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CROYDON, 2132

Ref : Submission to WestConnex EIS

Dear Sir/Madam,

I would like to make a submission to the WestConnex EIS currently on display.

I received a flyer in my letterbox recently and it made me aware of the EIS process for the proposed WestConnex project. I reside in Croydon so I will be indirectly impacted by the project. I have spent many years enduring the worsening traffic congestion associated with getting to, and through, the city for work purposes. Fortunately I am now retired so do not have to forgo many wasted hours held up in traffic on Wattle St. and associated roads.

I have had many years of experience initiating, preparing, contributing to and implementing EISs, for projects of various values up to approx. \$200m. While these are small in comparison to the cost of WestConnex, they were projects which had significant environmental and social impacts so I took an interest in the EIS document.

I viewed the document at Burwood library. It is a voluminous document so I did not have the time or fortitude to read it in its entirety. However, I did read enough of it to make a few comments.

Generally I do not have a great deal of concern with the overall concept of road tunnels to address some of the problems with the M4/Parramatta Rd. thoroughfare. I will leave the public transport Vs roads arguments to others. However, to be fully functional they have to be properly executed. In this case I feel the effectiveness of the tunnels will be severely compromised as the Stage 2 concept is only half-done.

The principal function of the City West Link, which includes Wattle St, is to funnel vehicles from the West (and some from the South) to and from the CBD and/or Harbour Bridge. This purpose was never properly achieved as (presumably) cost cutting measures simply provided improved and realigned existing roads without designing out the numerous existing intersections and other obstructions that stifle traffic flow through this artery. While the name "West City Link" implies some sort of quick dedicated linking road, the reality is a marginal improvement on a suburban road. I have spent many gridlocked hours on it. Half-doing a job is a waste of taxpayers money. It would seem the failings of the City West Link are to be repeated in the WestConnex project.

The bottom line is that if an effective solution is an aim of the project, then the tunnels should go through to Anzac Bridge. What is proposed is plain dumb. The proposed interface at Wattle St will not solve **ANY** existing problems, even in the first instance.

I noted in the consideration of options, the tunnel to Anzac Bridge was considered but eliminated. Generally, the treatment of options seemed very superficial. The financially obvious but likely to be highly unpopular option of going over the top on an elevated roadway was not even considered. It may not be too glamorous but it is cost effective and was good enough for parts of the M4 and an overhead railway is OK for the "westies" out Rouse Hill way. There was little discussion and the reason for not extending tunnels to Anzac Bridge but it seemed to be simply a matter of cost. No doubt it would cost more but there is a minimum price that has to be paid to achieve a result. If the minimum money is not paid the result will not be achieved, and in this case I feel quite confident that travel times from (say) Gt North Rd to the CBD will not be improved with what is proposed,

even from day one. The reason is quite simply that the project does nothing to address the numerous bottlenecks between Parramatta Rd and Anzac Bridge. Vehicles will be off-loaded from Parramatta Rd and into the same gridlocked system that exists now. Lots of money spent for no nett gain!

I accept that this is "Stage 2" and "Stage 3" **MAY** see new tunnels connected to the Anzac Bridge. This is a **MAY** statement. There is no certainty that it will ever occur. And if it does occur that will make most of the money spent on the Wattle St interchange redundant. There is a strong argument that, in the long run, it will be less expensive to construct the tunnels now than defer the costs to a later date. This is especially the case as there will not be a duplication of set-up and demobilisation costs. Not only will the financial situation be more palatable but there will be less disruption to the local communities and the travelling public if the full job is done in one stage.

The argument seems to be to pay a reduced amount now for no nett utility gain or pay an additional marginal cost for a scheme that is more likely to work and have a lesser total impact on the local community and the travelling public. I did not see this sort of argument in the consideration of options.

On a more detailed level, there are single lane off and on ramps from/to Parramatta Rd. This is very short-sighted but it seems to be typical of the thinking associated with the project. Reducing the number of lanes westward will absolutely cause congestion and back-up of traffic along Wattle St. The single lane off-ramp onto a suburban road (even if it is into two lanes for a short distance) will also cause a back-up, potentially back into the tunnel. If this occurs very dangerous traffic conditions will be created and efficient through traffic flow will be jeopardised.

I sincerely hope that if the short minded mentality persists and the Wattle St interchange is adopted as per the EIS, someone will have the foresight and verve to look at rationalising the numerous traffic lights and intersections along the "designed to fail" City West Link. I have never been able to fathom why small intersections like Waratah St. exist. It carries minimal traffic and that traffic has other options. Any vehicle turning right into Waratah St. (and usually one does on most traffic light cycles) effectively reduces the City West Link to a single lane eastbound. Crystal St. is another small intersection that stops City West Link flow for minimal value. Consideration for construction of over/under ramps along the City West Link and/or reduced side-street access should be considered. Or better still, construct the proper tunnels now and reduce the waste of money upgrading the City West Link.

I am not sure if it is currently included in the WestConnex project but the intersection of Moseley St. and Parramatta Rd. **MUST** be addressed as part of the project. It is absolutely insane that fifty metres or so from the eastbound confluence of three of Sydney's busiest roads (Parramatta Rd., Concord Rd. and the M4) there is an intersection with a very minor road (Moseley St.) which has traffic lights. I have been travelling on the M4 since it was opened and I have **NEVER** seen more than five vehicles exit from Moseley St on **ANY** traffic light cycle. More often than not it is a single vehicle or sometimes two. To stop these two main thoroughfares for such a miniscule flow is absolutely beyond belief. Vehicles using Moseley Rd. have alternatives and I suspect much of the trifling traffic flow is using the street as a "rat-run".

As I stated earlier the EIS document is formidable in volume so I did not attempt to read it in its entirety. However I did look at the Economic Cost Appendix. In short, I was extremely disappointed in the content. For such an important project, the methodology was not well explained and it seemed to be of a standard expected of a university under-grad. It was extraordinarily

unsophisticated. It seemed to have looked up a few ABS tables and manipulated some bits and pieces from the tables and presented numbers that had no qualifications. It looked like a simple desktop review that was thrown together into a spreadsheet. For a project of this importance I expected more.

Any document that lowers its bar to this sort of simplistic methodology should draw the questionable accuracy of the results to the notice of the reader. Reading the EIS, the Economic Costs and Benefits are quoted as though they have some precision when in fact they are very approximate estimates, at best. I accept that economic modelling always entails a degree of uncertainty and interpretation but an essential part of the modelling is estimating the precision and advising the reader of the magnitude of the likely variation. In this case I suspect the numbers can only be taken to be no better than "indicative" or "order of magnitude". I hope not too much money was expended on this report.

In summary:-

The WestConnex is an important project for Sydney and it deserves a thorough and exhaustive study to justify its worth. An EIS is one of the few documents that brings all the technical, economic, social, environmental, legal, etc., arguments together. While the WestConnex EIA document is formidable in its volume I have been less impressed with its quality, based on the Sections I have read.

In short the consideration of Options seems very superficial and did not seem to include any serious discussion, costings or argument related to the options. It looks like a decision was made and then other alternatives considered and summarily dismissed.

The Wattle St. intersection is of particular interest to me. There does not seem to be any identifiable reason behind its concept. Its simply a couple of probably ineffectual off/on ramps being connected into suburban streets. It does not seem to have been thought out very well at all and from day one it is unlikely to provide any more utility for long-suffering travellers. Longer term, IF Stage 3 is constructed, the money spent on it will be redundant. If Stage 3 is not constructed the money spent on this intersection will be just wasted.

I think the whole process must be looked at more broadly and include a review of the impacts of other variables which have the potential to mitigate any possible benefits of the project, e.g. consider the impacts of traffic flow to/from the intersections (like Wattle St.) will connect to. It seems to me that a likely scenario of the project is to move the M4-Parramatta Rd-Concord Rd debacle to another location.

I have a long association with all aspects of EISs and I have seen some very good ones and some very poor ones. The EISs I have associated with have largely been for major construction projects. I feel I can make comments with some background in the process and subject matter so I would be pleased if my comments could be given some consideration.

I think Sydney deserves a better thought out project and a better prepared EIS document. As I will repeat, my opinion is based on the Sections I have read and maybe the other Sections are of a suitably high quality.

Regards,

Chris Denton

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