

Submission to the Environmental Impact Statement exhibition for the West Connex M4 East Tunnel Project SSI 6307

I object to the proposed West Connex M4 East Tunnel Project and this submission details my concerns and suggestions for consideration.

My overarching concern with the project is its narrow transport objective, which focuses on cars and travel times for cars. A holistic review of transport issues in the Inner West should be undertaken and this would include public transport, active transport and cars.

Instead of the car-centric \$15Bn West Connex, I support investing the available funds in a way that would generate environmentally and socially sustainable benefits for all types of transport users.

Unfiltered ventilation stacks

The proposal includes the construction of an unfiltered ventilation stack in Haberfield. The ventilation stack location is close to Haberfield Public School and the Infants Home. Placing an unfiltered pollution stack in any location, and particularly this one, is very concerning for the health of children, teachers and residents.

It is well documented that exposure to motor vehicle pollution can cause and exacerbate respiratory problems in children. As there are only two ventilation stacks on the M4 east tunnel, the emissions from of the tunnel will be concentrated in the suburbs at the start and end of the tunnel.

Every effort should be made to use the latest technology to filter the emissions from the stacks. The arguments justifying an unfiltered stack at Haberfield are based on the costs and efficacy of a trial some years ago. I request that the issue of filtering be re-examined using up to date technological solutions. On the subject of costs, how can the cost of filtering be compared to the cost of increased air pollution on children.

During the public meeting at Haberfield Public School, representatives from West Connex explained that there will be ongoing air quality monitoring, and that if there is an adverse impact on air quality post construction, then changes will be made. This response was extremely concerning for two reasons. Firstly, striving to maintain existing levels of motor vehicle pollution is unacceptable. The project should decrease the level of pollution significantly. Secondly, if there are secondary measures that can be employed to reduce emissions from the ventilation stack, then those measures must form part of the initial design. It is always more expensive and time consuming to fix problems and retrofit solutions.

Pedestrians and cyclists

The guiding principle for planners appears to be to maintain the status quo for pedestrian and cyclist access. When so much money is being spent to improve the passage of cars, it seems sensible to invest some money towards improving cyclist and pedestrian access.

A specific example of this is the need for a pedestrian and cyclist overpass at the intersection of Wattle Street and Ramsay Road. As the current plans stand, the crossing at Ramsay Street and Wattle Street is the opposite of pedestrian friendly. This crossing would become a multi-section

crossing across a width of 50+ metres. This specific crossing needs to be redesigned, and the issue of crossings in general must be revisited with the objective of improving pedestrian and cycle access.

Safe, accessible pedestrian access is essential across Wattle Street, particularly for school children and the elderly. School children who attend Haberfield Public School, Dobroyd Point School and St Joan of Arc use these lights crossings, as do many elderly members of the community.

Impact on local communities

The communities that will bear the brunt of the adverse impacts of this project are unlikely to benefit much from the finished project. The adverse impacts include construction noise and traffic, loss of homes, families moving, and the new massive ventilation stacks and portals.

What is lacking in the current project plan is a mechanism to address the imbalance between the individuals benefiting from the West Connex (car travellers to and from western Sydney) and communities losing out (Five Dock, Ashfield, Haberfield, Concord). Measures which would go some way towards addressing the imbalance and deliver a dividend to impacted communities include:

- Changing the principle of “maintaining the status-quo” for pedestrian and cyclist access. The principle should be to significantly improve this type of access along the West Connex corridor, including portal areas. This could take the form of a series of cycle and pedestrian overpasses or underpasses across Wattle Street, the City West Link and Parramatta Road; and
- Establishing a fund with the purpose of improving community resources and infrastructure in a sustainable way in the Five Dock, Ashfield, Haberfield, Concord communities.

Impact on Haberfield Public School

The impact on the school will be significant, due to local road diversions and the activity of construction. All efforts must be made during and post construction to minimise disruption to children’s learning from noise, dust and traffic.

Specific air-quality monitoring needs to be installed at the school and kept in place for an agreed period spanning the construction and operation of the tunnel.

I look forward to seeing a response to the points raised in my submission, and those of other concerned residents, and for amendments to be made to the project accordingly.