the mine).

Due to the remote location of the Atlas-Campaspe Mine, the workforce resides at on-site accommodation during their shift. Depending on their place of residence, workers may need to travel a significant distance at the beginning and end of their rosters.

As noted in the NSW Resources Regulator's *Fatigue management: Guidance for the NSW mining and petroleum industries* (2018), having to travel long distances before or after work can lead to fatigue which can create a health and safety risks for workers.

However, under the existing consent conditions the shuttle buses would not be permitted to travel directly from the mine to Mildura/Buronga or Balranald as they fall under the definition of 'heavy vehicles' in the consent and would thus be restricted to the heavy vehicle haulage routes.

Tronox is therefore seeking approval to modify the consent to allow the shuttle buses to use more direct routes to minimise shuttle bus travel distances and associated travel times. The proposed shuttle bus access routes are shown in **Figure 2** below, and include the following roads:

- Between Mildura/Buronga and the mine: Arumpo Road, Marma Box Creek Road and Link Road; and
- Between Balranald and the mine: Balranald-Ivanhoe Road, Marma Box Creek Road and Link Road.

Tronox is also seeking permission for other project-related light vehicles to use the proposed shuttle bus access routes. Light vehicles are currently approved to travel between Mildura/Buronga and the mine along the proposed shuttle bus route, but no direct access is permitted between the mine and Balranald. The approved light vehicle access route is shown in violet in **Figure 2**.

A description of the modification is provided in **Appendix A**.

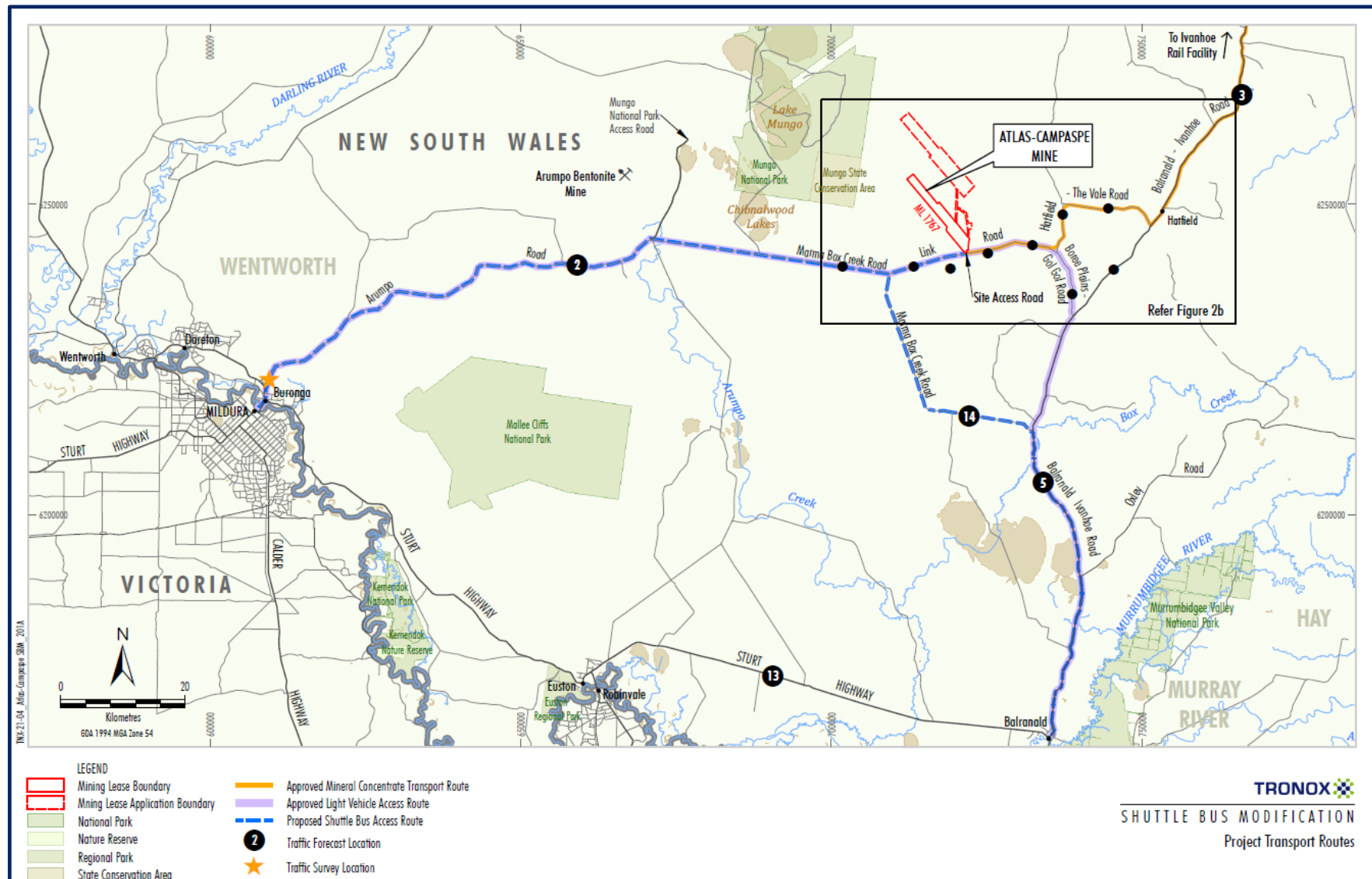


Figure 2 | Proposed shuttle bus transport route (Source: Additional information)

3 Statutory context

3.1 Scope of modification

The Department has reviewed the scope of the modification application and considers that the application can be characterised as a modification involving minimal environmental impacts as the proposal:

- would not significantly increase the environmental impacts of the project as approved;
- is substantially the same development as originally approved; and
- would not involve any further disturbance outside the already approved disturbance areas for the project.

The Department is satisfied the proposed modification is within the scope of section 4.55(1A) of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EP&A Act) and does not constitute a new development application. Accordingly, the Department considers that the application should be assessed and determined under section 4.55(1A) of the EP&A Act rather than requiring a new development application to be lodged.

3.2 Consent authority

Although the Minister for Planning is the consent authority for the application, the Director Resource Assessments, may determine the application under the Minister's delegation dated 26 April 2021 as Balranald Shire Council (Council) did not object to the proposal and Tronox did not make any political donations. The modification application was not required to be formally exhibited, and there were no submissions in objection.

3.3 Impacts on Biodiversity Values

Section 7.17 of the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 20016* specifies that if the approval authority is satisfied a modification would not increase the impacts on biodiversity values, a Biodiversity Development Assessment Report (BDAR) is not required.

The modification would not disturb any additional land and therefore the Department does not consider a BDAR is required.

3.4 Mandatory matters for consideration

Environmental planning instruments, proposed instrument or development control plan

The Department has assessed the modification against the relevant provisions of the following Environmental Planning Instruments:

- *Balranald Local Environmental Plan 2010*;
- *Central Darling Local Environmental Plan 2012*; and
- *State Environmental Planning Policy (Mining, Petroleum Production and Extractive Industries) 2007*.

The Department considers that the modification can be undertaken in a manner that is generally consistent with the aims, objectives and provisions of these EPI's.

Planning agreements

There are no voluntary planning agreements between Tronox and Balranald Shire Council or Central Darling Shire Council. However, Tronox makes contributions to the respective Councils for the

maintenance of local roads impacted by the project. The Department has considered the requirement for the contributions to be updated for the proposed modification in **Section 5.1**.

EP&A Regulation

The modification application satisfies the requirements of Clause 115 of the EP&A Regulation. There are no additional considerations relevant to the modification application in the EP&A Regulation.

Likely impacts of the modification application

The likely impacts of modification are considered in **Section 5**.

Suitability of the site

The Department's assessment of the suitability of the proposed access routes for shuttle bus movements is provided in **Section 5**.

Public Interest

The consideration of public interest is provided in **Section 6**.

The reasons for granting the consent for the original application

The Department has considered the reasons for granting consent to the original application, which included that the project would ensure the extraction of a valuable mineral sands resource without any significant environmental impacts that cannot be suitably mitigated, managed or compensated for.

4 Engagement

4.1 Department's engagement

Section 105(4) of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2021* (EP&A Regulation) specifies that the notification requirements of the EP&A Regulation do not apply to section 4.55(1A) modifications with minimal environmental impact applications. Accordingly, the application was not notified or advertised. However, it was made publicly available on the Department's website on 30 November 2021, and was referred to Balranald Shire Council, Wentworth Shire Council and Transport for NSW for comment.

4.2 Key issues – Government Agencies and Council

Balranald Shire Council (Council) initially raised concerns regarding the condition of sections the roads along the proposed shuttle bus routes and noted the roads are affected by wet weather events. Following additional consultation between Council and Tronox, Council was supportive of the proposed modification, subject to an independent review of the road condition along the proposed route to identify road maintenance requirements.

Transport for NSW noted the existing Traffic Management Plan for the project would be required to be updated as part of the proposed modification.

Wentworth Shire Council did not provide comment.

5 Assessment

The Department considers the key impact for its assessment of the application is potential traffic impacts to local roads associated with the movement of shuttle buses and other light vehicles along the proposed new access routes.

5.1 Traffic and Local Road Impacts

Shuttle bus movements would vary each day depending on roster timing. During peak construction, up to six shuttle bus movements per day would be generated to/from the mine. Once operational, up to eight shuttle bus movements per day would be generated to/from the mine.

Light traffic volumes would either reduce or be consistent with approved traffic volumes for all roads with the exception of Marma Box Creek Road (between Link Road and Balranald-Ivanhoe Road – refer to Location 14 on **Figure 2**). Potential impacts at this section of Marma Box Creek Road would include:

- an additional four light vehicle movements per day and two shuttle bus movements per day during peak construction; and
- an additional eight light vehicle movements per day and two shuttle bus movements per day during peak operations.

Council raised concerns regarding the condition of the roads along the proposed shuttle bus routes, including during periods of wet weather. Following additional consultation, Tronox agreed to upgrade the intersection of Marma Box Creek Road and Link Road before shuttle buses use Marma Box Creek Road, and to contribute to the maintenance of Marma Box Creek Road.

Council was satisfied with the commitments made by Tronox and were supportive of the modification subject to these commitments. Council was satisfied that the roads can be used in their current condition for light vehicle and shuttle bus movements (subject to the intersection upgrade).

The Department has recommended conditions requiring Tronox to upgrade the intersection of Marma Box Road and Link Road prior to using it for shuttle buses, and to pay annual contributions to Council towards the maintenance of local roads along the shuttle bus access route.

The conditions already require Tronox to prepare a Road Transport Protocol for drivers transporting materials from the site. The Department has amended this condition to broaden the scope of the protocol to cover transport of workers as well.

The Department considers that the increase in traffic movements would be relatively minor and unlikely to significantly impact the performance, capacity and safety of Marma Box Creek Road, and that residual impacts can be managed through the commitments made by Tronox and the revised conditions of consent.

The Department considers the proposed shuttle bus routes would provide more direct access compared to the approved heavy vehicle routes which would reduce the distance travelled between the Atlas-Campaspe Mine to Mildura/Buronga and Balranald. This in turn would reduce the potential for road accidents and risks related to fatigue.

5.2 Other issues

The Department is satisfied that the modification would not result in any significant additional environmental or amenity impacts beyond those currently approved for the project and that the revised conditions of consent would adequately address any potential impacts.

6 Evaluation

The Department has assessed the modification application in accordance with the relevant statutory requirements, having regard to the Modification Report and documentation relating to the currently approved project.

The Department considers that the local roads are suitable for the proposed shuttle bus movements, subject to upgrades and ongoing maintenance requirements.

The Department considers that the potential impacts of the proposed modification are minor and limited to small increases in traffic movements along Marma Box Creek Road. Residual impacts can be managed through the commitments made by Tronox and revised conditions of consent. The Department has recommended revised conditions of consent requiring Tronox to update the existing traffic management plan, complete intersection upgrades, and contribute to road maintenance along the shuttle bus access routes.

The Department considers that the proposed modification would provide more direct access for shuttle buses compared to the approved heavy vehicle routes and would result in benefits including reduced fatigue risks from workers commuting and the reduced chance for accidents given the reduced distance of vehicle trips to the Atlas-Campaspe Mine.

Consequently, the Department is satisfied that the benefits outweigh the impacts and the proposed modification is in the public interest and should be approved subject to conditions.

7 Determination

It is recommended that the Director Resources Assessments, as delegate of the Minister for Planning:

- **considers** the findings and recommendations of this report
- **determines** that the application MOD 2 falls within the scope of section 4.55(1A) of the EP&A Act
- **accepts and adopts** all of the findings and recommendations in this report as the reasons for making the decision to approve the modification
- **modify** the consent [SSD-5012]
- **signs** the attached approval of the modification.

Recommended by:



20/04/2022

Jack Turner

Senior Environmental Assessment Officer
Resource Assessments

The recommendation is **Adopted** / ~~Not adopted~~ by:



21/04/2022

Stephen O'Donoghue

Director
Resource Assessments
as delegate of the Minister for Planning

Appendices

Appendix A – Modification Report and Additional Information

Refer to the Department's website:

<https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/projects/mod-2-workforce-shuttle-bus>

Appendix B – Agency and Council advice

Refer to the Department's website:

<https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/projects/mod-2-workforce-shuttle-bus>

Appendix C – Notice of Modification

Refer to the Department's website:

<https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/projects/mod-2-workforce-shuttle-bus>

Appendix D – Consolidated Consent

Refer to the Department's website:

<https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/projects/mod-2-workforce-shuttle-bus>