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The Department of Planning and Infrastructure
GPO Box 39
Sydney, NSW, 2001

CBD and South East Light Rail Project

Application Number : SSI 6042

I am a supporter of improving Sydney's ailing transport system which has been underfunded and poorly run for decades. However this does not mean that I support rushing into the first projects which are submitted with unsubstantiated claims. We must be cautious of such over inflated claims relating to benefits that disregard the environmental and social impacts that will remain for decades. Transport strategy must look long term and not be based upon short term politically motivated projects that will only lead to restrictions in the future. Sadly Sydney has many examples of poorly thought out transport projects that have now turned the city into gridlock and cost us dearly.

The EIS is a highly technical document and very difficult for the general public to navigate. The submitted document (rushed ??) is full of errors and inconsistencies which is very disappointing. It has obviously been written by many different groups over a period of time that has not enabled them all to base their analysis on the same basic design concept. The timescale – 30 days- for responses set by Government has been raised as far too short for detailed feedback for such a large, complex and critical project. Despite requests from community groups, Members of Parliament, the City Council etc for an extension to 90 days, it was disappointing to find that without any explanation the timescale was only increased by 15 days. This has not allowed me to assess and provide any feedback on more than just the Surry Hills section and even that is not as detailed as I would like.

My biggest objection is that the chosen route Randwick through Central Station to Circular Quay already has a good public transport connections and does not focus on the critical growth areas of the inner city such as Zetland. I support a better transport link between Central Station and Circular Quay but from Central. The remaining TfNSW budget should serve or connect via communities that have poor public transport or those that would benefit from the associated urban renewal. Surry Hills, Alexandria, Waterloo etc are already thriving city villages and will only be damaged by a surface rail line passing through them. The narrow streets of these historic villages will only restrict future growth of the SE-wide network as all services will need to pass through this area. Today, the proposed design for this single service route does not meet EPA guidelines for noise and vibration and will cause significant congestion as it crosses major vehicle routes. The route will need to increase frequency and/or utilise larger trains as the network expands.

TfNSW have shown little evidence as to why the route through the narrow streets of Surry Hills is the most optimal route. The City of Sydney and local members campaigned for the route to pass up Oxford Street or Cleveland Street. They also campaigned for a tunnel under the heritage and confined area of Surry Hills. The reasons for not progressing any of these options have been hidden from the public and any information requested (even under freedom of information) has been denied.

The route from the city to the Moore Park hub ("the spin of the future Light rail network according to the Minister and TfNSW") needs to undergo further community and business debate. TfNSW need to show with quantitative data that the route, through the restricted (width, residential, congested etc) Devonshire Street corridor is the optimal option and will not restrict future growth of rail

network. TfNSW must release their data for detailed analysis and debate – this should have been done as a condition of this approval process.

Community Consultation

From the early days of this project becoming public there has been a total lack of meaningful consultation. Engagements have been restricted to communication about decisions already made that were not up for further debate. Generally, the communication was very aggressive and negative to any criticism. A number of community sessions were organised in public locations, however again they were run by TfNSW public relations staff and only aimed at telling the public that the plans are only viable option despite any negative impacts. If questions were raised or further detail requested the response was “we have not undertaken any detailed design yet so those issues have not been addressed yet”. This has later been found to be totally incorrect as a great deal of detailed design work was being undertaken at the time of the information meetings but was not made public.

It was also found that much of the study work incorporated in the EIS was actually undertaken based upon designs “frozen” in July/August 2013 timeframe which was before any community consultation was undertaken. It was only after community action groups gained some credibility with politicians and the media that meetings with TfNSW were held. I personally wrote to and met with TfNSW numerous times (see attached). However, when the EIS was released I was concerned to see that none of the issues or suggestions I raised had been addressed. When I questioned this at the TfNSW EIS information sessions, I was told that the design had been “frozen” before my inputs were received. I asked how this could be as they were submitted as part of the community consultation period. I was just told to resubmit the comments against the EIS.

TfNSW need to clearly state how they included **all feedback from the community** in their EIS released in November when the community consultation (including their online survey) only took place in September.

It is reported and witnessed that at some community information meetings, officials from TfNSW have described the future for Surry Hills as becoming a “nasty place to live”. This is based upon the Devonshire Street corridor becoming the spin of future light rail operations to the SE of Sydney. Surry Hills will become the main corridor for these operations that will change to nature of Surry Hills from a quiet residential and café area to a rail corridor. TfNSW claim this is unavoidable – for unstated reasons – to deliver light rail to Sydney.

TfNSW need to explain how the EIS can constantly state that impacts on Surry Hills will only be “minor negative” for all aspects when they have described the area as becoming the “spin” of future operations with a projected doubling of capacity being required in only a few years. If this EIS is approved how will residents be protected from the future environmental impacts ?? The EIS does not appear to cover anything on this subject.

The only meaningful consultation appears to have been with groups who will financially gain from the CSELR, such as cricket & football grounds, Randwick race course, UNSW. Businesses and residents who are likely to be negatively impacted were ignored.

It has also been pointed out that the Devonshire corridor was actually chosen as much of the housing bordering this route is in fact public housing. These residents are unlikely to make any objections.

Light Rail Projects

Many cities around the world have introduced light rail projects as a means to easily and cheaply deliver fast and reliable public transport. However evidence shows that they work most effectively in suburban environments and not in restricted city centres. Many similar systems use intermodal stations where travellers transit to other forms of transport – underground, buses, street cars etc and only utilise light rail for suburban services where the surface route has more space to operate and expand over time. For example in Portland USA transfer from LR to street cars and buses in the higher density city centre area. In other cities such as Barcelona the light rail system is above ground in the lower density urban areas but goes underground in the restricted city area, thus reducing the environmental impacts and enabling future growth.

TfNSW must clearly demonstrate and debate that light rail on this route through the narrow street of the CBD and Surry Hills is the most optimal. Surry Hills into the CBD is already very well served by buses, cycleways and heavy rail services. They also need to show how this single line route will integrate into a future network so the environmental impacts of a future network can be correctly assessed as part of this EIS. The EIS currently only assesses the impacts of a single line to Randwick yet the description talks about the Devonshire Street route being the spin of a future, much larger network, which by implication will require larger more frequent operations through the residential village of Surry Hills. Future growth impacts must be covered as part of this submission.

Route Considerations

TfNSW have so far failed to provide any evidence as to why the chosen route of Devonshire Street through Surry Hills offers the best route for the rail line to connect Central Station with Randwick. When the Light Rail Strategy document was released by TfNSW in June 2012 it was a complete shock to everyone that a tunnel under Surry Hills was the preferred option. An above ground route on Devonshire Street was noted as an alternative. TfNSW refused to engage with the community regarding this document. The majority of people continued to campaign for routes which utilised major roads as this would reduce the impacts and provide much needed commercial stimulus in areas such as Oxford Street.

The announcement in December 2012 that the proposed tunnel under Surry Hills was scrapped and the surface route along Devonshire Street was now chosen was even more of a shock. No community consultation had taken place and the residents of Surry Hills were told quite specifically that there would be no consultation on the choice of the route. TfNSW then started a campaign of direct communication telling residents that they had no ability to object to the route. The residents of Olivia Gardens were told that their homes would be acquired and demolished.

The residents of Surry Hills applied through the freedom of information act for information relating to why the narrow street of Devonshire was selected as the only possible route through Surry Hills. This was refused on the basis that a decision had been made and TfNSW did not need to explain their decision. There then followed all sorts of reasons given to the media most of which have now been proved to be incorrect.

As part of the consideration to approve this planning application, TfNSW must be required to demonstrate that all options other than Devonshire were genuinely considered, providing comprehensive and detailed evidence of technical and cost analysis. This must show that they genuinely tried everything they could not to use this narrow residential street and save demolishing a residential apartment complex.

TfNSW must explain why no community consultation took place on the choice and reasons for, this route prior to a final decision being made.

It is also evident from the information in the EIS that the Devonshire Street route is a major “spin” of the whole network and from the information provided it is clear that the narrow street will create serious restrictions to the future development of the network in future years. Whilst other options might be technically more demanding and higher cost, these should be further considered so as to future proof this important transport project.

TfNSW must demonstrate that the use of the Devonshire Street corridor will not damage the heritage nature in any way by altering the streetscape. They must also demonstrate that future growth capacity of the system will be limited by this densely developed area and any growth predictions will not further impact the environment – noise, vibration, congestion etc. (the EIS appears to indicate a need to double capacity in the near future).

Noise Impacts

This is a highly complex topic which cannot be only answered by empirical data. It is highly subjective and very emotive. EPA guidelines set “maximum levels” based upon international standards which have been adopted by NSW. TfNSW have given no confidence that they will be prepared to spend the money to meet the EPA Guidelines at all points along the route. In community information meetings they have admitted that they cannot meet the regulations but “it will not be that bad” and “residents will get used to the noise”. The TfNSW experts have clearly stated that they will not be able to meet the EPA noise guidelines along the Devonshire Street corridor – they didn’t appear concerned about this.

It is evident from the noise impact footprints submitted in the EIS that the operations will not meet the EPA average noise level guidelines down Devonshire Street. The EPA guidelines are there for a reason and must be met from day one and for the life time of operations.

It is critical that TfNSW explain how they are going to guarantee that these maximum limits will be met and wherever possible improved upon. Statements such as “anticipated that they will meet the requirements” are not a guarantee. In discussing the noise impact with experts from TfNSW it was unclear how the noise footprints were derived

- just for one train passing or two trains crossing?? Trains will operate at 2-3 minute intervals but as they operate to no fixed timetable there could be either constant train noise or increased noise from two trains at one time
- impact of altered traffic conditions; proposed that Parkham Lane now become a through road with significantly increased traffic; Devonshire traffic will be altered. What are the noise impacts of this traffic noise??
- impacts of much longer and more frequent trains used during events at the cricket/football grounds and the race course. These are excluded as “special events”. These are normal events for these facilities and will become much more frequent with better transport links
- Speed of trains is unclear in the assumptions. Passing through a mixed use residential and social area the speeds must be restricted to 20km/hr as proposed for George Street however they seem to be assuming a 40-45km/hr speed through the narrow residential streets of Surry Hills.

It is requested that an independent noise assessment be undertaken by Dept of Planning to verify the noise levels that will impact the community. This should clearly show whether the EPA guidelines will be met from day one of operations. This should include the important analysis of anticipated average noise levels by time of day against the EPA guidelines. This should be based upon the initial frequency and upon future frequency based upon TfNSW future assessments of usage under their

transport strategy plan. It should also provide the same for levels during so called "special events" where train size will be doubled and frequency increased.

Evidence from other light rail projects, for example in Seattle, show that 5 years after the operations started the City, Operator and Residents are still debating how the approved noise levels will be met. If planning consent is given to the CSERL project, there must be clear, unambiguous, rules on noise measurement from day one of operation which will determine if EPA rules are being met at all points along the route. If the approved levels are not met then operations must cease until a solution can be introduced. TfNSW must agree to this requirement prior to planning approval being granted.

Hours of Operation

Hours of operation are requested in the EIS to be 5am to 1am. This will have trains passing through a residential area generating noise levels, potentially above the EPA guidelines which are more restrictive after 7pm. It is also stated that trains will move around the network between 1am and 5am for maintenance requirements. On questioning, TfNSW admitted that this could be at a frequency of every 6 minutes.

It is important that TfNSW are very clear about their operating model as noise is measured in many ways including average levels, therefore operating frequency and hours of operation is a vital component.

Any planning consent must require operations to cease at times of the day when the EPA levels are not met. There should be significant frequency restrictions prior to 6am and after 11pm to protect the residential environment. There must also be a total ban on operations between 1am and 5am through Surry Hills.

Speed of Rail Vehicles

Much of the route along the Devonshire Street corridor will be shared and in close proximity to pedestrian and cycle environments. Currently pavements are largely separated from moving cars by parked cars. The rail line is proposed to pass very close to pavements due to the narrow nature of Devonshire Street. Devonshire Street is bounded by residencies, pubs, cafes, shops, churches, community centres, primary schools, kindergartens and businesses. It also crosses many main roads and a network of small access laneways (a feature of the village area). The current vehicle speed limit is 40km/hr but with the number of intersections, pedestrian crossings, congestion etc vehicles are rarely able to travel anywhere near that speed. Drivers are also conscious of the multiuse nature of Devonshire Street which is also an on road cycle path.

It is therefore inconceivable from an operational safety standpoint that train speeds can be any greater than 20km/hr. This is the speed limited proposed for the similar area of George Street which is not bounded by schools and kindergartens. Any approval given to utilise Devonshire Street must restrict speeds to 20km/hr on safety grounds.

Parking

The impact on parking for both residents and visitors needs to be considered. 128 car spaces along Devonshire Street will be lost plus with 30 spaces at the Langton Clinic, 10 spaces on South Dowling and 8 spaces on Parkham Place. The Surry Hills area is already subject to considerable parking stress. It is totally unclear from the EIS what the impacts are actually going to be nor are there any concrete plans for resolving the issue.

TfNSW must demonstrate how/where they are going to replace the lost parking spaces. They should also consider altering parking restrictions to dissuade visitors from driving into the area, many global cities utilise “residents only” parking in front of residencies as well as car share schemes etc. They may also consider keeping the parking garage under Olivia Gardens for sue by the clinic staff.

These solutions need to be considered, debated and agreed before planning permission is granted. When the Bourke Street cycle way was approved 75 spaces were lost on a promise that new spaces would be opened up – not a single new space has been found 4 years later.

Congestion

Surry Hills has a number of North South major vehicle routes which will be dissected by the light rail line. It is proposed that at all these intersections the train will have priority over these main routes which currently have extended “green light” priority over Devonshire Street. Trains will run at a frequency of 2-3 minutes at peak times thus only allowing “green light” periods of just 60 seconds. It is very unclear from the EIS what the actual impact on traffic flow will be. There is a mass of data which does not provide an easily understandable outcome that the public can understand. Again TfNSW sum up the situation with the meaningless comment “it is anticipated that the impact on congestion will be minimal”.

When questioned at the EIS information meeting, TfNSW response was that congestion was not their problem that will be dealt with by RMS. They said they “think” it can all be managed – what happens if it doesn’t work ??

TfNSW must provide much more detailed analysis on the actual impacts to journey times and wait times at each intersection, including the new crossing on South Dowling. This assessment/impact needs to be verified by independent consultants.

NSW emergency services must also confirm their agreement that the new traffic layout and increased congestion in Surry Hills caused by CSELR will not impact the journey times for emergency vehicles.

It has been suggested that TfNSW/RMS run a number of demonstrations to show the impact of the changed light sequencing at say Crown Street to show the minimal impact.

Traffic Flow

It is very unclear from the EIS how traffic flow around Surry Hills will be managed as there are multiple laneways that access and cross Devonshire Street. The EIS as submitted is totally vague on this point. It is not practical or acceptable for residents/visitors to be forced to undertake extensive detours, often onto heavily congested roads such as Cleveland, South Dowling etc, just to travel a few hundred metres. Additionally there are a number of circumstances where residents can leave their homes but are not able to return.

Local access traffic must be allowed to cross the rail lines to enable practical access to lane ways and back streets. This is critical for residents and service vehicles.

TfNSW must present a full traffic management proposal for discussion, debate and agreement prior to planning approval. This cannot be left until some future time as it is expected that a number of situations may require considerable redesign to be resolved. This must provide details for traffic flow at every affected junction.

Cycle Ways and Pedestrian Crossings

Surry Hills has fought for many years to deliver a network of linked cycle ways and pedestrian access with improved priority for pedestrians. This took considerable community engagement over many years. It is now very concerning that the cycle way along Devonshire Street will be lost because the street is too narrow to accommodate it. Also the multiple pedestrian priority crossings on Devonshire Street will be lost and only traffic light crossings at major intersections available.

It is not clear how pedestrian crossing will operate with the frequency of trains and safe crossing only allowed at main intersections. Trains could well pass in either direction at 60second intervals during peak/special event times and this is not long enough for many to cross a three lane road. It is proposed that the trains do not stop for anything.

TfNSW must provide a detailed and agreed plan for how the cycle ways will operate under the proposed light rail and how priority will continue to be given to cyclists.

TfNSW must provide a detailed operational plan for safe pedestrian crossing at multiple locations along the length of Devonshire Street. This must provide data on allowable crossing times at peak/special event periods to clearly demonstrate that there will always be adequate time for all pedestrians to cross in safety. – vehicles will always wait or slow down trains cannot –

Removal of Trees

The whole CSELR looks to remove a staggering 760 trees along its route. Many being historic trees which provide much needed shade and are part of the village atmosphere of many areas. It would appear that the TfNSW designers have made little or no attempt to work around the trees. They seem to believe that cutting them down with a vague statement about replacing with new ones is different locations is acceptable. Even if new trees are planted it will take tens of years before they provide the same visual and shade environment as the existing trees. The visual environmental impact from the removal of trees along the route will be highly significant and detrimental to the village environment of Surry Hills well known for its shady tree lined streets.

TfNSW are requested to provide detailed justification as to why each of the 760 trees requires to be removed. They must provide details of the planning activity undertaken to re-route, alter the design, alter the alignment etc to ensure every effort has been made to save as many trees as possible. They must provide detailed plans to replace existing mature trees in close proximity locations with ones of a similar age/size to ensure that shade etc is maintained.

Wimbo/Olivia Gardens Park

The proposed route will remove the existing historic Wimbo Park and the homes of residents of Olivia Gardens. Routing the rail line through this area will expose the houses along Nobbs Street and Parkham Street to significant environmental impact - noise; visual and social. Currently the residencies enjoy a very tranquil environment as Parkham Lane is a cul-de-sac and only used by residents and infrequent service vehicles. The Olivia Gardens apartment block is across the lane and stands back from Parkham Lane, shielded by a line of mature trees. On the other side of Olivia Gardens the Nobbs Street houses have deeper gardens, many with garages and most face onto the pool block and gardens.

The proposed plan for Olivia Gardens post the rail line are quite confusing. Different sections in the EIS show different treatments for the area. It appears from the words that the alignment will take central route exiting the area through what is currently the Langdon Clinic car park. This car park is heavily used by clinic staff and has parking for 30+ cars. No solution for where these cars will park in future is offered other than saying this will need addressed.

TfNSW must advise their solution for this as moving parking for staff to other locations in Surry Hills will further impact already reduced on street parking. Have they considered keeping the existing Olivia Gardens underground parking ??

The design for this area seems to suggest that Parkham Place will be closed. This is the only route out for traffic using Parkham Lane – mainly related to Bourke Street school safe drop-off zone and residents of Parkham Street. Parkham Place is also the only access for service vehicles to come to

Parkham Lane – Parkham Street is too narrow and the turn to Parkham Place is too sharp for such vehicles.

On one scheme in the EIS it is proposed to open Parkham Lane to Bourke Street thus creating a one way system up Parkham Street, left into Parkham Place and then left into Parkham Lane with a left hand exit into Bourke Street. This proposal does not allow for the tight turn at the end of Parkham Street. Also a left turn only into Bourke Street routes all the traffic back in front of the school increasing safety issues due to increased traffic. This plan also has reduces the frontage for the realigned Wimbo Park to Bourke Street, increasing the negative visual impact. It would introduce additional safety issues as the new Wimbo Park would now be cut by both a road and a rail line.

TfNSW must consider keeping Parkham Place open across the rail line with signalling linked to the lights at South Dowling. This would address all the concerns raised and enable some parking to be maintained for the Clinic

The introduction of the new Wimbo Park is a great concept. Its design needs to have the full involvement of the local community and in particular the residents of Parkham/Nobbs Streets. The detailed design and planting concepts need to provide significant noise and visual barriers to reduce environmental impacts. TfNSW and City of Sydney must set up a community group, to include the residents and businesses with adjoining properties. This Group must meet prior to planning consent being given so key features of the future park are stated in the planning approval as requirements.

TfNSW must clearly outline how the immediate local community will be involved in the detailed design and be committed to making this area the best possible outcome in reducing the impacts of the rail line. This will require a very different approach to that used by them so far in the project.

Impact on Businesses

The Devonshire Street corridor is bounded by many businesses. There is significant evidence from similar infrastructure projects around the world and in Australia that businesses are severely impacted especially during build phases.

The EIS seems to indicate that there will be minimal impact on local businesses. TfNSW must provide evidence from similar projects that demonstrates that impacts on local Surry Hills businesses during build and operation will be minimal.

For businesses such as Bourke Street Bakery, the EIS appears to be proposing that they will lose their outdoor seating area. This will have a very significant impact on their business and will disastrous for those who use this iconic café. TfNSW must indicate clearly all such impacts on businesses along the CSERL route so community feedback can be given on such impacts. Sadly the EIS again states “the impacts on businesses will be slightly negative” – TfNSW need to explain how they came by this assessment when Bourke Street Bakery’s assessment is that they could well go out of business (public statement in SMH).

Wire Free

The technology supporting overhead wire free operation of light rail would not have even been considered 5 years ago. The technology is advancing at a rapid rate and will be even more advanced in 5 more years when the route is anticipated to begin operation. It is disappointing to see that the proposed design does not even consider wire free operation other than on George Street. Even here it is only being considered because the City of Sydney, who are providing \$220m of funding, are demanding it.

In environmentally sensitive areas such as Surry Hills where the visual and noise impacts of overhead cables should be reduced at all cost wire free would seem to be an option that should be developed to work and not just discounted "as too difficult". It will also reduce the number of trees to be destroyed. There is strong community support for the use of this technology as it will significantly reduce the visual impacts.

TfNSW must demonstrate, with a supporting technical assessment from an external organisation, that wire free operation cannot be used at any point in the Surry Hills area. They need to prove that technology will not advance enough over the next 5 years to enable any sections, such as the level area through Olivia Gardens, to be wire free.

Permanent Loss of Moore Park Land

It is vital that loss of Moore Park land is minimised.

This area is part of Governor Macquarie's 1811 Sydney Common bequest which sets aside 405 hectares of land for the outdoor recreational needs of present and future Sydney generations. Sadly, State Governments over the decades have taken it upon themselves to remove this bequest and only one third of the land now remains for recreation. In addition to this planning approvals have steadily been granted to significantly increase residential development in areas bordering Moore Park. This is putting even greater stress on the use of this vital land for recreational use. In all previous approved plans that reduced parklands and trees, the Governments of the time committed to offsetting the losses but did nothing.

There are many, possibly more expensive and technically challenging, routes which could be used to align the rail route to existing roads and bus lanes thus significantly reducing the loss of critical parklands and trees.

TfNSW must confirm that any design option proposed does not reduce the available land for recreational use.

They must also provide full and complete evidence why alternative routes following existing roads and bus ways are technically impossible to use.

Construction Noise and Disruption

It appears from the EIS that 7am to 11pm construction operations are planned throughout the residential, school, church, social and business area of Surry Hills.

Access to properties must be available at all times. If parking is required to be restricted for short periods of time alternative parking must be made available.

There will be considerable noise, dust and vibration which will significantly impact residences, schools, businesses etc in the Surry Hills area. TfNSW must provide details as part of this planning process how they intend to compensate those affected and provide clear details on how they will cover any repairs to damaged properties, including dust/pollution damage. It is understood that this has been a major issue on other large scale projects with affected parties often waiting years for compensation to be agreed.

TFNSW must provide details as part of the planning process. If this is not acceptable to businesses and residents then any related Government policies may have to be amended.

TfNSW must outline their public communication process for informing and agreeing with businesses and residents about future works that will impact them. This process must include community

meetings to agree measures to prevent or mitigate impacts, including determining when respite is needed. TfNSW must establish a community liaison group for each area of the project. This team must be available 24/7 to directly discuss (not via some call centre) existing and future issues with residents and businesses.

Sadly, TfNSW's record of proactive two-way communication with the community so far on this project has not been good. They must provide detailed plans and processes before planning approval is given.