

To: NSW Government Department of Planning & Environment
CC: RMS & NCC.

Objection to the EIS Exhibition – RMS Newcastle Inner City Bypass project

I have read the latest EIS on exhibition and I object to its findings in section 4.5.4 with regards to the Northern Interchange - Jesmond Park shared path connections and note that the preferred option is still the crossing of 3 sets of traffic lights. I believe the RMS has greatly underestimated the utilisation of the Jesmond park shared path and the impact of its loss of connections on the community.

I understand the RMS received significant community objection to its proposed modifications to the shared path. I am aware of at least 20 individuals who made submissions on the issue and NCC has also noted its objection in its council meeting of 28 June 2016...

<http://www.newcastle.nsw.gov.au/Council/About-Council/council-meetings>

NCC “Supports cyclists concerns and calls on RMS to implement design changes to mitigate the need for cyclists to traverse three additional sets of traffic lights when travelling east / west to / from Wallsend on the off road cycle path.”

Section 4.5.4 of the EIS report starting at page 85 acknowledges the community's objection and considered two options for the Jesmond Park shared path however the two options put forward are very basic at best, so basic in fact that I believe they were only included to 'tick the box' with regards to consultation about the loss of the Jesmond park shared path and had no real rigor applied to them.

The two options shown in the report are a \$3M underpass and a \$30M overpass. The lowest cost option – the underpass is rejected because of anti-social and water drainage issues. The \$30M overpass option at 540m in length included going over the main bypass itself at a height of 12m is also rejected because of the cost.

The key issue to recognise here is that the overpass option does not need to be 12m in height and does not need to cross the main bypass itself to maintain the shared path connection.

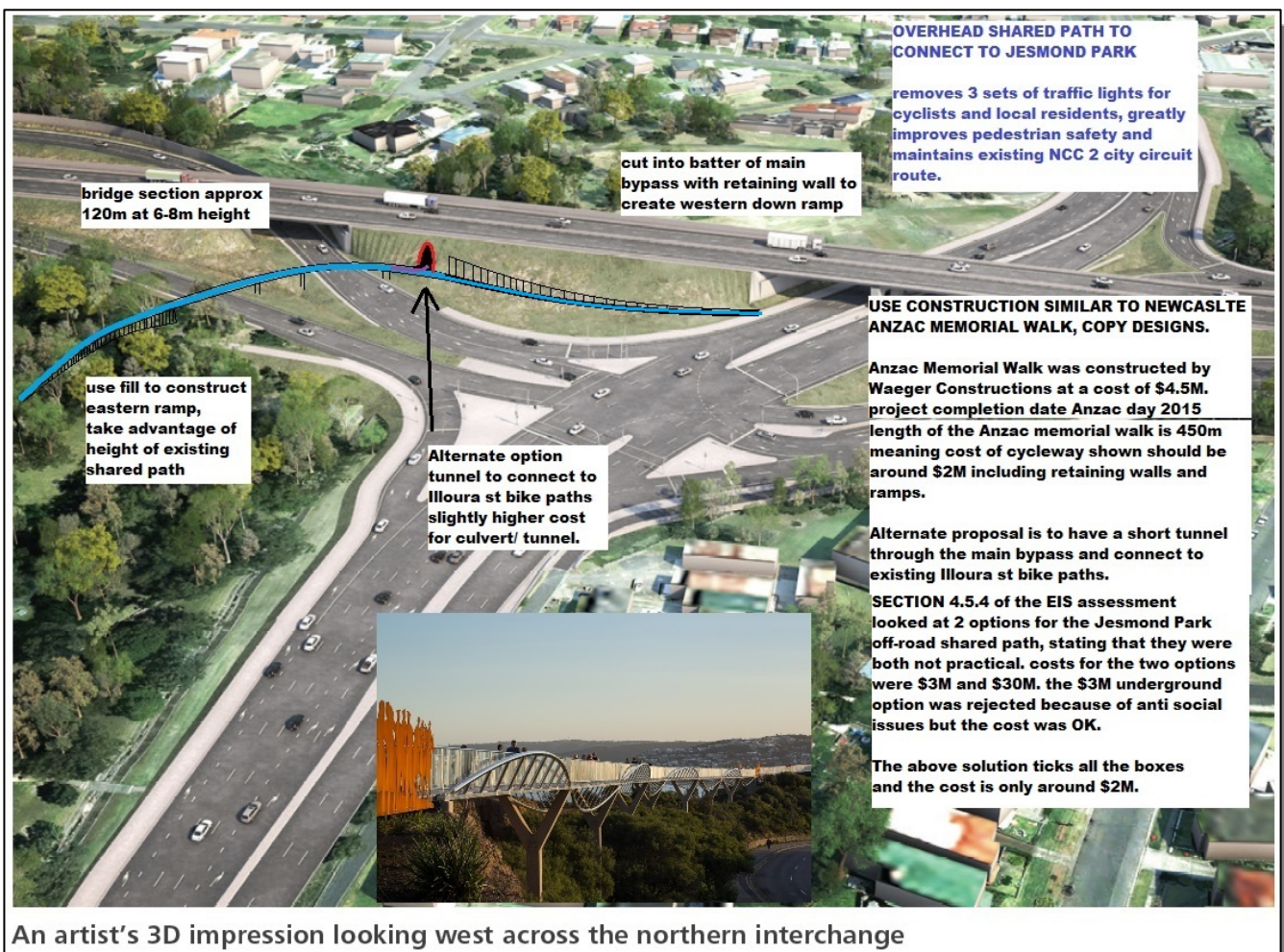
My Proposal

I propose that the RMS adopt a reduced overpass option approximately 120m in length across the two off ramps only. The reduced overpass which is much shorter in length and lower in height can be constructed at a lower cost without any of the anti-social or drainage issues. I have attached a sketch of my proposal below.

I have an electrical engineering background but am involved in major civil construction in my current role. Using the recent NCC project The Anzac memorial walk as a baseline I believe we can get a very accurate estimate for the costs involved. The Anzac memorial walk is 450m long and cost \$4.5M to construct, it was opened to the public Anzac day 2015; based on this information I believe the total cost should be less than \$2M including all associated ramps and retaining walls.

The important consideration in keeping the costs down is to make use of the height of the existing shared path and also available fill materials to construct the access ramps. The shared path at the eastern end of the overpass is above the road level, meaning that a shorter ramp with less material is required.

For the western end of the bridge the batter of the main bypass can be used to create the other down ramp – a much lower cost option than constructing a ramp from concrete and steel. Alternatively a very short culvert or tunnel could be included to connect to the existing path at Illoura Street / Victory Parade significantly shortening the overall length of the shared path.



An artist's 3D impression looking west across the northern interchange

Figure 1 – My proposal for a shorter overpass for the West end connections to Jesmond Park

The importance of maintaining the connections to Jesmond Park

- Jesmond Park shared path forms part of the NCC two city circuit - a major thoroughfare for cyclists both commuting and for recreation. (<http://bikefest.net.au/maps/Bikefest-2-City-Circuit.pdf>)
- NCC has just invested significant money into improving the connections from Wallsend Brickworks Park to Jesmond Park including a trial of the area's first dual crossing (<http://www.theherald.com.au/story/3931389/wallsend-to-trial-citys-first-dual-crossing/>)
- Maintain quality of life for Elmore Vale residents - easy access for walkers, runners, children, parents with prams, dogs etc. to the park.
- Reduce congestion and angst towards cyclists by forcing them on to Newcastle road to avoid the delays associated with 3 sets of traffic lights.
- Will in the future provide connection to the Richmond Vale cycleway.
- Maintain pedestrian and cyclist safety and Newcastle's reputation as a bike friendly city.

I have genuine concerns for the safety issues associated with the proposed 3 sets of traffic light road crossings - kids on bikes, local residents with prams and dogs, commuting cyclists simply will not fit on the traffic islands provided or will be tempted into risk taking behaviour, an accident is inevitable.

The Jesmond Park shared path is a major thoroughfare; to date there has been no assessment of the volume of traffic it supports. It requires that the existing off road shared path is maintained;

I look forward to your reply. I am happy to provide further information as required.

Thankyou & Regards,

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