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Submission on Environmental Impact Statement on Beaches Link and Gore Hill Freeway Connection

Application No. SSI_8862

I do not support the construction of the tunnels as set out in the EIS.

This is an important project and it is essential that we get it right. It is a once in a lifetime opportunity to address the traffic congestion in the Northern Beaches and Mosman, Cremorne and Neutral Bay. All of the options need to be considered.

In my opinion the EIS only examines one option; yet another freeway for cars. The EIS comprises circa 12,000 pages and requires submissions to be lodged by 1 March 2021. It was released on 9 December 2020. Despite requests for an extension of time to lodge submissions the deadline remains. Because of Covid the ability to have community discussions has been limited. December and January are periods of school holidays and summer holidays. What is the rush? It appears to be political. We do not want this project to become a political football with the government telling us what we must have. We need time to consider all options. This EIS is imposing an unrealistic deadline limited to one option.

Further it is a very difficult time to be forecasting future traffic flows. Since this was first considered the following changes have taken place:

- Covid has impacted on social distancing and reduced work travel as more employees have worked from home
- Social distancing has reduced travel and reduced capacity of public transport. Fear of catching the virus has reduced the number of commuters using public transport
- Introduction of B line buses has decreased car travel as a work commute before Covid
- An express bus service between Dee Why and Chatswood has been introduced but because of Covid is not as yet a popular choice of travel
- Bus routes have been changed and a hub and spoke model has been introduced

- A reduction in the capacity of Manly ferries is planned

We should extend the deadline for submissions and the EIS should be amended to cover all options.

The proposal is an obvious solution; but is it the right solution?

I would have expected some "back of the envelope" financial analysis to consider the business case for this proposal before spending on consultants on the EIS? How much did the EIS cost?

What is the estimated financial cost of the proposed tunnel?

What is the projected toll income that would be generated?

How much will commuters pay for using the tunnel?

Will tolls be fixed or will there be time of day and weekend discounts on tolls?

I get the impression in reading the documents that issues have been identified but there is the Australian swagger of "no problems; she'll be right mate".

The bottom line is that it is proposed to spend \$10 billion plus on a tunnel and supporting infrastructure that will reduce traffic on Military Road by 10%, and for which a toll operator would pay circa \$5 to 7 billion to purchase when complete.

Has a cost benefit analysis been prepared and if so when will it be made public along with a list of assumptions.

There are only 3 main roads servicing Sydney's Northern Beaches, Military Road/Spit Bridge Warringah Road and Mona Vale Road. The tunnel will add another. Obviously another outlet will diminish the existing usage of each. This does not consider increased future usage. The EIS discloses current usage of vehicles per day for each. It further discloses that *"by 2037 you will see traffic significantly reduce on*

- *Spit Road 33% less traffic*
- *Military Road 10% less traffic*
- *Warringah Road 23% less traffic*
- *Eastern Valley Road 40% less traffic*
- *Mona Vale Road 8% less traffic*

This implies that a lot of the traffic using spit Road does not use Military Road?

It is not stated specifically but presumably these reductions will be possible because these vehicles will be using the tunnel? This traffic will need to change their routes to access the tunnel. There are only 2 entry points being Wakehurst Parkway and Burnt

Bridge Deviation. This traffic will have to get to these entry points using existing roads. The traffic from Mona Vale Road and part of the traffic using Warringah Road will cause an increase in the number of vehicles travelling along Pittwater Road to Manly Vale. There are no plans to modify these roads to accommodate the increased traffic.

Residents of Seaforth, Clontarf and Balgowlah who live south of the 2 entry points will be forced to travel the "wrong way" to approach the entry points. There are no plans to permit traffic to travel north on Wakehurst Parkway and do a u-turn to access the entry at Wakehurst Parkway. They will be forced to access via Burnt Bridge entry point or to travel north on Wakehurst Parkway and to turn around at Northern Beaches Hospital unnecessarily increasing traffic at Frenchs Forest.

The Seaforth, Clontarf etc traffic will add to traffic from Manly, Fairlight and North Manly accessing the tunnel via the access road at Balgowlah. It is anticipated that rat runs will develop and entry to the tunnel will be a problem.

The short length of the Access road at Balgowlah with traffic lights at each end will exacerbate this congestion.

Merging rather than stopping traffic would ease this problem but this suggestion has been rejected. The EIS states less stop start traffic will result in a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. Their refusal to accommodate these suggested changes is inconsistent with this statement.

Without these changes we are merely relocating the pinch point from Spit Bridge to Burnt Bridge deviation, a mere 1 to 2 kilometres away at a cost of \$10 billion plus. Surely we can get a better outcome? It may cost a little more but it will increase the likely sale price of the infrastructure as a toll operator wants the traffic to flow and to have unrestrained access.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

"Our assessment showed greenhouse gas emissions from traffic volumes on the road network will become more efficient once the project is operational, due to less congestion, less stop start driving and a greater average vehicle speed, and as a result of expected improvement in fuel efficiency and increase in electric vehicles average speed will increase due to the efficiency of the tunnels".

To me this is wishful thinking. The reality is that there is no policy to support an increase in electric car usage. Fuel inefficient vehicles are being dumped in Australia as they cannot be sold in other markets as they do not comply with the tougher fuel emission restrictions in those markets. To have traffic stop starting on congested rat runs with no exhaust extraction and treatment before entering the tunnels misrepresents the likely outcome.

Public Transport

"Bus users will enjoy new opportunities for express services via the beaches linked tunnel, providing quick and reliable connections to centres including North Sydney Sydney CBD St Leonards and Macquarie Park."

This is an indication of potential opportunities. The reality is that a tunnel operator maximises toll income from tolls and that means as many cars as possible. Twenty vehicles with one driver in each vehicle generates more toll income than one bus with twenty passengers.

Electric buses seem sensible but that will make the tunnel worth less. Is it contemplated that the contract of sale for the tunnel and its infrastructure to a toll operator will mandate bus usage and capping tolls to be paid by buses?

Timing

Before we rush into this we need to step back and consider other options.

We can spread the traffic volumes during peak hours. I recall when the Olympic games were held in Sydney. The forecast traffic congestion never happened as businesses changed their hours of business, partly to allow employees to attend the games. This illustrated what is possible. The adaptive nature of our citizens was demonstrated when Covid virus required we change to a new normal. This included work from home, curtailed travel through use of video conferencing and other initiatives.

The B-Line bus and express bus service from Dee Why to Chatswood are in their infancy stages and the impact has not been considered in the EIS.

The reality that is unstated is that this tunnel will force planning changes in the Northern Beaches to permit higher density living. Already planning changes are being considered for land within 1 kilometre of a B-Line bus stop. Residential living in boxes in the sky, places increased pressure on remaining open space for recreation. But this project will destroy burnt bridge creek and Manly Dam and may impact on the water quality in Middle Harbour restricting swimming and skiff and dinghy sailing.

I drive a motor scooter and use the bus lanes and have no problem in commuting. Why would I countenance a project destroying my amenity for 6+ years of construction and impacting the local environment forever. How can others change their daily habits to reduce traffic congestion?

Back to the drawing board. Open your collective minds to all of the options and give residents sufficient time to review what is proposed.

B. K. O'Connell 1 March 2021