

17 Dalhousie St
Haberfield NSW 2045

1-10-2015

To whom it may concern

RE: WestConnex EIS Submission

I am writing to express my strong objections to the WestConnex project, on the grounds that:

A: It will increase traffic on already congested arterial and suburban roads, particularly Parramatta Rd and arteries parallel to it; it will increase traffic at the St Peters Interchange; and it will also further clog the M5 East motorway.

These predictions come from an independent study modelling the traffic impact of WestConnex. It was done by SGS Economics and Planning, and commissioned by the City of Sydney.

This study directly contradicts modelling cited by WestConnex planners, which claim the impact on arterial and suburban roads will be negligible. The basis for the SGS prediction is that neither the tunnel that will exit onto Parramatta Rd in Haberfield, nor the new M5 East Tunnel, will offer attractive alternatives to motorists, largely due to the prohibitive cost of tolls that will have to be applied to help recoup (and more) the project's \$15b price tag.

Experience with traffic volumes post-tunnel construction backs this claim. How many motorists prefer the Lane Cove tunnel, or the Cross-City tunnel, to surface roads? Not as many – according to numerous studies -- as planners had predicted, because motorists are reluctant to pay the hefty tolls. So if the tunnels are under-utilised, that means the surface roads will be MORE, not less, congested than before the building of WestConnex.

Even if this prediction is not borne out, and motorists end up happily forking out as much as \$26 per day to use the WestConnex tunnels, they still have to exit the tunnels on surface roads that are not wide enough to accommodate increased traffic volumes. Common sense tells you the traffic will only have so many surface roads -- and only so many lanes thereon -- to manoeuvre on as it heads to the city or eastwards. The same scenario would be played out at the westward-bound end, by commuter traffic returning home.

B: As it is currently designed, WestConnex shamefully prioritises private and commercial vehicles over public transport (see 'suggestions' below).

C: The M5 Motorway was built to answer problems with traffic congestion but reached a new 'capacity' not long after it was built. Build, and more people will drive. And then you are right back where you started.

C: According to modelling cited by WestConnex planners, noise and air pollution resulting from the project will be minimal. But why take the risk that such models may prove to be wrong? After all, WestConnex planners cannot promise the models are iron-clad: they admitted as much at a Haberfield Public School meeting in which they said “mitigating action” could be taken if the models proved wrong.

D: WestConnex will by its compulsory acquisitions destroy community open spaces such as parks, as well as dozens of heritage homes and long-standing local businesses.

I urge that the \$15 billion current estimate for building WestConnex be instead used to improve public transport on the current routes -- including dedicated express bus lanes to and from the city, along Parramatta Rd., the addition of light rail (perhaps built into a lane of Parramatta Rd), plus dedicated bike pathways.

If the WestConnex project does proceed, I urge even more strongly that the project’s planners, modellers and engineers take heed of the following suggestions:

1. If a tunnel must be built, why not make it into an underground train system worthy of Paris or London?
2. Stage 1 of the project will expand the total number of city-bound traffic lanes to six, from the current three. Yet the planners have failed to provide for a continuous express bus lane to the city (at least, this will not happen for some 10 years). The main reason given by WestConnex planners is that express bus lanes would interrupt vehicle traffic flow, especially at exit points. I don’t believe there is no engineering solution to this -- just a failure of political will.
3. If bicycle riders cannot, for understandable reasons, travel in and out of tunnels, why not find another way to accommodate them? What about an elevated bicycle pathway, above the traffic?
4. Pedestrians - especially vulnerable school children - are already poorly catered for along Parramatta Rd, and WestConnex will make things worse for them. More overhead pedestrian bridges should be built along sections of Parramatta Rd that lead to schools, parks and other community facilities.

I know that I am not alone in expressing the above concerns and I urge you to take account of sensible, well-considered community reaction to this project.

M Kathleen Murfitt

