Application Number SSI 7485
WestConnex M4-M5 Link – Modification 2 The Crescent overpass

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Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed West Connex Modification 2. My key comments are listed as follows and are supported by a pdf package of drawings. The modifications is driven around traffic improvements and has not adequately considered Landscape, urban design outcomes for pedestrians and local users. The overpass has significant visual impacts in its own right, and is leading to a range of multiple flow on effects all to the detriment of the public realm, visual amenity and pedestrian connectivity. The overall outcome now is a spaghetti junction of vehicular and pedestrian aerial overpasses that is at odds with the NSW Government commitment to have all of the vehicle movements underground.

Refer also to A3 PDF – Community concerns

Key outcome 1:

Remove the overpass. Return to option 1 at grade intersection or solve underpass option 2 technical constraints.

Issues and concerns:

Aboveground overpass is the primary change and urban and visual and impact.
The above ground road overpass is what has primarily changed from the original EIS design, with multiple flow on effects. The decision to put in an overpass has driven a range of undesirable flow on changes particular around pedestrian connectivity, including the need to move the green bridge west. It has led to the relocation of the green link, the addition of a new pedestrian bridge, and associated visual impacts and reductions in pedestrian connectivity. The overpass blocks views from the relocated green bridge to the harbour.

Level of service issues may never be overcome due to heritage constraints of the Crescent
The overpass has been driven by "level of service" (LOS), which is a measure of how long you have to wait at an intersection. The city West link / The Crescent has a LOS of F (the worst). The overpass will only improve it to a C. Over time that may degrade again. Traffic will always be impacted by heritage and space constraints of the rail underpass at Johnston Street / The Crescent.

Overpass blocks views from green bridge
The Overpass has a design speed of 60Km/Hr which makes it even higher than it needs to be and as a result blocks harbour views from the relocated green bridge. The current illustrations do not show street lighting which will extend up even higher.

Other options not adequately reviewed
The modification report table 4.1reviewed three options. 1; Traffic lights, 2; Underpass and 3 overpass. The decision to proceed with Modification 2 has not adequately reviewed the two alternate options that had far better urban design outcomes.

Option 2 tunnel not adequately reviewed.

The Tunnel option however was discarded due to constructability and other concerns. The design reviewed, however was a 165m tunnel. By exceeding 120m it then required mechanical ventilation and escape routes. This drove the tunnel lower for the ventilation equipment, and therefore made it longer, and meant that it exited past James Craig Road and the Crescent to the south. All this dramatically pushed up cost, complexity, and workability.

We believe however that the underpass option should have come from the premise of making it shorter than 120m so that it sat below the threshold for ventilation. This would mean that it could be shallower, therefore shorter and substantially cheaper. To do this it needs to come from the centre lane, necessitating the relocation of the bus stop to just south of Johnston Street.

The option 2 underpass is a far better urban design outcome to improve the LOS. An underpass option would achieve the increased level of service, while retaining the original connectivity of the EIS scheme. The Tunnel option however was discarded due to constructability and other concerns. The design reviewed, however was a 165m tunnel. By exceeding 120m it then required mechanical ventilation and escape routes. This drove the tunnel lower for the ventilation equipment, and therefore made it longer, and meant that it exited past James Craig Road and the Crescent to the south. All this dramatically pushed up cost, complexity, and workability.

The option 2 provided the greatest urban design outcomes and is the preferred community solution. It needs to be carefully re-evaluated with the following criteria:

The intention should be to maximise the open slot trench to ensure the underpass section itself is no longer than 120m, so that it does not need to be mechanically ventilated. This would mean that it could be shallower, therefore shorter and with reduced cost and complexity. This might include the ramp from the centre lane, which may require the relocation of the bus stop location. The gradients of the down ramps be considered so that the ramp allows the existing pedestrian crossing at Johnston Street to remain.

Concerns about constructability should be reviewed to investigate alternative construction options – eg pre-cast or other technology and temporary traffic diversions through the goods yard site.

Outcomes

1.1 Review Option 1 in terms of traffic light phasing. This option provides maximum traffic movement options.

1.2 Review option 2 with objectives to:

• Keep the tunnel shorter than 120m to avoid need for mechanical ventilation and emergency egress to reduce cost and complexity. The remaining areas to be open slots. This is a far better urban outcome.

• Consider relocating bus stop south of Johnston Street to have underpass in middle lane to reduce tunnel length.

• Ensure northbound tunnel entry starts after Johnston Street.

• Solve waterproofing issues with precast box solution with waterstop joints or other appropriate means as has been applied to other Sydney tunnels (LCT and SHT).

• Concerns about constructability should be reviewed to investigate temporary traffic diversions through the goods yard

1.3. The option 3 outcome is not desired at all. If it is to remain then.

1.3.1 Design speeds northbound should be reduced given the proposed alignment up and around the rail bridge pylons and onto Johnston street and back.

1.3.2 The option 3 overpass needs to be lower than the green bridge so that yiou can see the water from the green link.

Key outcome 2:

Improve pedestrian connectivity.

Issues:

The 20% concept design in the EIS did not adequately cover pedestrian connectivity. The Current MOD 2 has not adequately covered off on issues raised in the EIS stage about connectivity. The MOD 2 has made some considerably worse. These include:

• Removal of direct park to park connectivity between Rozelle Goods yards and Glebe Foreshore by relocating the green link, (See notes below)

• Tortuous 4 traffic light pedestrian crossing at Johnston street The crescent

• No at grade wheelchair / pram / kids on bikes connectivity through Buruwan Park and the western side of the crescent. (see notes bleow)

• Addition of a third crossing into Rozelle parklands, but one that has ended up 120m longer than necessary to be able to get over the overpass, and its flow on visual impact issues.

Relocation of the green link

This modification alters one of the centrepieces of the original design: a pedestrian and cycling green link to connect the Glebe foreshore and Bicentennial Park. To the new Rozelle parklands in the former Rozelle Goods Yard.

The green link was originally intended to provide a seamless grade separated connection for pedestrian between the Glebe foreshore parkland and the new Rozelle Parklands. The relocation of the green link to the west due to the overpass now necessitates the crossing of the Crescent.

The option 1 and option 2 in table 4.1 of the modification report allow for the single green link to still serve that function.

Relocating that green link to the west of the intersection of The Crescent and City West Link puts the needs of motorists ahead of pedestrians and cyclists. By having it on the western

side, you now need to cross the four lights at the Crescent rather than no road crossings at all. The original intent was safer and allowed for greater connections in and around the parklands.

To over come this lack of a direct link, the modification has added a second pedestrian bridge. As this has to get over the new vehicle overpass, it is another three metres higher than a direct connection. This is adding about 120m length to the walkway to meet accessible grades. An undergrounded tunnel connection would avoid the need for this second bridge.

Lack of an at grade Railway Parade to the Glebe foreshore link
At present, residents in wheelchairs, mums with prams and kids with bikes can connect at grade along railway parade and through Buruwan Park to the Glebe Foreshore and other destinations. This only requires a single traffic light crossing at the corner of Johnston Street and The Crescent. The modification does not seem to provide this linkage. The only way from railway parade to the Glebe Foreshore is now crossing over three sets of light at the city west link and passing under the underpass.

This link on the western side of the Crescent was identified as being retained in the Community outcomes report in C 4.12.1 Active transport links. The revised design needs to ensure that the at grade pedestrian connectivity through from Railway parade to the Glebe foreshore is maintained in its current arrangement.

Outcomes

2.1 Provide for the direct grade separated connection between the Glebe Foreshore and the new Rozelle Parklands via the green bridge.

2.2 Simplification of the Johnston Street crossing of the Crescent. Change to a single traffic light crossing in the current location on the Northern side of Johnston Street as currently exists.

2.3 Ensure provision of easy "at grade" access from Railway Parade to the Glebe Foreshore. Route via Buruwan Park and the western side of the Crescent (adjacent the mural) with a direct connection to the simplified Johnston Street / The Crescent intersection note above.

Key outcome 3:

Immediately halt all further tree removal in Buruwan Park. Urgently review design to adjust roads for maximum tree retention on the southern side of Buruwan Park in line with EIS commitment C13.2.1

Issues:

Existing trees make a positive visual and environmental contribution and the EIS committed the consortium to review of significant trees in Buruwan Park. Yet trees are being cut down without apparent design development or review.

This EIS proposal and this design modification diverts through Buruwan Park and all the vegetation at that site including over 70 trees and several beautiful mature fig trees. Some of which has now already occurred.

Removing this vegetation impacts on the liveability of our suburb by removing shade, making our local area warmer and destroying the green barrier it provides between the City West Link and residences. The visual impact is this will be considerable as evidenced by the removal this week of trees in the park along White Creek canal.

In response to community concerns, the EIS community comment review under C13.2.1 Visual impacts during construction (general) on page 13-8 stated the following:

"At The Crescent, investigate measures to retain the mature trees of high retention value adjacent to the light rail corridor at the corner of The Crescent and City West Link, and to provide screen planting alongside the retaining wall edge of the light rail corridor, to minimise landscape and visual impacts".

The Modification design should make every possible effort to save these trees and vegetation immediately beside the light rail line, including the large Fig tree to the west of the Rozelle Bay station stairs. At a bare minimum, these trees should not be removed until a full Urban Design and Landscape Plan has been completed.

Outcomes:

3.1 The EIS community response committed the consortium to "investigate measures to retain trees of high value adjacent to the Light rail corridor at the Crescent" Community response to the EIS stated under clause C13.2.1. It is essential that tree removal is halted while an urban and landscape design review takes place.

3.2 The trees in Buruwan Park against the light rail make a significant visual and environmental contribution - including urban cooling.

3.3 We urgently need the landscape architects and urban design team to review the design with the traffic planners to maximise the retention of these trees including the large 30m diameter fig. This can be made to work through good design. This needs urban design thinking "Beyond the Pavement" for pedestrians and urban outcomes. Minor changes to line marking across City West link, reduction in medians and revised curves can all make this happen.

Key outcome 4:

Consider local traffic including right turn lane from Johnston Street / The Crescent Issues:

This modification would remove the option to turn right out of Johnston Street into the Crescent to destinations such as the tramsheds, Glebe, Sydney University etc. This will increase traffic through local streets including Piper Street and Booth Street as they seek alternate routes.

These changed conditions will mean increased noise and emissions for residents in Annandale.

Intersection redesign should investigate the ability to easily turn right to access Glebe, The Tramsheds and other destinations.

Changes to local traffic include removal of the right hand turn The Overpass removes the ability to turn right into James Craig Drive.

Outcomes:

4.1 Consider options to retain the right turn lane from Johnston Street to The Crescent in the redesign of the pedestrian intersection and location of the traffic lights.
4.2 review option 1 for ability to turn right into James Craig drive.