

## **Waverton Precinct submission – Beaches Link Project**

**14 February 2020**

Waverton Precinct welcomes the opportunity to provide comment on the EIS for this project.

Our submission will explain and develop these points more fully, but a quick overview is:

1. There most certainly is an existing traffic problem, both to/from the Northern Beaches and the Sydney city centre during the entire week; but also and at least as importantly also to/from/ around the suburbs east of the North Sydney CBD and the Sydney City centre and the North Sydney CBD during the entire week; plus there is also a traffic problem from the North Sydney municipality generally to and from the Northern beaches on weekends. There is a real need to ameliorate this WHOLE situation.
2. An express road link from the Warringah Expressway to the lower ends of the northern beaches is a likely and helpful part of a total solution - but is not the total solution. We applaud the initiative to also take any such new link across to link in with the Gore Hill freeway to facilitate travel along the M2. We are concerned at the practicality of the suggested joining point at Cammeray when the Warringah Expressway is already at gridlock at this point in the morning peak hour. We concur the link should have an exit point on the Wakehurst Parkway and see no problem with the proposed design. Conversely, we consider that there are serious flaws in the intended exit point design and location in Balgowlah.
3. We are extremely disappointed that all the locally generated traffic, from suburbs like Mosman, Cremorne, Neutral Bay - which appears on the statistics in the EIS to be significantly more voluminous than that originating from the beaches area - is not dealt with at all. We are disappointed that no mention is made of creating above and below road traffic crossing points along Military Rd. as a related initiative to this project so that the through traffic on the surface does not have to constantly stop for pedestrians. We are very disappointed that no heavy rail/ metro line is to be constructed from North Sydney to Mosman as a related component of the overall solution. We are concerned no mention is made of improving cyclists or pedestrian linkages across and beyond the North Sydney LGA as a related surface activity to this underground project. These are all 'missed opportunities'.
4. We have the same views we made in our submission on in the Western Harbour Link project on aspects like the need for installing world class tunnel air filtration; for proper remediation of the project's work sites; for the creation of more open public areas in the North Sydney municipality by the end of the construction period; and for maintaining on and off points onto the major road system for the local residents, with respect to the Beaches Link project.
5. We continue to strongly urge the building of several land bridges across the Warringah Freeway to create new open spaces, parks, play areas, sport fields, and cyclist and pedestrian links through and around the North Sydney municipality; as a related feature of this project. The Greater Sydney Commission is urging the creation of Green Grids but the Warringah Expressway currently completely severs all these pre-existing linkages - they can, however, be recreated using the landbridge concept and we want at least 2 of these

constructed as an element of this project and the Western Harbour Link project to aid cyclists and pedestrians.

6. We consider that on completion of the Immersion tube construction phase you should leave a new public wharf/pontoon on that site for private boats (i.e yachts and power boats, not commercial craft) to load/offload passengers free of charge. There is no current public wharf in this area, despite this area being the primary boating hub on Middle Harbour.

The following is our more detailed explanation of the above points.

First, we all concur that there clearly is a current and ongoing significant problem. The road traffic along routes like the Spit Rd., Ourimbah Rd. and Military Rd. is extraordinary and a phenomenon all week. Local 'rat runs' through suburbs like Cremorne and Neutral Bay are constantly busy, too, mainly in peak hours. The morning bus queues on the Harbour Bridge, which of course are comprised of buses from all over the north side of Sydney City CBD and not just from the Northern Beaches or, for that matter the suburbs from Mosman to North Sydney, and all heading to Wynyard are immense. The traffic volumes on Eastern Valley Way and on Mona Vale Rd. is less on weekends but on all the three roads mentioned above - and in the Northern Beaches itself on Pittwater Rd. - it remains very heavy all week.

As p12 of the 'Community Guide to the EIS' notes, the problem is not as simple as 'a whole lot of people from the Northern Beaches trying to get into the City to work'. However, that is the only element this solution caters to. There does need to be a set of related initiatives to deal with the whole problem in an integrated and holistic manner. This tunnel is probably ok for just one aspect.

After this project is finished Military Rd. is forecast to only have a reduction in volume of 10%. On any day of the week, stuck in very slow moving traffic that is kilometres long, the absence of 1 in every 10 cars will simply not be noticed. By comparison, the road linking Military Rd. to the northern beaches – Spit Rd. – by contrast is forecast to see a reduction of 33%. There is only one sensible understanding of these figures; which is that most of the traffic currently on Military Rd. is NOT beaches-generated traffic at all, but is locally generated traffic also seeking to get around and through these same suburbs at these same peak times.

People going to the Sydney or North Sydney CBDs for work, students trying to get to the biggest high school concentration in the State in the North Sydney CBD are also a significant part of the mix ... to think the problem is mainly commuter traffic originating from the Northern Beaches is clearly erroneous, both in common sense and in looking at your own traffic projections in the EIS.

The proven way to move lots of people around inner city suburbs is heavy rail. It is not new car bypasses or more busses and certainly is not to install light rail. We all know this; it underlies the Transport Department's capital works priorities in Sydney; and to its credit the State Government is building new metro and heavy rail lines across other parts of the City - including, locally, a parallel line to the existing North Shore rail line. So, why not build a new one heavy rail line to, say, Taronga Zoo from North Sydney station and give all these suburbs a superior option to their existing choice which is having to either drive everywhere or getting onto a bus on already overcrowded road networks? The lack of a rail line is why there are so many cars on these local roads.

We are at a complete loss as to why this is not being suggested as a parallel project - to deal with the other and at least as significant element of this overall problem :the locally generated traffic.

We assume the other rail question – going from the North Shore to, or even along, the Northern Beaches – still has the same best answer as has been decided decades ago in the major report by Ron Christie. That answer is to construct a new heavy rail line from Chatswood across to Brookvale via Forestville. We note for clarity that suggestion is not being made as part of our comments on the current Beaches Link EIS because that clearly is a separate and unrelated project - however, if the Government is looking for the next round of long term, more broad-based infrastructure solutions for the Northern Beaches of Sydney that one does seem to have significant long term merit !

Second, we concur that it is possibly a good idea to take the cars and buses going to and from the Northern Beaches direct through an underground tunnel to bypass all that existing surface chaos in the suburbs from Neutral Bay to Seaforth, but on your own figures it is clear that initiative alone does little for the main source of the current chaos : the locally generated traffic problem.

This proposal even fails to address relatively easy to fix but constant existing irritant along thoroughways like Military Rd. and Spit Rd. of all the through traffic being halted at traffic lights so that a pedestrian or two, or an occasional dog walker or shopper can cross the road ... there needs to be frequent under or over crossings built right along Military Rd. through the suburbs of Neutral Bay, Cremorne, Mosman , Beauty Point and at The Spit so the through traffic can keep moving. This is a relatively simple and inexpensive program of work and we suggest it should be done as a strand of this project as a related but important improvement. We fail to understand why such simple and inexpensive ideas are not built into the proposal in the first place as part of good traffic management and as part of a more holistic approach to solving the existing problems.

Third, and this is an next item of immense concern, is that the Beaches Link proposal appears to actually worsen the (already pretty bad) traffic situation in the North Sydney CBD in peak hours by routing buses from the Northern Beaches into North Sydney station to unload /pick up their passengers. Sure, we understand that results in less buses being on the Bridge and at Wynyard, but the bus passengers are wanting to go the southern side of the Bridge, not to be offloaded one kilometre away and try to join already full trains at North Sydney to complete their morning commute. It is recognised that some of those bus passengers are intending to go into North Sydney CBD for work, school, or to University and so some designated bus routes should have that as their destination - but to route all buses in to there seems a poor solution for commuters. It is a lazy, unwanted and unwelcome addition to the traffic congestion in the North Sydney CBD. This concept needs to be completely re-thought. If you do decide to continue with constructing a new 'bus off ramp ' near Kirribilli, which in itself is not a bad idea, in our view the use of that should be limited to buses where the passengers WANT to finish up in the North Sydney CBD - and those in which the passengers want to get into the Sydney CBD should continue to cross the Harbour Bridge.

Fourth, we note the project does suggest a link from the new Beaches Link tunnel onto the Warringah Freeway at Neutral Bay - the option of continuing on to Rozelle Bay on the new Western Harbour Link; and the choice of a link onto the Warringah expressway near Gore Hill going north to go to the north west or Sydney on the M2, or beyond. This is a good idea and we strongly support these concepts.

However, we note the locals in Neutral Bay are likely to lose their current direct access onto the Expressway into the City from Ernest St. This means they will have to somehow instead join the

already overloaded Military Rd. corridor in order to go to the City. We would like this aspect re-thought and redesigned so they can continue to have a local access and egress point.

Similarly, we note there is a need for good cycleways and pedestrian thoroughfares from the city and would like to ensure the project's access and egress points are designed to facilitate (or, at least, not inadvertently block or diminish) the intended routes for these other commuting modes. We note that the Greater Sydney Commission is pushing the notion of Green Grids so that pedestrians and cyclists can move about suburbs safely and easily. This is a good idea. However, the Warringah Expressway slashed all these pre-existing parkland links when it was constructed - and so land bridges will need to be constructed to restore the connectivity within the North Sydney LGA. We urge that several of these be built as a related part of this project.

Fifth, you will know our views relating to the air extraction system proposed for the tunnel: It is the same as our position on the Western Harbour Link. In summary we want full filtration and particulate treatment as would be installed anywhere in Europe, the USA, or Japan on such a road tunnel. We do not want untreated tunnel air simply pumped out over a local primary school and drifting over RNSH, the North Sydney CBD, and all the surrounding suburbs. We simply do not accept the argument that "the State Government has a consistent approach to this issue across all its major road tunnel projects" – not the aspect that there is consistency of approach, which is true, but the level of pollution treatment resulting from that approach is in our view consistently inadequate and is consistently dangerous to public health. This is the strong advice received from the doctors at RNSH in relation to the outlets proposed for the Western Harbour Link project.

We note that particularly in suburbs like Cammeray and Neutral Bay this single feature alone has created tremendous concern in these local communities when suggested for the Western Harbour Link project and has become a reason to oppose what might otherwise be a good, sensible, traffic solution. It is exactly the same response for the Beaches Link project ...and that is a great pity. This blind adherence to an inadequate approach by the State Government has created immense consternation and is the focal, core point of emotional opposition within our communities to this project.

It does not have to be like that. Indeed, in most first world countries it simply could not be like that - the tunnels would not be permitted to be built with such poor filtration and dispersal processes.

In a similar way, the egress points at the other end of this Beaches Link project seem simply to be poorly conceived. So our Sixth point is that we note that the suggested exit at Burnt Creek Deviation in Balgowlah is 500 metres from the first set of traffic lights in Manly Vale. Over the next kilometre there are 3 more sets of traffic lights, one of which is also serving as the main turn off to Manly, and so has a major blocking impact on the main north-south flow along this entire stretch of road. Then the road opens up again and flows on down the hill into Brookvale.

We fail to grasp why the EIS does not take the tunnel under Manly Vale completely and emerge onto Pittwater Road near the District Ovals, with an underground side exit to Manly built in along the way which feeds onto the existing link road?

Such a concept seems simple to build and to certainly provide a superior solution. This would be like the exit to Bondi in the Eastern Distributor tunnel; the exit to the Harbour Bridge in the Cross-City Tunnel; or the exit to the Pacific Highway in the Lane Cove tunnel ... longish but all under the surface and out of sight. If the State Government is going to spend such a vast amount on the project, why NOT get a fundamental feature like this right as well? In the whole scheme of things the extra cost is not going to be significant.

This alternative suggestion allows Manly Vale not to be sacrificed to being bisected by the constant through traffic and also avoids all the arguments the project has generated about the permanent reduction in the size of the Golf Course in Balgowlah.

Conversely, the exit currently being proposed for the Wakehurst Parkway looks sensible and we note will necessitate the widening of that road up to the Warringah Rd intersection. A related project , not necessarily branded as part of the Beaches Link Project, should presumably be to widen the Parkway also on the other side of Warringah Rd to at least beyond Oxford Falls to keep all the traffic flowing smoothly. Otherwise you simply will create an ongoing traffic jam next to the Northern Beaches Hospital. Why not, simply do it now while your road construction crews and equipment are in the area?

Our Seventh and last observation is that we understand the need to build a temporary facility to construct the tube tunnel units and concur that The Spit seems the most obvious place to do this. We note that this whole area currently lacks a public wharf or a dedicated floating pontoon wharf where people can safely get on and off yachts or a speedboat . Ironically, the area is dominated by vast private marinas and private sailing clubs. It is suggested that after the project ends such a public facility be gifted for the area where the temporary construction support site is to be built. Presumably you simply would not deconstruct a wharf you have already built for the project, but instead leave it in place and hand it over to the relevant authority (Maritime, or the Council).

We recognize that both this temporary facility for the immersed tube construction and any residual wharf or jetty or launching ramp must also still allow for the rowing clubs to still have safe and easy access for their craft, plus some car and bus parking spaces, in that same general area through the life of the project. There would appear to be enough space on land and on the water for everyone and the proposed plan looks fine.

We look forward to your consideration of all the points raised and remain hopeful of seeing some significant changes and improvements made to the Project as a result of this community input.

Ian Grey

Chair, Waverton Precinct