

North Connex Tunnel Submission

Trelawney Street Tunnel Support Facility Traffic Issue

Introduction

This is a submission to the Environmental Impact Statement for the North Connex Tunnel project. It is in particular related to the Trelawney Street Tunnel Support Facility and the information as per the Factsheet of July 2014 and the access plans for this site.

I am extremely concerned at the apparent lack of analysis around the access plan for this site which has led to a totally unacceptable approach.

Objections

Traffic and Pedestrians

The current plan shows trucks entering the site from Loch Maree Ave, meaning that they will have to turn at the lights. They then exit on to Pennant Hills Rd, cross 3 lanes of traffic, turn right at traffic lights down Phyllis Ave, make a U turn at the bottom, come back up Phyllis Ave to the traffic lights in order to turn left on to Pennant Hills Rd. This will be happening during peak movements at just over 1 per minute.

The lights at Loch Maree Ave for traffic approaching from the south on Pennant Hills Rd only give a 20 second period to turn right into Loch Maree Ave, within an overall sequence of 2 to 2 and a half minutes.

Given the above facts of truck movements and traffic light cycles, it will be impossible for this schedule to be met. That is not even taking into account the overall amount of traffic movement on Pennant Hills Rd, Loch Maree Ave, Phyllis Ave and the streets which feed into them

-There are 100's of cars that use Loch Maree Ave as their access to Pennant Hills Rd. I do every day and know the issue of getting out with a very short traffic light cycle

-A number of pedestrians (including children) use these lights to cross Pennant Hills Rd.

-There is a church on the corner which runs a daytime childcare facility which involves parents dropping off and picking up children.

-Phyllis Ave is access to a large commercial area which incorporates a considerable number of big and small businesses, not the least of which are Ibis hotels, Bunnings, Macdonalds (national corporate headquarters as well as the restaurant). Central Ave, which is accessed through Phyllis Ave, is a very busy thoroughfare. In addition there is the Community Centre on the corner of Phyllis Ave and Central Ave which frequently has activities involving children. The round about is totally inadequate for a truck doing a complete 360 degree.

Also to turn left back on Pennant Hills road the lanes are narrow, one goes straight or turns right, the other left a truck sitting to turn left will impede the cars wanting to go straight (like myself or turn right

-Then there is the amount of traffic on Pennant Hills Rd itself (the very reason for this tunnel being built)

Put all this together and with the current access plans you have a recipe for extreme frustration, clogging up of all surrounding streets, extreme inconvenience for residents and passing motorists, and possibly disaster. So we will see the following scenarios:

- As trucks wait at the lights at Loch Maree Ave to turn right they will bank up back down the northbound lanes of Pennant Hills Rd as they can't possibly turn at the rate in which they arrive.

-Trucks coming from the north will similarly queue back up the southbound lanes of Pennant Hills Rd as they wait to turn left.

- Residential cars (many with children on board) for the area will have no hope of getting through as the area becomes clogged up by trucks.

- Frustrated truck drivers will start to use Nelson St, Trelawney St and Loch Maree Ave to park in as they wait their turn.
- In the meantime trucks exiting the site will have to cross 3 lanes within a short distance to turn right down Phyllis Ave. Given the number of truck movements of almost 1 per minute, this will clog up Pennant Hills Rd southbound. Then as they drive down Phyllis Ave, make a U turn, drive back up Phyllis Ave and wait to turn left, they will also clog up the movement of traffic through that whole area, impacting the commercial sites.
- Both truck drivers and car drivers will become extremely frustrated and start to take risks, leading to the inevitable. Even now I already see trucks and cars shooting the lights every day, and cars making illegal right hand turns from the wrong lane in Phyllis Street. With the added congestion and accompanying frustration caused by this plan there will be accidents.
- Increased noise and air pollution in the area as trucks queue and wait, rev their engines, move slowly in low gear.
- There will also be a considerable increase in danger to pedestrians – children as well as adults – throughout the entire area.

It would seem from all of the above that the person or people who proposed the current access plan have given no thought to traffic analysis of Pennant Hills Rd, Loch Maree Ave and the residential neighbourhood which uses it for car and pedestrian access; Phyllis Ave and the commercial neighbourhood, the physical environs including the turning circle at the bottom of Phyllis Ave; nor to the traffic light patterns. I doubt very much whether they have even been out to have a look at the area, viewing of which would show how unworkable this plan is. It would seem that they have taken a very lazy and unconcerned approach.

Parking

As mentioned above, under the current plan it is highly likely that trucks will end up by parking in Nelson St, Trelawney St and Loch Maree Ave due to their frustration at queuing up on Pennant Hills Rd as they wait to access the site. This will cause considerable congestion, disturbance, inconvenience and increased danger for the residents, not only the immediate residents but all those who use Loch Maree Ave as an access to the area. The plan to allow for 100 cars to park along the eastern boundary will lead to increased traffic around the block bounded by Trelawney, Nelson and Loch Maree. Given that the site will be operating 24/7 for 3 or more years, each shift change will see a substantially large increase of traffic in this area, including late at night. Also add the extra car movements to the traffic scenarios as described above, and there is just that much more chaos.

Noise and Dust

Because of the topography of the area, noise and dust carries a long way. This has been proven as we already experience disturbance and noise from activities such as:

- Track work on the train lines
- Road work on Pennant Hills Rd (it arcs around this area) and other surrounding roads
- Local construction such as the work being carried out at the SAN hospital

Given that the construction of this project is immediately up the hill and that it is 24/7, I have a major concern that this will cause a noticeable disturbance across a large residential area.

Possible Alternatives

Traffic and Pedestrians

It is acceptable that regardless of what site access plan is used, there will be inconveniences to the local residential and commercial neighbourhoods, as well as to through traffic. However a better plan allowing for better flows and protecting the local environs, areas and people needs to be developed.

One potential plan is for ingress and egress to be from Pennant Hills Rd, which I believe was on the original plan. This could work as follows:

- All approaching trucks to approach the Trelawney St site from the north.

Trucks which originate from the south can come up Pacific Highway, around Pearce's Corner into Pennant Hills Rd

- Trucks exiting to turn left on to Pennant Hills Rd and head south. –

All trucks from the Trelawney St site to dump their loads to the south.

- As a quid pro quo, all trucks coming from sites south of Trelawney St (such as the Bareena Ave site) to head north and dump their loads in the north – in other words the different sites swap where they dump their loads

This will have the effect of:

- Completely freeing up the residential areas of Loch Maree Ave, Trelawney St, Nelson St.

- Minimise disruption to the residential area which utilises Loch Maree Ave as an access to and from Pennant Hills Rd.

- Completely free up Phyllis Ave and the access to the commercial area. - Minimise the danger to pedestrians and local traffic

It will have an impact on Pennant Hills Rd, but then any access plan for this site will do that.

Conclusion

All of the above alternatives are entirely feasible with many of them easily incorporated into the plan. They would have a major effect on reducing and alleviating the heavy impact which the current plan will have on the local residential areas, the commercial areas and the high volume of passing traffic.