



# **RESPONSE TO EIS FOR M5/KING GEORGES ROAD INTERCHANGE UPGRADE AS PART OF WEST CONNEX**

**by**

**10,000 Friends of Greater Sydney (FRoGS)**

10,000 Friends of Greater Sydney (FRoGS) presents this submission in response to the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) released by the West Connex Delivery Authority on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2014 for the M5/King Georges Road Interchange Upgrade of the proposed WestConnex project.

The submission is presented in two parts:

1. The WestConnex concept as a strategy for future development of transport for Sydney; and
2. The specific proposal for the M5/King Georges Road Interchange Upgrade of the proposed WestConnex project.

## **The WestConnex Concept for Transport for Sydney**

The WestConnex concept aims to address the increased future demand for passenger and freight between western and eastern Sydney identified by the Transport Master Plan. Over the next twenty years, morning rush hour traffic will increase and the EIS reflects this.

However, FRoGS has two concerns.

### **1. Justification of the proposal**

The concept for the entire WestConnex represents a \$11.5 billion massive road infrastructure investment which presents a solution that is difficult to justify both on traffic amelioration grounds or cost benefit analysis. While the EIS refers to a business case, no information is provided on that Business Case and the cost/benefit quoted appears unrealistic.

In common with the EIS for Stage 1 of the proposed WestConnex project for the widening and upgrade of the M4 Motorway from Church Street, Parramatta to Homebush Bay Drive, Homebush, this EIS for the massive road proposal does not seem to tackle the primary issue of passenger movement to the CBD and the Airport along the east west corridor.

Furthermore, the EIS does not appear to have taken into account current or proposed developments nor the future Airport at Badgerys Creek, which could significantly reduce travel from Western Sydney to the CBD and existing Airport. Is the basis for analysis already outdated ?

### **2. Consideration of Alternatives**

The EIS presents only road based alternatives whereas other options that should be considered are rail to accommodate the forecast massive increase in west to east commuters to the CBD and commuters and passengers to the Airport.

This especially applies to freight movement out of Port Botany to Intermodal terminals at Moorebank and other Western Sydney locations. The east-west freight connection can be fixed by duplicating the existing freight line. Putting more freight on rail would make the greatest positive impact on freight movement in Sydney. This alternative means there may be no need for the proposed M5 work, resulting in significant cost saving.

Modelling from 20 years ago showed that building high capacity roads from west to east would create major congestion in the CBD, at the Airport and in eastern Sydney. As a result, the Sydney Orbital freeway was developed with no freeway end in the east.

With growth in traffic and the numbers of people travelling to the city CBD and Airport, why expand roads which are delivering more cars to Eastern Sydney ?

The proposed north-south portion of the WestConnex to bypass the CBD will provide some relief if extended north to pick up Victoria Road traffic and in due course north of the Harbour to link with the M2. But this will not change the fact most workers are travelling to the CBD and Airport environs. The consequence is likely to be a massive increase in traffic congestion with the inner eastern portions of the M4 and M5 becoming nothing more than huge car parks !

It seems with cities around the World, particular London and now New York, expanding transit systems to serve their City Centres and providing constraints to car movement to these Centres, the question could be posed –

**“No other major city in the world attempts to solve its transport problems with more freeways towards their City Centre as Sydney is doing – so either the whole world is wrong or we are.”**

**Recommendation:**

1. Consider rail alternatives e.g. extra fast Metro style rail tracks between Parramatta and the CBD and duplication of Botany line and links to proposed Intermodal Terminals in Western Sydney.
2. Review the cost/benefit analysis for the current proposal and include an economic assessment of the rail alternatives

## **Upgrade of M5/King Georges Road Interchange**

The detailed proposal for the upgrade of the M5/King Georges Road Interchange at Beverly Hills appears justified on a localized basis as it seeks to accommodate traffic demand at this Interchange.

However, aspects worthy of further consideration are:

**1. Impact on King Georges Road**

It would seem that the proposed Interchange upgrade will have the greatest traffic impact on movement between the M5 west and King Georges Road. Yet no proposals are shown for proposed upgrade of King Georges Road especially at current known squeeze points.

**2. Trip Time Savings**

It would appear that the trip time savings quoted as benefits from the Interchange upgrade are unduly generous as they assume free traffic flow at either end of the project, which will not occur until the entire project is completed. Even then, queuing back from General Holmes Drive may simply result in a speedier trip to join an even longer queue therefrom.

**3. Tolling Issues**

The toll charges foreshadowed in the EIS for WestConnex are high with trucks paying three times what a car will pay. This could lead to user resistance which we have seen with the Cross City Tunnel.

Lower traffic volumes would result in reduced revenues, which would ultimately impact on the Government – this would not be a first for Sydney.

These concerns about financial viability could also lead to reluctance by private proponents to participate in the project. The government may have to provide substantial guarantees to ensure a return on investment.

**Recommendation:**

1. Review impact of proposed Interchange upgrade on King Georges Road and plan to ease pinch points along that road prior to opening of upgraded Interchange.
2. Review forecast of traffic, financial viability and the benefits of WestConnex proposal.

**In summary**

Sydney has a powerful case to build more new infrastructure like WestConnex but it seems we could deliver much more with \$11.5 billion that just build more road.

There is concern that the WestConnex project may not prove to be as successful as claimed for transport in Sydney and result in more traffic congestion around the CBD and Airport, as well as not living up to the economic and financial predictions.

FRoGS believes an alternative solution making greater use of rail as follows:

- Build new rail tracks for fast Metro rail between Parramatta and the CBD.
- Upgrade the freight line from Port Botany to Moorebank Intermodal Terminal.

We believe this alternative could deliver the nucleus of an efficient transport system for Sydney and be part of a viable, strategic plan that would exploit complementary modes. This could better accommodate the huge future growth of Western Sydney.