

77 Brighton Street  
Curl Curl NSW 2096  
Email: [aesharp@bigpond.net.au](mailto:aesharp@bigpond.net.au)  
Phone: 9938 3459

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

### BEACHES LINK PROJECT

28 February 2021

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

#### **Impact on southern suburbs of Northern Beaches**

In order to access the tunnel, heavy traffic is likely to converge on the southern suburbs of the Northern Beaches. This includes Seaforth and Balgowlah, where tunnel openings would be located, as well as surrounding suburbs, such as Manly Vale and Brookvale, which would be affected by through traffic.

#### **Local traffic**

The motorway tunnel is likely to cause more congestion on local roads. A faster travel time via the motorway will encourage travel by car and generate more traffic. It will also increase the demand for car based infrastructure including parking.

#### **Traffic forecast**

Traffic predictions are based on current peak hour traffic. The traffic modelling apparently does not factor in the influx of traffic to the Northern Beaches, particularly in summer. This inevitable influx in traffic will lead to an increased demand for car parking near the beaches.

#### **Wakehurst Parkway**

In any cost / benefit analysis it is important to give high priority to the long term social and environmental benefits of a viaduct (above ground) road to avoid the extensive widening at grade and the loss of bushland and habitat. Along the stretch of Wakehurst Parkway between Seaforth and Warringah Road side turn offs are not currently provided or required. Nearly all the traffic would continue to be through traffic, except for cars that require local access for recreation purposes.

#### **Recreation Use**

The reserves on either side of Wakehurst Parkway are well used for recreation, walking and cycling. A raised road would allow for the land underneath to be used for this purpose i.e. for local access and recreation. This would have a substantial long term benefit for residents, visitors and the environment, including native fauna.

#### **Wakehurst Parkway North**

Along the northern section of Wakehurst Parkway a raised road would be the most appropriate option to avoid the flood prone sections and avoid the devastating clearance of bushland that would be required if the road was widened to 4 lanes. A raised road would allow for a predominantly recreation use and access at ground level. It would also avoid the significant problem of road kill along this stretch of road.

## **Public Transport**

Public transport initiatives should be given first priority to reduce car dependency. An East to West public transport service could be introduced at minimal cost. An express bus service could be introduced at minimal cost without additional road infrastructure. Other initiatives include flexible intra-urban routes and shuttle bus services to provide circuit routes and a link to facilities and transport nodes.

## **Balgowlah Connection**

The proposed tunnel feeder road through the Balgowlah Golf Course would have multiple adverse impacts. The traffic lights required on the Burnt Bridge Deviation would interrupt traffic flow. The proposal would fragment existing open space, result in loss of riparian habitat, and require relocation of the creek and the bike path. The connecting road would have a constant stream of traffic entering and emerging opposite Balgowlah Boys High School. This would pose a safety hazard for students, while air and noise pollution would adversely affect health and stress levels.

## **Short term solution**

The motorway is not a sustainable transport solution for the Northern Beaches. Constructing motorways that feed more cars into the CBD and urban areas is outdated transport planning. It has been demonstrated in many locations that constructing motorways in urban areas increases car dependency. The tunnel project ignores the lessons learned in Europe and elsewhere. Public transport should be given priority and car based motorways avoided in urban areas.

## **Public Open Space**

The tunnel and connecting roads would severely impact on Balgowlah Golf Course, Burnt Bridge Creek and riparian area as well as bushland along Wakehurst Parkway adjoining Garigal National Park and Manly Dam Reserve. The impact of the tunnel and connecting roads on open space and the environment is unacceptable.

## **Warringah Freeway**

The widening of Warringah Freeway and inclusion of additional traffic lanes to accommodate the tunnel would create a confusing network of lanes. It would be another stressful scenario for drivers, particularly inexperienced drivers and those who are unfamiliar with the area.

## **Public consultation**

The Department of Transport has decided on a road tunnel and motorway without any prior public consultation, including with residents on the Northern Beaches. The motorway option was an announcement made in conjunction with a State election; it was not subject to any prior community consultation about sustainable and public transport options.

## **Air pollution**

The air vents would be located at either end of the tunnel, which would be 7 to 8 km long. These vents would disperse exhaust emissions over the surrounding area. Fans would operate to blow the exhaust fumes out of the tunnel. However, air pollution and haze could also build up inside the tunnels.

## **Safety**

Breakdowns in a tunnel is always a risk. Heavy vehicles, such as trucks and buses, would share the same lanes as lightweight vehicles. Confinement in a tunnel is claustrophobic for many people, particularly in a long tunnel under water. Tunnels can also be a target for terrorist attacks, which has to be taken into account as a potential safety risk.

### **East West Corridors**

Public transport could be greatly improved with additional bus services, including express services and east to west along Mona Vale Road, Warringah Road and connecting links via Forest Way. Innovative and equitable options to reduce car dependency is the preferred transport strategy for the Northern Beaches.

### **Fossil fuels**

The tunnel will increase the demand for fossil fuels, even though we have already passed the peak phase of oil supply. Compared with public transport, including buses, the increase in car dependency will mean higher dependency on fossil fuels. Transport options that reduce fossil fuel consumption would also reduce air pollution.

### **Stressful scenario**

The tunnel has the potential to become a stressful scenario with additional traffic flooding into the Northern Beaches, particularly in summer. Other adverse impacts include increased air pollution, loss of open space and bushland, reduced urban amenity etc. It is a scenario that we should not wish for, let alone impose upon, the next generation. The Northern Beaches is geographically constrained and not suitable for the Beaches Link road tunnel and motorway.

### **Cost**

The billion dollar cost is exorbitant and would eclipse other transport priorities. It would also compromise public transport opportunities. The ongoing maintenance of the tunnel would be very expensive and require the imposition of a toll for the foreseeable future.

## **SUMMARY CONCERNS**

### **Beaches Link Tunnel**

I do not support the Beaches Link Tunnel proposal. It will create a serious imbalance in favour of car travel and will greatly increase car dependency. The tunnel will adversely affect air quality and the environment. The road infrastructure will affect local amenity, alienate active travel options and allow car travel to become an overly dominate transport mode.

The proposal is for three lanes of traffic each way in the tunnel, which will be 7.2km long. No dedicated public transport lane is proposed.

Public transport options should be given priority in terms of investment. This includes public transport options that do not require additional roads.

Issues / concerns include:

- Traffic congestion on local roads
- Car parking demand, especially at beaches
- Environmental impacts
- Air quality
- Balgowlah Golf Course
- Seaforth temporary depot

Wakehurst Parkway:

The project would have an extensive environmental impact on adjoining bushland areas and reserves. The long term benefit of protecting the bushland warrants a high rating in any cost/benefit analysis. If the project proceeds, at grade widening should be avoided by extending the tunnel or constructing an elevated road.

The Beaches Tunnel project is likely to overwhelm all other transport projects in terms of cost, traffic generation, environmental impacts and quality of life.

This road infrastructure will have a major impact on the Northern Beaches and result in many changes, including negative impacts, over which the Northern Beaches Council and residents will have little control.

The tunnel will bring to closer fruition the nightmare reality depicted in the Manly Daily headline: The Cars that Ate the Northern Beaches.

Residents who support the tunnel appear to do so primarily because they want to shorten their driving time to the CBD and across the city. By the same token the tunnel will also provide a wide open passage for a high volume of traffic emerging from 3 lanes. This will result in a significant increase in the number of cars converging on the Northern Beaches, particularly at weekends and in summer.

The consequent increase in traffic is likely to cause congestion in local streets, which in turn will become more hazardous for pedestrians and cyclists.

An increased demand of parking, particularly near the beaches in summer, is inevitable. The existing problem of coping with parking demand will be exacerbated multiple times. This will result in increased hard surfaces and conflict between residents and visitors for limited on-street parking.

The Beaches tunnel will encourage car travel to the Northern Beaches from all Sydney metropolitan areas to the west of the tunnel entrance.

A far better alternative is to invest in public transport, including buses. This will avoid / reduce problems associated with traffic and parking. It will also be more compatible with active travel options.

Public transport is an equitable and sustainable transport option that is strongly aligned with the strategy objectives of reducing car dependency and carbon emissions.

The funding priority for the Northern Beaches should be public transport. Further road expansion, which will encourage car usage and generate more traffic, is inappropriate and will exacerbate existing problems.

### SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT PLANNING

The planned road tunnel is not compatible with sustainable transport planning. The immense cost of building the tunnel is not justified and funding would be far better spent on new technology and public transport options.

The adverse consequences of the Beaches Tunnel have not been adequately considered. The planned Beaches Tunnel would have multiple lanes that would cater mainly for car travel, not public transport. Priority should be given to public transport improvements rather than road projects that will increase car dependency.

The tunnel has the potential to increase reliance on cars, congestion on local roads and convergence of traffic entering the CBD. The demand for car parking facilities is also likely to increase,

particularly in summer if the Northern Beaches becomes a magnet for cars, and additional parking is required to cope with the influx.

The associated 'at grade' road widening along Wakehurst Parkway would mean the irreversible loss of a wide swathe of bushland adjoining Garigal National Park and Manly Dam Reserve.

Alternative options for infrastructure and public transport need to be considered that avoid the significant adverse impact on the environment and urban amenity.

Ann Sharp