Westconnex M4 Widening EIS - Objection

A: Basis for Objection - Lack of clarity in documentation

The EIS project documentation in the areas of the: extent of works descriptions, as well as the proposed design treatment of this project are still as vague, as they were described in the original preliminary public consultation documents. It appears that the author SMEC and others have left out key information for the public to determine the projects impacts, or shrouded the information in such a way to make it difficult to gain any clarity. Example being in the EIS on line version many of the works diagrams are poor resolution, or the overlays are intended not to show details, but there are no alternatives provided in the documentation.

It only covers some of what the author sees as important aspects. While it Disregards describing the whole widening project in any detail. So what about the other sites that have equal impacts?

I recently received the M4 Widening EIS Community update mail out. It has provided in a few clear photos and words more information, than the EIS documentation has in terms of the descriptions and design elements for the exhibited project.

The EIS documentation for many of the sites are really not assessable, due to the lack of information or the confusion the documentation seeks to create.

From the Appedix D

1.6 Objectives of the M4 Widening project

The core objectives of the M4 Widening project are to:

- Relieve road congestion so as to improve the speed, reliability and safety of travel in the M4 Motorway between Church Street and Homebush Bay Drive.
- Cater for the diverse travel demands along the M4 Motorway corridor that are best met by road infrastructure.
- Enhance the productivity of commercial and freight generating land uses strategically located near the M4 Motorway corridor.
- Improve access to the M4 Motorway from Sydney Olympic Park.
- Improve access to M4 Motorway from Homebush Bay Drive.

These objectives are consistent with the core objectives of the WestConnex scheme. An additional specific objective of the M4 Widening project is to enable integration with the subsequent stages of WestConnex while not significantly impacting on the surrounding environment in the interim period.

What is missing in the EIS, is any real reference to what happening with access to and from Parramatta. This is largely ignored other than in the overview document to relegate any improved connections to access Parramatta as out of scope.

Yet the project scale and location will add to the congestion at the current access points, this project provides no remedy to these M4 widening created issues. I find it hard to fathom that a major urban road project of this scale "Westconnect" can be allowed to be built in a vacuum to its surrounding environment.

B. Objection relating to Specific issues

Silverwater Road.

The EIS documentation has little substance to treatment of the widening of M4 at this site.

1. East bound off ramp.

There are a few vague diagrams that indicate areas of work. But these are coloured blobs.

Some technical statements made in the report are left open and unanswered in the documentation, such as the treatment of the current tail back 683metres now in AM peak and with the full Westconnex it is projected to grow to over 1200 metres. In the Traffic study makes the statement that the issue is related to the signalised intersection. That it not address by the EIS document. Other than to conclude that something will need to be done. The document does not say how Westconnex works will address this issue. Other than to say there will be unspecified lengthening of ramps.

No reference as to the designed extent of lengthening of this east bound off ramp is given. The issue is that the pedestrian M4 overbridge to North Auburn school @ Melton Road, it does not address the bridge Height / clearance issues on the northern abutment or its relocation. This would involve significant adjustments to M4 carriage way and the embankments / abutments of the Silverwater bridge overbridge would need to varied. But these are similarly not addressed. The roadway Design schema satellite imagery overlays onto the existing M4 Aerial photos are more confusing showing limit of works in red but no indication of number of lanes, limit or extent of the designed lanes at this site.

2. Document does not describe the treatment of Silverwater Road M4 overbridge. Currently 3 lanes and shoulder in each direction. But the project major theme statements clearly state that overall is to create 4 lanes both direction.

There are references to the treatment of the other ramps, although these are vaguely expressed and misleading indicating that Westconnex works at Silverwater Road M4 over Bridge is only 3 lanes as the on ramp is no merge thus forming the 4th lane from then on.

But at this point the only real statement is made about the treatment of this bridge is the impacts of noise for residents. Advising there will be impacted by noise from bridge works on Silverwater road M4 Overbridge.

3. No mention of the result of the changes to M4 at the controlled intersections @ Silverwater Road is given. Despite the findings documented in the EIS.

From Appendix D. Table 4-7 Intersections assessed at Auburn

shows the results of the interchange and intersection analysis. The analysis was based on traffic volumes obtained from a combination of intersection turning volume surveys and counts obtained from detectors at traffic signals.
The results show that none of the intersections along Silverwater Road operate satisfactorily in either peak. The longest queue during the morning and evening peaks occurs on the

southern approach to the Silverwater Road/Carnarvon Street intersection. The Parramatta Road/Rawson Street/Duck Street intersection has the longest queue in both peaks at the western approach.

Perhaps the most telling indication of the scale of the current issue is that they report the two eastbound ramps together. It is interesting they omit the critical off ramp performance. The report uses information from the study, elsewhere but does not provide any figures or provide an indication of the current issues.

In the section 4.3.7 Queuing at M4 Motorway off-ramps. This ramp is mentioned as having the longest queue length for this site AM and PM!

Due to the increased demands projected under all scenarios it is anticipated that infrastructure improvements would be required on the Silverwater Road corridor to bring the modelled network below capacity. These modifications could take the form of a revised lane configuration on Silverwater Road between the M4 Motorway and Parramatta Road. [from page 161 of Chapter 7: Effects of the M4 Widening project]

The intersection treatment in 5.3.2 is limited to a statement

The Silverwater Road interchange is currently a full diamond interchange configuration that accommodates all turning movements, with access between the ramps and Silverwater Road
regulated by traffic control signals. The existing interchange movements would be retained.

I expect this signifies adopting the Do nothing option.

Conclusion

1. The M4 over Bridge at Silverwater Road has three lanes in either direction over Silverwater road. This is what it currently is, Westconnex provides no improvement for drivers travelling to and from the city from west of Silverwater road. Just adds a toll for using existing inadequate infrastructure.

Core objective: • Relieve road congestion so as to improve the speed, reliability and safety of travel in the
M4 Motorway between Church Street and Homebush Bay Drive.

2. Many of the impacts of the Full Westconnex project vehicle usage, seems to be ignored in this project, alternatively: left as future possible action or simply not fully detailed in the EIS documentation, this is appears to be true of the M4 widening project also, thus there is no substantiation that the core objective is to be met by this project and what the environmental outcomes will be.

3. The documentation often mentions the future use of intelligent traffic systems, but these are never qualified in the documentation, so the impact of these measures cannot be assessed, so we are left wondering what Westconnex M4 Widening is providing for the motorist of western Sydney and the residents and environment.

James Ruse drive

1. On ramps. The EIS proposes the Movement of interchange of the James Ruse drive eastbound on ramp to M4 to adjacent to Tennyson Street from its location near Wentworth Street. The documentation is vague on how this is to be achieved. But the EIS document does not address how this lengthening of on ramp achieves the increase integration of traffic from James Rouse drive, or how the project reaches its objective of reducing travel time. It just proposes to move the eastbound connection to incorporate a merging zone closer to the sensitive wetlands.

These merging zones are areas of increased chance of accidents; this area of M4 is trafficked by Petrochemical tankers and waste trucks coming from Auburn and Clyde. But this risk is not displayed. The current [revised] M4 onramp design to make No merge lanes substantially lowered the risk of collision for these vehicles that have potential spill risks into Sydney harbour waterways.

Westconnex is now to reverse this risk mitigation design, and add a collision risk zone, even closer to the waterway?

The merge point eastbound is very short. It is much shorter than any of the merge points on the existing M4. In Appendix D Collisions, by far the highest accidents occur relate to rear end collisions just under 700. In the past and indeed in the EIS they are lengthening merge zones?

What more confusing is conflicting statement, This area is described in 5.3.2 For traffic joining the motorway to travel eastbound,
the on-ramp would become the outer eastbound lane of the motorway and no merge with motorway traffic would be required, similar to the current arrangement.

2. This issue of no treatment described, applies equally to the James Ruse Drive westbound on ramp.

The current viaduct westbound is currently reduced from 3 lanes to 2. This is to allow the onramp to be no merge providing a third lane, on the westbound viaduct. So what proposed is that for a very short section where the westbound ramp enters its effectively 3 but then it will becomes 2 again.

Thus reducing the capacity as well as increasing collision risk. So no description of mitigating works proposed, or indication of the treatment, to achieve the promised savings in travel time, safer travel is mentioned, just a reduction in vehicle capacity at the merge point that is made.

3. No Improvement to Intersections. No mention of the result of the changes to M4 at the controlled intersections @ James Ruse Drive is given. Despite the findings documented in the EIS. Perhaps there will be zero population in Parramatta.

See Table 4-6 [Appendix D – Current Performance of intersection]
All intersections overall operate satisfactorily during the morning peak, however, the southbound left turn movement from James Ruse Drive to the eastbound on-ramp of the M4 Motorway is approaching capacity and experiences delays resulting in a LoS of D in both peaks. This delay is due to congestion on the motorway itself which inhibits the rate at which traffic can join the motorway from James Ruse Drive.

The James Ruse Drive/Prospect Street intersection is operating near capacity during the evening peak and has the longest queue in both peaks (northern approach).

4. Variable widths within on ramps eastbound. The diagrams C4 & C5 shows the following anomalies:

The extended on ramp crossing Deniehy St on a new two lane bridge @ 3000 M, as the on ramp eastbound has changed from 1 lane to 2 Lanes @2850 M and @3200 M it is One lane again and then drops onto M4 @3300M as one lane.

There is no specific explanation for this change in roadway width in the documentation. It's strange as the congestion where the on ramp eastbound from James Ruse Drive that has multiple lanes merging within 50 meters just above Duck creek @ 2550 M that caused the current congestion is not treated! Still two lanes immediately after a controlled intersection that has 2 lane from North and the south entering then merging into One, no allowance made for traffic growth from Parramatta cities expansion.

There is a statement in 5.3.3 Bridges over Deniehy Street
It is anticipated that two new three span bridges would be constructed over Deniehy Street. The westbound bridge would carry three lanes and a shoulder. The eastbound bridge would carry two lanes and a shoulder.

No other detailed information provided

5. Matha Street cycleway is transformed into a construction site and the end result will be a reduction in road width. During construction this will be a hazard for both cyclists and vehicles in this industrial area. And after construction there is no design documentation or views of the final new cycleway. Nor is there the construction access treatment, for cyclists

Works described in 6.3.3Wentworth Street, Granville to the bridge over Duck Creek
A reinforced earth wall may be constructed along the southern boundary to accommodate widening in this section. This would first involve excavation of the existing batter down to a level suitable for the foundations of the wall with the batter excavated back about as far as the wall is high. Alternatively, this section could be constructed as an extension of the new viaduct and connecting to the bridge over Duck Creek.

6. Introduction of additional toll penalty to access Parramatta, Not mentioned in any of the previous public document and not highlighted in the EIS either, effectively an Access charges / Tax on vehicles from Silverwater road accessing Parramatta. This is achieved through the design shown in Diagram C5 & C6 .The segregation of onramp traffic from Silverwater road on the M4 westbound on ramp. It is purpose is to channel traffic from this entry point onto the new viaduct, so they cannot use the James Ruse Drive exit to Parramatta.

This design seems to be motivated to increase revenue by making motorists to drive further to access Parramatta, as distance based tolling is proposed! This is bazar, or it's as though the city of Parramatta does not exist in Westconnex road planner brief.

The western approach roads to Parramatta from Burnett Street are already congested so this has a negative community effect that also not addressed in the EIS

Conclusion

At these sites within the James Rouse Drive M4 interchange The underlying issues are not addressed, since the major time impediment currently in this area of interchange is the treatment of the reduction of capacity east and westbound along the M4 due to need to accommodate addition of a major Road artery linking Parramatta and the Hills areas. This is currently catered for by merging of through lanes on the being the three lanes to two lanes, but now it will be 4 lanes with one lane becoming a merging integration lane effectively 3 lanes and this is no change from current situation. It will continue to be a source of accidents; the accidents will east bound effect 4 lanes rather than 3 still causing much longer delays.

The introduction of access penalties and the increase in traffic diverted to Burnett and Coleman streets Mays Hill / Westmead, to access Parramatta from west is not considered as an impact by westconnex in the EIS.

So what information is missing from the EIS to understand Westconnex that will allow for achieving the 74% reduction Time targets promised?

Perhaps it's covered in this vague statement of intention, that at a future time.

3.7 Concurrent transport projects and proposals. [Appendix D]

3.7.1 Smart motorway system

(NSW) Roads and Maritime Services (Roads and Maritime) is proposing to implement a smart motorway system on the M4 Motorway between Lapstone and Concord. Roads and Maritime has a separate smart motorway project for the section between Lapstone and Mays Hill. Smart motorway systems aim to:

- Improve travel time reliability.
- Improve safety.
- Provide real-time information about traffic conditions, travel times and traffic incidents for drivers on the M4 Motorway and on approach roads. Drivers would be able to make informed decisions about which route to take.
- Reduce vehicle emissions.
- Reduce journey times.The smart motorway systemfor the M4 Motorway would include the following features:
- Real-time traffic and travel information delivered through enhanced variable message signs on the M4 Motorway and on approach roads.
- A coordinated entry ramp signals system.
- Dynamic speed and incident management through advanced lane use management and variable speed sign systems.
- Enhanced network monitoring delivered by traffic sensors in the roadway and closed circuit television (CCTV) cameras.
- Emergency telephones and stopping bays to provide drivers with improved safety in the event of a breakdown or if there is an emergency stop required.
- Road improvements such as some widened and lengthened on- and off-ramps and nearby intersection improvements.

The M4 Widening project includes the provision of road infrastructure and services to support the future implementation of smart motorway operations within this section of the M4 Motorway. The project includes widening and/or lengthening of existing on-ramps at Church Street, James Ruse Drive, Silverwater Road, Hill Road and Homebush Bay Drive. It is proposed that these ramps be widened and/or lengthened to provide sufficient vehicle storage capacity for future smart motorway operations. The project also includes a new ITS

cableway along the M4 corridor which can be used to support the future implementation of a Managed Motorway solution.

This appears to the general catch all statement, which the EIS author uses to not say what they will actually do! While I do not dispute that it is possible that this use of technology is part of solution to achieve the time savings .

There is no attempt anywhere to include this as part of the Widening works within the EIS, or to substantiate this assertion that it will be used, when and where precisely.

Tolling

The tolling design treatment is not addressed; there is the only area where the design is mentioned

6.3.7 Tolling infrastructure

The M4 Widening project tolling system involves approximately 15 tolling point locations, at either
end and on all existing motorway ramps. At each location a tolling gantry, equipment base (with
equipment cabinets) and a maintenance parking bay would be constructed. This would involve:

- Clearing of small areas and excavation for gantry footings, conduit and equipment bases.
- Formwork and concrete pours.
- Installation of power and communications cables.
- Erection of gantries and installation of general requirements such as lighting, generators, security fencing, signage.

So everything including the locations remains a mystery, and the system that used to detect vehicle entry on a multilane urban motorway is also unaddressed.