8 November 2010.

Mr Mark Turner
M5 West Widening Project
Planning, NSW

By email: mark.turner@planning.nsw.gov.au

Dear Mr Turner

Re: M5 West Widening Project

Thank you for the opportunity to comment upon the proposed widening of the M5 West from Camden Valley Way, Camden to King Georges Rd, Beverly Hills.

The Southern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (SSROC) considers that it is very important to the economic prosperity of NSW and the southern Sydney region that the M5 West is able to function efficiently, especially given the forecast expansion in population, employment and trade demand in the south-western suburbs of Sydney. Commercial enterprises in our region, including Sydney Airport and the Port Botany Container Terminals, are highly dependent upon the smooth flow of private passenger and freight into and out of their precincts.

The M5 West widening will also benefit increasing numbers of private vehicles using the motorway, an increase compounded by the delay in constructing new passenger rail services from the western suburbs to beyond 2017 under the Metropolitan Transport Plan. The new lanes will provide additional capacity and, beyond that, the opportunity to maintain traffic flow when there is an incident or maintenance that requires temporary lane closure. SSROC welcomes the installation of noise mitigation walls and variable message signs, providing enhanced amenity to drivers and local residents.

SSROC acknowledges the RTA’s conclusion that widening of the M5 West will have relatively few environmental impacts compared with the construction of a new road, and will create extra capacity on the road, resulting in improved speed and travel times, at least in the short term. We also put forward the following comments:

1. The RTA (appropriately for its remit) presents only a road-based expansion plan. This project is not integrated with the suite of initiatives under the Metropolitan Transport Plan. It is a stand-alone project that has been developed in response to Interlink Roads’ (unsolicited) approach to the RTA. Although Interlink Roads owns and operates the M5 West, it was agreed that the RTA would be the proponent of the project (Preliminary Environmental Assessment p1). This is somewhat misleading and does not suggest a cohesive and strategic approach to transport planning. The NSW Transport Blueprint that was slated for 2009 would perhaps have provided the right strategic context, and should be the key driver for the development of such plans, rather than proposals from interested parties.
2. The increased capacity on the widened M5 West will be short-lived if private vehicle demand is exacerbated. SSROC questions the intent behind the statement "The project would reduce congestion on radial roads... Reduced demand and travel times on the parallel route present an opportunity to implement bus priority measures that exploit this increased capacity" (Executive Summary p.iv). Strategic bus corridors are important, particularly when the South West growth centre will not benefit from an expanded heavy rail service for at least another six years. The accessibility and enhancement of the public road network should remain the RTA's primary focus for the benefit of all road users. Most importantly, it would be unfortunate if this project actively funnelled motorists onto a privately operated user-pay network.

3. Although, as the RTA states, congestion on parallel roads may be temporarily offset by increased capacity on the M5, surrounding arterial roads will inevitably become more congested, especially around existing on- and off-ramps. This issue was raised by the RTA in the November 2009 Feasibility Study into the M5 Expansion. It is also noted in Appendix E of the Environmental Assessment that "The alternative route of Newbridge Road, Milperra Road, and Canterbury Road plays an important function in conveying short distance trips to destinations within the corridor... There is limited scope for this route to cater for any excess growth from the motorway." (Traffic and Transport Report Executive Summary p.viii).

SSROC recommends that the RTA should address all measures to ensure that demand increases on the M5 West as a result of the new lanes can be accommodated by the surrounding public road network, particularly around on- and off-ramps.

4. The RTA needs to plan for the effects that increased capacity on the M5 West will have on the rest of the corridor and beyond. Undoubtedly, the widening of the western end of the M5 corridor will place greater pressure on the rest of the motorway, particularly the heavily congested M5 East. The plan to duplicate the M5 East to improve capacity is not as advanced as the M5 West proposal; it is much more complex, funding is yet to be secured and community opposition is likely to be greater. The impact of increased demand on the M5 West will resonate on the M5 East for many years to come.

5. As a means of managing demand on the newly widened M5 West, SSROC recommends that the new lanes be utilised as express transways for buses and heavy vehicles during peak periods. This strategy would dampen any increase in demand from private motorists, as they would be restricted from receiving the full benefit of the increased capacity. This may serve to offset the impact of any mode shift away from public transport. Instead, heavy vehicles would derive the most benefit from the new lanes.

SSROC contends that separation of the heavier vehicles from the main flow of traffic would result in safer road conditions, less competition for road space between smaller and larger vehicles, and improved traffic speeds and travel times for private vehicles.

6. In relation to the construction of the new lanes, SSROC is concerned about the statement: "existing lane widths may need to be narrowed, which would impact on traffic capacity" (Executive Summary p.iii). This would present a considerable risk as wider vehicles may inadvertently traverse lanes to get past the construction works, causing accidents and impeding traffic flow.

There is no specific reference to the management of heavy vehicles on narrowed lanes in the Environmental Risk Analysis, although it is stated in the Executive Summary that "Potential adverse impacts associated with the project have been fully assessed, and strategies to avoid, minimise and mitigate those impacts have been an integral part of the project development process" (p vi).

SSROC recommends that the RTA should review the width of new lanes on freight corridors, that the associated adverse impacts and risk mitigation actions should be made publicly available. The number of heavy and oversize vehicles on the motorway will increase over time, and existing lane widths are not sufficient to accommodate them. Road safety on freight corridors would be enhanced if the standard width of new lanes were increased.
7. The lack of impact on cyclists and pedestrians is welcome in that it suggests no detrimental effects. However, it also means that there will be no beneficial effects either. Australia needs to discourage use of private vehicles and to provide alternatives: those include not only public transport, but also cycling and walking. It is disappointing that no plans are specifically included in this proposal for cycleways or pedestrian access, but are simply left to the RTA's Bicycle Plan which is, in turn, not integrated into any metropolitan Transport Plan.

In conclusion, SSROC accepts the RTA's view that the widened M5 West may provide some enhancement to travel efficiency and freight capacity on the western end of the motorway. In acknowledging the relative simplicity of the project, however, we are concerned that any capacity increase will be short lived, and is likely to cause more congestion on the eastern side of the M5 corridor if demand is not carefully managed, which does not seem to be a consideration of this proposal.

Finally, and most significantly, the proposal has limited integration with the Metropolitan Transport Plan and does not appear to support policies that are in the best interest of the community. A more detailed analysis of private, public and freight transport in relation to population and employment growth targets, active and sustainable transport alternatives and dedicated freight transport solutions is required before further expansion of the M5 Corridor is considered.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this submission and I hope you will find these comments useful.

Yours sincerely

David Lewis
General Manager
Southern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils
Date 30 November 2010

Michael Young
Major Development Assessments
Department of Planning
GPO Box 39
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Attention: Mark Turner

dear Mr Turner

Major Project – M5 West Widening project – Environmental Assessment – Liverpool, Bankstown and Canterbury Local Government Areas

Thank you for your letter of 21 September 2010 seeking comment from the NSW Office of Water (NOW) on the Environmental Assessment (EA) for the above major project proposal.

The NOW’s key issues with the EA are outlined in Attachment A.

Contact Details

Should you have any queries in relation to this matter please contact Janne Grose on telephone (02) 4729 8262.

Yours sincerely

Mark Mignanelli
Manager Major Projects and Assessment
Waterways and Riparian Land

Riparian setbacks
The NSW Office of Water (NOW) has previously mapped the watercourses (Georges River, Salt Pan Creek and Anzac Creek) which relate to the M5 West proposal using the Riparian Corridor Management Strategy (RCMS) approach to identify minimum riparian setback requirements from a catchment perspective.

The Environmental Assessment (EA) indicates the Georges River provides a “significant ecological corridor” (Section 8.3.2, page 8-58). Because of the significance of the river and corridor, NOW previously recommended at other sites that a minimum riparian setback of 100 m be established either side of the Georges River and for new development (with the exception of crossings) to be located outside the riparian corridor.

The EA makes reference to the protection of land within 40 m of the top of bank of a clearly defined drainage line (permanent or intermittent) under the Water Management Act 2000. It would appear the proposal is applying the DWE Guideline for Controlled Activities (February 2008) approach to identify minimum riparian setbacks. If the Controlled Activities Guideline approach is to be applied to the proposal rather than the RCMS approach it is important the DWE Guideline is applied correctly.

A key aspect of the DWE Guidelines includes locating infrastructure, detention basins, stormwater structures, water quality structures, etc outside of riparian corridors (both the CRZ and the vegetated buffer).

In applying the DWE Guideline, a minimum 50 m wide riparian area should be established either side for the Georges River (measured from top of bank). It should be noted the Department’s previous RCMS recommendation of 100m would afford greater protection to this important corridor.

Anzac Creek is a second order stream in the vicinity of the M5 proposal. The DWE Guideline recommends a minimum 30 m wide riparian area be established either side of second order watercourses (consisting of a CRZ of 20 m plus a 10 m wide vegetated buffer).

Watercourse Crossings
NOW notes the bridges over Georges River and Salt Pan Creek do not require structural modification as part of the M5 West widening project and that the project would not result in any adverse impacts on the connectivity of these ecological corridors (see Section 8.3.2, Environmental Assessment (EA) main volume).

Figure 8.8 (b) in the EA shows it is proposed to widen the M5 immediately east of the Georges River East crossing and that River Flat Eucalypt Forest occurs adjacent to the
River at this location. It is recommended any riparian vegetation disturbed or removed by the proposal is rehabilitated either at, or near the site or offset by establishing native riparian vegetation elsewhere along the river.

Figure 8.8 (b) in the EA shows it is proposed to widen the M5 by construction over Anzac Creek, however Section 9.2.2 of the EA indicates "no culvert upgrade works have been proposed" and there are no structural works at the major watercourse crossings. Clarification is required on this point in relation to the proposed widening of the M5 over Anzac Creek and potential disturbance to the creek and riparian land.

Construction Compound Sites
Tables 6.3 and 6.4 in the EA indicate that ancillary construction compounds are to be located 100 m away from any watercourse, however Figures 6.3 and 8.9 show it is proposed to locate a construction site compound either side of Anzac Creek.

As noted above, if the DWE Guideline is to be applied to the proposal it is recommended a minimum 30 m wide riparian area is established either side of Anzac Creek. While Table 8.26 in the EA indicates the Heathcote Road (north) compound site is characterised by two cleared areas either side of Anzac Creek, Table 8.32 states the site contains mature trees and shrubs and Figure 8.8(b) shows 'landscaping' has been undertaken either side of the creek. It is noted the landscaping at the site will be cleared (Section 4.4 of the Biodiversity Working Paper, Appendix G, Volume 3). NOW recommends the compound site is located outside the 30 m wide riparian area along Anzac Creek and in an area that has not been landscaped/ rehabilitated. If this is not possible, it is recommended either an alternative location is found for the compound site or the hard stand area and any associated works are removed post-construction and the riparian area is rehabilitated with local native plant species that are representative of the local vegetation community.

The Biodiversity Working Paper indicates Anzac Creek "is likely to have undergone significant modification as part of the M5 Motorway construction with much of its length being channelised". It would appear construction associated with the existing M5 Motorway has impacted Anzac Creek. This should not be a reason for the current proposal to not protect/ rehabilitate this watercourse and riparian area and prevent further degradation from occurring.

Table 8.26 in the EA indicates the compound site at Moorebank Avenue would be situated to avoid the wetland area which occurs to the west of the site. NOW supports the compound site avoiding the wetland area.

Drainage basins
Figure 5.1 (b) in the EA shows it is proposed to locate an additional drainage basin to the east of the Georges River East crossing. It is noted "this basin will require the construction of a significant retaining wall" (Appendix H (page 45) in Volume 3) and that River Flat Eucalypt Forest occurs in the vicinity of the proposed basin (Figure 8.8b main volume).

As noted above, the Department has previously recommended at other sites a minimum riparian setback of 100 m be established either side of the Georges River but if the DWE Guideline is to be applied the proposal a minimum 50 m wide riparian area should be established either side (measured from top of bank). Infrastructure, detention basins, stormwater structures, water quality structures, etc should be located outside the riparian corridor.
Clarification is required on the distance the basin is proposed to be located from the top of bank. Is the basin/retaining wall located beyond 50 m from the top of bank? NOW recommends:

- the basin and associated work is located outside the riparian corridor;
- the basin is located in an area that is currently cleared of native vegetation and/or minimises disturbance of existing native riparian vegetation; and
- the design criteria includes vegetation of the basin with local native plant species.

**Bikepaths**

The Table in Appendix C of the Traffic and Transport Report (Volume 2) refers to the construction of a path on the western side of the Georges River (route number 25). NOW recommends any pathways (with the exception of crossings) are located outside the riparian corridors. This recommendation is in accordance with the DWE Guidelines. It is recommended that riparian areas should remain, or be revegetated with local endemic vegetation. The locating of pathways in riparian land compromises the ecological function of riparian areas.

**Rehabilitation of riparian vegetation**

NOW recommends any riparian areas disturbed by the M5 proposal are rehabilitated at, or near the area of disturbance or elsewhere along the affected watercourses in a two step process. The primary stage should rapidly stabilise disturbed riparian areas and the second phase should establish a permanent cover of vegetation that reflects the local native species that occur in the vicinity of the site areas.

**Draft Statement of Commitments**

Table 14 in the Biodiversity Working Paper includes the following mitigation measure: “all land within 40 m of the top of bank of a clearly defined drainage line (permanent or intermittent) is protected under the WM Act. Clearly mark out and protect areas with para-web fencing or similar. Ensure all works within close proximity to riparian zones have adequate sediment and erosion control.” It is recommended this mitigation measure is incorporated as a Statement of Commitment (SOC) but the setback width along the Georges River is amended to delineate at least a minimum 50 metre wide riparian area measured from the top of bank.

Draft SOC (FF3) states “preference will be for the use of locally indigenous species in identified revegetation areas. Revegetation and landscaping activities will be undertaken progressively”. In relation to riparian land disturbed by the proposal it is recommended local indigenous plant species are used to rehabilitate these areas.

NOW recommends the SOC include the following amendments under “Impacts on Flora and Fauna Managed”:

- any riparian land disturbed by the proposal must be offset by rehabilitating the riparian corridors at or near the site or elsewhere along the affected creeks.

- the rehabilitation of riparian areas must use native plant species from the local vegetation communities. A Vegetation Management Plan needs to be prepared which provides details on the rehabilitation of riparian land.

- the riparian vegetation must be maintained for a minimum period of at least 2 years after final planting
- areas of disturbance near watercourses should be inspected particularly after major rainfall events to ensure any stabilisation works have been effective.

End Attachment A
26 October 2010