

Re: Beaches Link and Gore Hill Freeway Connection - Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)

1st March 2021

I wish to object to the Beaches Link for the following reasons:

Operational traffic and transport

“A substantial proportion of traffic that currently travels east-west along Warringah Road would travel from east to south and from south to east along Wakehurst Parkway and Warringah Road and through the intersection of Warringah Road and Wakehurst Parkway instead of passing through the underpass. Similarly, southbound traffic on Forest Way that would turn right onto Warringah Road would instead turn left, then right from Warringah Road to Wakehurst Parkway, increasing localised delays at the intersection of Warringah Road and Wakehurst Parkway.”

“The number of stops would increase by up to 26 per cent as a result of the project due to the change in the pattern of demand with more trips travelling through surface road intersections rather than through the underpass.” [9.4.6 Frenchs Forest and Surrounds]

Traffic Diversion

The tunnel project would result in a diversion of traffic from E-W routes to N-S or E-S to connect with the tunnel entry / exits points in Balgowlah and Seaforth.

This will result in a significant increase in traffic along Wakehurst Parkway. It is also likely to increase traffic congestion on N-S routes, including Pittwater Road, and connecting roads.

The increase in traffic along Wakehurst Parkway would have attendant impacts on noise, air and water pollution. This will affect the environment and amenity of adjoining bushland areas that are reserved for environmental protection and recreation.

A high volume of traffic is likely to converge on the entry / exit points to the tunnel. A proportion of traffic that currently travels east to west via Warringah Road or Mona Vale Road will instead divert to N-S routes, such Pittwater Road, to access the tunnel in the southern portion of the Northern Beaches. This will increase congestion on N-S arterial routes and local roads in Brookvale, Manly Vale, Balgowlah, Seaforth and surrounding suburbs.

East – West Road Expansion

During the past 10 years the State Government has spent at least a billion dollars on road expansion and road infrastructure in the Northern Beaches – notably Warringah Road and Mona Vale Road. These routes cater for East to West traffic.

These E-W corridors are major arterial roads within the Northern Beaches. Mona Vale Road attracts E-W traffic in the northern part of the Peninsula, while Warringah Road attracts traffic in the mid and southern part of the Peninsula. If travelling E-W, residents living on the Northern Beaches use either of these routes. However, the tunnel will change this pattern and attract a large volume of E-W traffic to Balgowlah and Seaforth.

When the State Government has just invested millions (or billions) in widening two East West arterial roads why spend seven billions on a tunnel to channel traffic in a southerly direction towards already congested roads and promote car usage on the Northern Beaches?

Environmental impacts

The Warringah Road and Mona Vale roadworks have resulted in extensive removal of bushland and rock outcrops. The expanded roadway has literally denuded the landscape and encroached upon a wide swath of natural areas. For residents, it is distressing to witness this wholesale loss of bushland with conservation and scenic values.

The Warringah Road and Mona Vale roadworks have resulted in extensive removal of bushland and natural rock outcrops. The expanded roadway has literally denuded the landscape and encroached upon natural areas. The works have also resulted in sediment being washed into waterways. For residents, it is distressing to witness this wholesale loss of bushland corridors with conservation and scenic values.

Wakehurst Parkway

For Wakehurst Parkway the environmental impact of the tunnel proposal will be severe. The ridge is relatively narrow and the proposed expansion of the road will result in the removal of bushland and rock outcrops within and adjacent to Manly Warringah War Memorial Park and Garigal National Park. This encroachment will also have an impact on native flora and fauna, soils, waterways and sensitive catchments, including Manly Dam Catchment.

Shared user path

Along Wakehurst Parkway a shared path beside a road with high speed traffic, noise and air pollution would provide a poor amenity for pedestrians and cyclists.

Shared user path underpasses beneath Wakehurst Parkway would lack surveillance and may not feel safe for pedestrian use at night.

2016 Base year

“The 2016 baseline year represents transport network conditions at the time of the traffic and transport assessment.”

The B-Line Bus service was introduced in 2017 and in 2020, due to COVID-19, many residents worked from home, so dependence on cars for commuter transport may have declined since 2016.

If bus travel is well patronised and ‘work at home’ patterns become established, a downward trend in peak hour traffic could continue. An ongoing reduction in car dependency for commuter travel would relieve pressure on existing roads and alleviate any urgency to construct a tunnel to ease peak hour traffic. Improved public transport would greatly facilitate this trend.

Public Transport

Increased traffic converging on N-S routes to access the tunnel has the potential to cause congestion delays to bus services if there is no dedicated bus lane.

“The Northern Beaches B-Line began operation in 2017 which provides frequent and more reliable services between the Northern Beaches and Sydney CBD.”

“The reduced vehicle congestion on Warringah Road between Frenchs Forest and Roseville would support the possible implementation of a proposed rapid bus service, similar in nature to the existing B-Line, between Dee Why and Chatswood.”

A similar service to the existing B-Line could be introduced soon to reduce car dependency without relying on the tunnel to reduce vehicle congestion on Warringah Road.

A first priority for transport would be to introduce E-W bus services along arterial routes to increase patronage and encourage a modal shift from cars to public transport. Routes that would benefit from improved E-W public transport services include Mona Vale to Gordon (a more frequent service for starters) and Manly / Dee Why to Chatswood.

Environmental management measures

A review of operational network performance will be carried out subsequent to the opening of the project. This will be too late to avoid or rectify some of the traffic induced problems.

Measures to minimise the impact of the project on the surrounding local road network are likely to be ineffective and will not avoid congestion and parking problems.

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