

# **City of Sydney Councillor Christine Forster**

## **CBD and South East Light Rail Project EIS**

### **Submission**

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission on the EIS for the CBD and South East Light Rail Project (light rail project), to which the City of Sydney is contributing \$220 million.

This is an extremely important transport project for central Sydney, which will have a significant impact on travel conditions for hundreds of thousands of City users. It will also bring flow-on economic benefits for the City by reducing congestion on roads in the CBD and surrounds.

My comments on the EIS are attached.

#### **Devonshire Street versus Foveaux Street**

In my capacity as a local Councillor, I have received a large amount of correspondence regarding the Surry Hills segment of the light rail project.

Community response to the proposed above-ground route along Devonshire Street has generally not been positive, and as a local resident myself, I can understand the many concerns about the impact of both the construction and operational phases of the project on the amenity of Surry Hills. Those concerns include disruption to local businesses and loss of open space at Ward Park during construction, noise impacts during the construction and operational phases, traffic disruption, pedestrian safety, the loss of Wimbo Park and loss of on-street parking.

The community group PUSH (People Unite Surry Hills) recently approached me regarding an alternative proposal for a sub-surface route along Foveaux Street, with an underground station below the intersection of Crown and Foveaux Streets. PUSH has been a strong advocate for this alternative option, which it claims is economically feasible.

I would request that Transport for NSW provide the Surry Hills community with detailed information as to the consideration given to the Foveaux Street option and the reasons for its determination in relation to the proposal. I would also ask that this information be disseminated as widely and as thoroughly as possible throughout the local community.

#### **Surry Hills Consultation**

I continue to receive a large amount of correspondence from Surry Hills residents expressing concern and disappointment with the lack of detailed consultation and communication regarding the light rail project.

As a result, I moved a motion at the City of Sydney's November 18 Council meeting asking the City to engage and cooperate with TfNSW and the local community to facilitate and ensure effective levels of communication and consultation regarding the Surry Hills section of the light rail project. That motion was passed unanimously by Council.

I would again request that TfNSW work as closely as possible with the City of Sydney and the Surry Hills community throughout the entire project timeline to ensure extensive consultation and communication is both realised and perceived.

I have also received a large number of representations seeking an extension to the December 16 deadline for comment on the EIS. Although I am aware of TfNSW's need to pursue the light rail project in a timely manner, many community members felt pressured by the deadline and a 30-day extension would have been welcome, particularly given the size and complexity of the EIS document.

### **Ward Park Stop and Second Stop in Surry Hills**

I am aware that current plans indicate a light rail stop adjacent to Ward Park on Devonshire Street and that design options are being considered.

I would request that the design comprising two separate platforms on either side of central tracks be given the highest priority as this would reduce the overall impact on Ward Park. This option would also integrate the stop with the park and would provide increased accessibility for customers using the stop.

The project Development Agreement between the City of Sydney and TfNSW outlines the possibility of the creation of a second train stop in Surry Hills at Wimbo Park or Olivia Gardens. I am fully supportive of this option as it would promote usage of the service and further activate the surrounding area.

### **Trial Closure of George Street**

A key component of the light rail project will be the pedestrianisation of a significant portion of George Street, the major central north-south arterial road in the CBD.

The plan to pedestrianise George Street between Hunter and Bathurst Streets is broadly supported and is expected to provide a significant boost to the City's economy. Implementation of the pedestrianized zone is a significant project, however, and will involve massive changes to transport and traffic flows in, around and across the CBD.

I would request that TfNSW, in conjunction with the City of Sydney, as soon as possible conduct a trial closure of George Street between Hunter and Bathurst Streets to all but bus and pedestrian traffic for a minimum period of two weeks, with a view to compiling data to prepare for the permanent closure.

### **Potential Expansion Opportunities – Oxford Street**

Any expansion opportunities for the light rail should include the prioritisation of a route along Oxford Street. The formerly thriving retail and restaurant strip along Oxford Street is in desperate need of reactivation, with local businesses complaining that they have been very negatively impacted by the introduction of bus lanes and clearways along the street.

The provision of light rail along Oxford Street would bring visitors to the area, supporting local businesses, provide a new public transport option for residents and integrate the precinct more fully with other parts of the City and CBD.

## **Conclusion**

There can be no doubt that the construction phase of the CBD and South East Light Rail Project will be disruptive and challenging, and will need to be very carefully managed by TfNSW and City of Sydney and Randwick Councils, in order to minimise the impact on all stakeholders.

However, the CBD and South East Light Rail is a vital and well overdue infrastructure project which will bring enormous benefits to residents, businesses and visitors in the City of Sydney and Randwick local government areas. It will have massive flow-on economic impacts in Sydney and beyond by reducing congestion and improving transport flows in and around Australia's only truly global city.