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The Hon. Rob Stokes MP
Minister for Planning
GPO Box 5341
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Re: WestConnex New M5 (M5 East) Environmental Impact Statement (SSI 14_6788)

Thank you for the opportunity to provide the following submission regarding the WestConnex New M5 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

I write as a Councillor on the City of Sydney Council to make the following comments on the EIS for the WestConnex New M5 project.

Please note that I oppose the WestConnex project as conceived in the EIS for the reasons detailed below. It is my strong belief that the inadequacy of the New M5 EIS is so profound that I do not believe it can be used as the basis for a Ministerial determination to approve the project.

The strategic justification for the New M5 is weak and inconsistent with the NSW Government's strategic planning and policy framework. The project as proposed in this EIS does not deliver the broader objectives of WestConnex as stated in the *Updated Strategic Business Case* (November 2015).

Specifically, I write with a number of concerns regarding the project and to express my strong opposition to the WestConnex project as a whole conceived in the EIS, noting that the information contained within the EIS for the New M5 means that it:

- Does not resolve the key need to deliver freight links to Kingsford Smith Airport and Port Botany, reduce congestion, and deliver sustainable urban development objectives;
- Will reduce green space available in Sydney Park;
- Does not contain traffic modelling outside the immediate impact area and contains doubtful assumptions in the traffic modelling provided inside the immediate impact area;
- Will likely cause significant traffic congestion and impacts upon public health in the immediate impact area; and
- Sets out future clearways and road widenings that were not initially intended as part of the project.

Further, I write with a number of concerns regarding the project, noting that:

- As a result of the WestConnex New M5 project, the volume of traffic flowing into the City of Sydney LGA via the St Peters Interchange and the upgrades of Campbell Street and Euston Road will increase, with no increased investment on alternative public transport pathways;
- The New M5 and St Peters Interchange will impact upon the public amenity of Sydney Park by removing sections of green space caused by road widenings along Campbell Street and Euston Road;
- The project will lead to greater levels of traffic in the inner-city by creating an induced demand for private motor vehicle transportation, leading to traffic congestion in inner-city streets and failing to adequately respond to the challenges of transport in Sydney;
- The project, by inducing greater levels of private motor vehicle traffic to use roads, will have negative health consequences on local communities by increasing the level of pollutants emitted by motor vehicle traffic in the area, as well as localised negative impacts caused by ventilation stacks along the route of the project;
- By inducing greater levels of private motor vehicle use, the project will likely cause the need for clearways on King Street, Newtown – and turn this thriving cultural high-street into another version of Parramatta Road. Clearways will likely destroy local businesses, cost local jobs, and reduce public amenity on this culturally significant high street; and
- By encouraging private motor vehicle transport and adding to traffic congestion, the project will increase greenhouse gas emissions when compared to other modes of public transport which are less-intensive greenhouse gas emitters.

Failure to Achieve the Aims of the WestConnex Project

The WestConnex project has been described as a road access project linking Kingsford Smith Airport and Port Botany to the wider road network.

In its current form the WestConnex project will not deliver upon its promise to provide links for freight vehicles and passenger vehicles to the airport and port facilities via the proposed Sydney Gateway. The proposed road connection to the airport and port facilities is currently not designed and remains unfunded. Further, the Sydney Gateway does not currently form part of the WestConnex New M5 plans, raising questions about the ability for WestConnex to deliver upon its stated aims.

The proposed alignment of the New M5 does not deliver on the fastest and most direct path to Kingsford Smith Airport and Port Botany. The proposed route veers away from the airport and port facility to terminate at the St Peters Interchange, and the future route of the connection to these two facilities will require vehicle movements to flow in the opposite direction to their destinations all the while immediately depositing thousands of vehicles into the suburbs of Newtown, Alexandria, Green Square, and Erskineville.

Impacts upon Local Traffic

The WestConnex New M5 project will have the immediate impact of depositing extra vehicle movements into communities within the City of Sydney. According to traffic modelling conducted for the WestConnex New M5 portion of the project only and which has been provided to the City of Sydney, the total effect will see an increase of 12% to traffic movements across local roads in the suburbs north of the St Peters Interchange. Euston Road will experience an increase of 69% to traffic movements along that road, which borders Sydney Park due to the WestConnex New M5 project. This significant increase to traffic movements also presents safety risks for pedestrians accessing and enjoying the amenity of the park.

Should the project proceed and traffic estimates be shown to be incorrect, I request that conditions be inserted to prevent any further road widening due to increases in traffic. Traffic modelling provided to the City of Sydney shows that increases to traffic on local roads increases further when the WestConnex project as a whole is considered. These traffic movements are expected to increase by 16% in the suburbs and roads north of the St Peters Interchange due to the WestConnex project. When considering the impact of the WestConnex project as a whole, Euston Road will experience an increase of 80% to traffic movements.

These impacts will present direct negative consequences to current and future residents of suburbs in Alexandria, Green Square, and Erskineville, to name a few suburbs which currently face congestion problems.

Impacts upon Sydney Park

Sydney Park is an open green space in the City of Sydney LGA that occupies 40 hectares of land in St Peters. The park is home to an area of wetlands, home to native flora and fauna, and has recently had a stormwater harvesting system installed which is designed to absorb nutrients and improve the habitat for a range of species. This open green space and wetlands area, as well as the urban ecology of the area, will likely be negatively impacted by the increase in air-pollution as a result of the St Peters Interchange, as well as reducing the public amenity of the park by situating a major new motorway adjacent to this highly patronised public space.

Sydney Park is situated adjacent to the Sydney Park Village, a mixed development of 17 buildings including 810 apartments. Further to the north of Sydney Park is the Ashmore Precinct which is expected to house over 6,000 new residents whilst to the north-east the Green Square urban renewal project is located, which is expected to house over 61,000 residents by 2030. The removal of sections of Sydney Park caused by the widening of Campbell Street and Euston Road will reduce this precious green space resulting in a loss of access to an important community commons at the same time as thousands of new residents will be moving into nearby areas that will patronise the park. Green space is already a scarce communal resource in the inner-city and any plans to reduce the size of Sydney Park will have detrimental effects on the liveability of suburbs nearby to Sydney Park.

Summary

In summary, WestConnex as whole and the WestConnex New M5 project specifically will have an enormous negative impact on the communities affected by the route with no clear evidence showing that the project will deliver upon its stated aims.

National and international evidence has shown that investment in new roads at the expense of new investment in public transport infrastructure has negative social, economic, and environmental impacts on communities and cities.

Sydney is in dire need of greater investment in public transport infrastructure, not new motorways.

Once again, I thank you for the opportunity to comment on the WestConnex New M5 EIS and reiterate my view that the New M5 project should not be approved.

Yours Sincerely,



Councillor Linda Scott
Labor Councillor, City of Sydney Council