EcoTransit News

Public transport solutions from EcoTransit Sydney • www.ecotransit.org.au • October 2015

WestConnex?

$15 billion down a hole!

BY THE ECOTRANSIT TEAM

If it were ever completed, WestConnex would be the biggest underground motorway system anywhere in the world, and certainly, per kilometre, the most expensive.

This gigantic project, which would take at least 10 years to finish, is being forced on the NSW taxpayer at a time when the rest of the world has sworn off urban motorways. It will suck public funds out of vital public transport projects and much needed regional infrastructure.

Global experience since the 1950s has conclusively demonstrated that urban motorways are counterproductive. Over past decades, when crude oil was abundant and petroleum cheap, big new road capacity immediately generated big new traffic. The new roads quickly reached capacity. There was more local traffic, more air and noise pollution and, inevitably, less open space.

For these reasons, and with the rapidly escalating energy crisis in mind, the rest of the world has turned to mass transit solutions – rail and light rail in particular. But the NSW government is clinging doggedly to a failed idea.

Your submission to the official Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the M4 East section will be received until close of business on Monday 2 November. This is your chance to tell the government what you think of WestConnex. ***We recommend outright rejection.***

An EIS is supposed to honestly and fully discuss the costs and economic benefits as well as the social and environmental effects of a project, as well as alternatives to it, but the EIS for the M4 East section of WestConnex is no more than a shoddy and evasive sales pitch.

Take its traffic predictions. These were prepared by AECOM, a company with a track record for getting it disastrously wrong. In September this year it was forced to settle a major lawsuit about its traffic predictions for Brisbane's Clem 7 RiverCity tunnel for $280 million. The $2.2 billion project had attracted only a fraction of the traffic predicted and was subsequently sold for only $618 million. According to The Australian, AECOM has since announced it will "no longer provide traffic and revenue forecasting for toll road operators or owners in Australia".

A big element in the Baird Government's political spin for Westconnex is that it would get traffic off Parramatta Road and local roads, allowing Parramatta Road to become a European-style boulevard. The EIS gives the lie to this. With AECOM's help, the very best face that the WestConnex Delivery Authority has been able to put on the traffic effects of the construction of the M4 East is that traffic on long sections of Parramatta Road will be higher than if WestConnex wasn't built. The same goes for local feeder roads. And that finding didn't factor in the 40,000 apartments that Urban Growth NSW – the government's mass property resumption arm – is seeking to locate along the road.

Environmental impact statements were originally introduced to give the community an opportunity to have its say on big public projects. The process allowed for 'build', 'no build' and 'build with modifications' outcomes. A number of bad proposals were halted in this way and some good ones gained resounding public endorsement or were improved by incorporating changes suggested by the public.

But over recent years, under pressure from the road lobby, big construction companies and developers, governments have tried to neuter the process. One of the most outrageous aspects of WestConnex is that the Baird Government has awarded tenders for the M4 East section of the overall project, before publishing the EIS. This corruption of the planning process is intended to persuade the public that a go-ahead is inevitable and the EIS process is a pointless formality. This is bullying and obfuscation by the Baird Government. You should ignore it.

Make a submission to the M4 East EIS. Do it now. It's easy. Find out how on the back page.

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SEE BACK PAGE

Thousands marched against WestConnex in the King Street Crawl on Sunday 1 February this year – just one of hundreds of street actions and meetings against the proposal. PHOTO: MIŠKA MANDIĆ

INSIDE ...

Get your objection in today! For more info go to THE PEOPLE'S EIS: http://m4eis.org

What could we build if we didn't blow the budget on WestConnex?

BY THE ECOTRANSIT TEAM

The worth of any large infrastructure project has to be measured against the cost and effects of alternative solutions to the problem it purports to solve. Planners call this the "opportunity cost" of the project, although "lost opportunity cost" would be a more accurate term.

Opportunities lost through a WestConnex go-ahead would be felt across the state, and not just in terms of vital infrastructure Sydney or the regions wouldn't get. The social budget – health, education and welfare – would also be raided.

So what could NSW buy if it scrapped WestConnex, which is conservatively costed at $15.4 billion? EcoTransit advocates a raft of projects, across Sydney, that would dramatically reduce road traffic, particularly in the peaks.

Sydneysiders get the main point: WestConnex would steal funds from real solutions. PHOTO: MIŠKA MANDIĆ

Modernise rail signaling to increase capacity

$3 billion

New technology taking off in continental Europe, called European Train Control System (ETCS), uses 'moving block signaling'. Our rail uses outdated 'fixed block' signaling. Moving block signals rely on sensors placed on rail tracks at short intervals to identify the exact location of trains. Fixed block signals use upright traffic signals that look like traffic lights. They let a train into a designated length of track, or block, that might be several kilometres long. Train controllers don't know the exact location of the train inside a fixed block, only that one is in there and that if they let another in they might collide.

With the new moving block signals train controllers calculate a 'safe envelope' around each train as it moves along the track, making sure that envelopes don't overlap. This technology means far more trains can fit on the same section of track, increasing capacity without the need for expensive additional track.

Experience in countries like Denmark where the new system is being introduced, shows rail capacity could increase by 40 per cent across the board, meaning more frequent commuter services and more freight throughput.

IMAGE: PARRAMATTA COUNCIL

Parramatta-focussed light rail network

$3 billion

(including a generous contingency for cost overrun)

Parramatta Council's wish-list of three initial light rail lines focussed on Parramatta CBD – West-Central Line, Carlingford Line, Macquarie Line, total 34 kilometres. The scheme would cut road traffic dramatically and enhance the employment potential of Parramatta, Macquarie Park and Bankstown whereas WestConnex – often touted as being 'for the West', would cater only for a tiny minority of Western Sydney residents who choose to drive to the CBD.

So far the Baird government has vaguely promised only $600m towards this vital scheme but the huge drain imposed by WestConnex will certainly mean this commitment is never met.

East-West Translink

$450 million

This EcoTransit proposal would extend the Dulwich Hill light rail line via the spare space in the Bankstown Line easement to Sydenham Station and then, via new track in the Botany Goods Line easement to Domestic Terminal and then through Mascot and Eastlakes to join the CSELR light rail (under construction) at Kingsford.

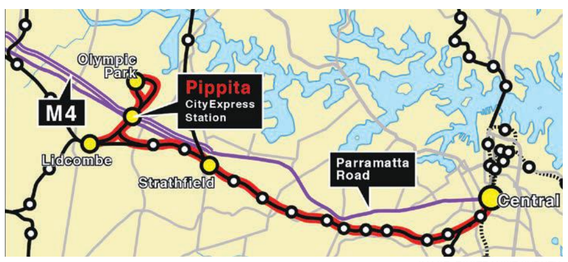


IMAGE: ECOTRANSIT SYDNEY

Pippita Express solution

$100 million

An express commuter link from Pippita, where the rail to Olympic Park passes over Parramatta Road, to Central Station via Strathfield using remaining spare capacity in the Western Line. There would be a large commuter car park next to the station. Pippita to Central in less than 15 minutes. This would soak traffic off the M4 before Strathfield. A quick, low-cost solution that would have a big impact on M4 and Parramatta Road road traffic, particularly in the peaks. Cost is mostly construction of Pippita station.

Kingsgrove 'Last Chance' Park & Ride

$75 million

Kingsgrove Station is where the M5E comes closest to the East Hills Line. It represents a golden opportunity to inexpensively cut traffic on the M5E before the M5 tunnel. A large park and ride, kiss and ride and bus turnback located in the industrial area next to the station would soak thousands of vehicles off the M5E and the roads leading into the airport. By train it's only 11 minutes to the International Terminal and 13 to the Domestic, so the Kingsgrove facility would facilitate the decentralisation of airport drop-off and pick up. It would also be served by express buses picking up in a big area of the South-West that's currently not well served by public transport.

Retrofit two extra stations to Airport Line

$150 million

The majority of public transport users who access the Southern Industrial Area by public transport do so by rail. But with no station at Doody Street in the centre of the SIA, there's a yawning gap in coverage. We know, from the booming patronage at Green Squate and Mascot, that a Doody St station would attract at least 10,000 passengers a day. Another new station in the public housing estates in south Redfern would also attract big patronage. These stations would take tens of thousands of cars off the roads every day.

This list totals $9.4 billion – $5 billion less than the WestConnex price tag – leaving funds for regional road and rail projects, as well as much-needed funds for hospitals and schools.

Sydney-Newcastle rail line upgrade (stage 1)

$500 million

Before the Baird Government closed the last section of the Sydney-Newcastle rail line, journey time between Central and the Newcastle CBD was, by international standards, woefully slow – 2 hours 37 minutes for the fastest service. The closure has added at least 15 minutes and the inconvenience of a mode change. The closure should be reversed and key sections of track upgraded and quadruplicated to bring Sydney-Newcastle journey time below 2 hours. This would provide an enormous boost to the economic potential of Newcastle, the Central Coast and the Hunter.

IMAGE: ECOTRANSIT SYDNEY

Parramatta Road Light Rail (CBD to Olympic Park)

$1 billion

This project can be pushed west from Central Station in a series of short stages progressively replacing buses which can then be retasked to provide frequent feeder services to the light rail. There would also be strategically located park and rides, soaking traffic off Parramatta Road. This would provide a clean, quiet, high-capacity, service as the basis for Parramatta Road revitalisation. One tram lane can carry 10,000 passengers an hour, while a road lane only accommodates 2,000 cars or 2,400 commuters, so Parramatta Road Light Rail would remove thousands of cars from the road, particularly in the peaks.

IMAGE: ECOTRANSIT SYDNEY

White Bay GreenLink

$710 million

This proposal would provide a direct link from the Dulwich Hill light rail line at Rozelle Bay to Barangaroo and the Northern CBD via a tunnel under the Balmain Peninsula and an immersed tube tunnel under Darling Harbour (pictured) and under the CBD to join the unused heavy rail tunnels from the Northern CBD to the Cenotaph. This positions it to emerge on Oxford Street to join proposed light rail extensions up Oxford Street to join the CSELR, now under construction, as well as a future line to Bondi.

Cycling, pedestrian and rail access projects

$500 million

With petrol costs rising, and the need to cut down Australia's greenhouse gas emissions, it's vital we encourage cycling by providing safe cycle paths in Sydney, Newcastle, Wollongong and regional towns.

Cycle paths are cheap so we'd get a lot of bang for our buck, but the Baird Government is hostile to cycling and the cycling budget has been cut to the bone.

The existing program for retrofitting lifts at rail stations is also proceeding at snail's pace, with 90 Sydney stations still to receive them. Around $200 million would fix this problem, making stations easily accessible to mothers with prams, travellers with luggage, the elderly and the disabled.

The west needs more rail capacity and more frequent services

Peak period trains on the Western Sydney Rail Line are packed. They're the most heavily loaded trains on the Sydney network and there's little room for more commuters.

Western Sydney, and the regional communities beyond, need more frequent rail services and greater capacity so people can access job opportunities in key centres like Parramatta, the Sydney CBD and the suite of growing global business centres like North Sydney, Macquarie Park and the Southern Industrial Area.

Roads too are full, but a road lane only accommodates 2,000 cars (around 2,400 people per hour) while the same amount of space given over to a rail line can accommodate around 20,000 commuters. That's how to make a genuine dent in the problem of road congestion. This can't be done in a practical sense with road building. The only practical transport options for supporting job growth and economic development in these dense centres are rail and light rail.

The tollway troika: Mike Baird, Duncan Gay, Tony Abbott.

WestConnex?

Dump Abbott's folly!

The demise of Tony Abbott clears the way for the Turnbull Government to dump federal support for Premier Mike Baird's open-ended WestConnex adventure.

There was no more enthusiastic exponent of WestConnex than Abbott. It meshed perfectly with the self-serving agenda of his "Big Coal, Big Car, Big Construction" backers. Without the federal funding Abbott promised it would never have gained momentum.

Echoing Margaret Thatcher, who famously opined that "A man who, beyond the age of 26, finds himself on a bus can count himself as a failure", Tony Abbott wrote in *Battlelines*: "The humblest person is a king in his own car… For people whose lives otherwise run largely at the beck and call of others, that's no small freedom."

In fact, one of the failed prime minister's "battlelines" was his hostility to any publicly owned and operated public transport – except buses – and his support, against the world's hard-won experience, for radial freeways bringing cars right into the centre of Sydney.

"In Australia's biggest cities", he wrote, "public transport is generally slow, expensive, not especially reliable and still a hideous drain on the public purse. Part of the problem is inefficient, overmanned, union-dominated government run train and bus systems. Mostly though, …there just aren't enough people wanting to go from a particular place to a particular destination at a particular time to justify any vehicle larger than a car, and cars need roads. ...

"Sydney for instance, should fill the gap between the CBD and the M4 at Strathfield, the expressway at Hornsby and the M2, and the M5 and the expressway at Heathcote."

Abbott's influence over federal policy was both decisive and disruptive. Infrastructure Australia, set up by the Rudd Government to select state infrastructure projects for federal funding, had used an evidence-based approach to select projects and, in a ground-breaking move, it prioritised key rail and light rail projects proposed by state and regional governments.

On a personal whim, Abbott changed all that and dictated that the Commonwealth would fund only roads.

The states greeted the move with dismay. Western Australia's Liberal premier, Colin Barnett, for example, had won office promising both light rail and heavy rail projects for Perth, on the assumption that federal funding would be available. Abbott's dictum was a severe embarrassment and Barnett was forced to withdraw his favoured projects and substitute roads. Western Australia has now sought to reverse Abbott's ruling.

South Australia, under a Labor administration, has similarly withdrawn its application for freeway funding and reapplied for the heavy and light rail projects it originally favoured. The Gold Coast is likely to get funds Abbott blocked for extensions to its hugely successful light rail.

Abbott's pro-freeway stance was also in defiance of the fact that motorways, in construction and operation, are a climate disaster. Concrete is the third-largest producer of greenhouse gases and Westconnex, with its 20-plus kilometres of tunnels, would be a huge generator of climate degrading emissions. Once opened, it would increase traffic volumes and, therefore, carbon pollution.

Finally, there is this: a whole raft of traffic-reducing public transport and freight rail projects would cost far less that the $15.4 billion WestConnex. If the Baird Government locks NSW into 15 years of WestConnex construction, it will also suck funding out of vital rural and regional infrastructure projects and even infrastructure maintenance programs and the social budget.

The demise of Australia's most backward-looking prime minister must be followed by the dumping of his most extravagant folly.

EIS admits deterioration in Parra Road traffic after M4 East

BY THE ECOTRANSIT TEAM

Twenty years ago the Greiner and Fahey Governments claimed construction of the M4 missing link and the M5 would significantly cut travel times and reduce congestion. Opponents said the motorways would only generate more traffic, eroding any short term improvements while pulling people off public transport and starving the rail and other pubic transport networks of funds for further development.

Today, Sydney's road traffic is worse than ever and in some inner urban areas where the motorways converge, motorists are beginning to experience 'super-jams' — delays where people can get caught in traffic for hours.

The EISs for the M4 widening and M4 East don't hide the fact that a similar future is waiting for everyone if these projects go ahead. A close look at the numbers shows that congestion is anticipated to get worse in many areas and traffic volumes on some sections of Parramatta Road are anticipated to be higher than if WestConnex was not built.

The spin used by the WestConnex Delivery Authority to justify the projects is that while the motorways won't generate any significant improvements, the next motorway that connects the M4 and M5, will. The predictions are that travel times will improve on most routes from around 6 to 8 minutes in the morning peak by 2021 to an earth shattering 10 to 12 by 2031 if the full $15.4 billion WestConnex scheme is built.

With about eight different motorway projects under discussion in Sydney and an embarrasing recent history of legal proceedings over traffic predictions for tollways, coupled with little in the way of public transport for western Sydney, the community can be easily forgiven for feeling this situation is getting ridiculous and out of control.

Let's start with the M4 Widening. The EIS states that by 2021 with minimal network changes at a point near Duck Creek, Parramatta Road will be carrying 43,990 vehicles on average per day, per year. With the M4 Widening it will carry 59,370 — that's 35 per cent more — because with a toll in place, some traffic will divert to using non-tolled roads. Victoria Road to the north is estimated to carry a daily average of 70,250 per day, per year with the M4 Widening instead of 60,440 — that's 16 per cent more — also because of toll diversion.

By 2031 with the full WestConnex scheme in place, volumes will rise to 62,490 for Parramatta Road and 75,770 for Victoria Road. If WestConnex isn't built, the 2031 estimates are 52,030 for Parramatta Road and 68,250 for Victoria Road.

Moving on to the M4 East, at points along Parramatta, Liverpool, Punchbowl and Canterbury roads, the story is much the same. Traffic volumes on local roads are higher with the M4 East motorway and full WestConnex motorway scheme in place than they would be without them. By 2021, average weekday traffic on Parramatta Road would be just over 29,000 in the 'do minimum' case but 42,000 in the 'do something' case. For Liverpool, Punchbowl and Canterbury Roads, volumes stay pretty much where they are with no real improvements. For 2031, the estimated traffic volumes, are all higher or much the same, with the full WestConnex scheme in place with the exception of Liverpool Road which would see just 2,000 less vehicles on average on a weekday.

These results don't sit well with the claims from politicians that more motorway building will take traffic off local roads.

One of the reasons why traffic volumes will remain high on many sections of Parramatta Road and other local arterial roads is because the motorway will unleash another round of induced traffic growth and significant sections of the network are needed to act as feeder routes to the M4. When taken as a whole — traffic on the motorways and local arterial roads — the volumes are always higher with the motorways in place.

Results from the intersection analyses in the EISs aren't much better. Using a traffic engineering standard that measures congestion on a scale from A to F, where F represents a breakdown in the flow of traffic so that queuing and extensive delays result, of the 29 intersections covered in the EIS for the M4 Widening (Church Street, Granville to Shaftesbury Road, Burwood), 15 will be operating at Level of Service F or experience a drop in service levels during the morning peak, 7 will be much the same, while Level of Service is estimated to improve on only 7. With the full WestConnex in place 16 intersections will be at Level of Service F or worse, 4 will be the same and 9 are anticipated to improve. The results are similar for the evening peak period.

Closer to the city, an inspection of the numbers in the EIS for the M4 East for 2021 tells a similar story. Of the 39 intersections analysed (Homebush Bay Drive to Crystal Street), 14 are anticipated to be operating at Level of Service F or experience worse congestion, 11 will be much the same, while 14 are estimated to improve during the morning peak period. Results for the evening peak are similar. With the full WestConnex scheme in place by 2031, 16 are anticipated to be operating at Level of Service F or experience worse congestion, 10 will be much the same and 15 are estimated to improve. Results are similar for the evening peak.

> ***If these underwhelming results are the best the WestConnex Delivery Authority has been able to produce amongst its general obfuscation of the truth, the reality is likely to be far worse.***

Frighteningly, of the total 68 intersections investigated along the stretch of Parramatta Road, 25 are anticipated to be operating at Level of Service F. Add the 40,000 additional apartments that Urban Growth wants to build in the Parramatta Road corridor that have not been included in the traffic model and this number will increase so that conditions become even worse than the forlorn outcomes reported in the EISs. Keep in mind these documents are meant to be sales-pitches for the motorway.

If these underwhelming results are the best the WestConnex Delivery Authority has been able to produce amongst its general obfuscation of the truth, the reality is likely to be far worse and certainly not worth spending $15.4 billion on. This is undoubtedly why the government will not release the business case for the motorways.

WestConnex traffic forecasters have conflict of interest and history of failure

BY WENDY BACON

AECOM is the company paid to produce the 5000 page environmental impact statement (EIS) for the M4 East. It's also responsible for the M5 tunnel report due before the end of this year.

AECOM is a huge US-based engineering company with 100,000 employees involved in everything from oil and gas to military contracting in 150 countries. Australian operations only account for a small slice of the business of AECOM, which recently took over another global NY stock exchange-listed company, URS corporation, with a revenue of about $20 billion a year.

One might think that a company of this size would have the clout to produce a study with the independence that the public has a right to expect for a project that will affect the lives of millions and cost $15.4 billion. But AECOM is far from independent. As well as producing EIS reports, it's been involved in WestConnex from the beginning – paid for a range of other services including project concept development, tunnel design and communication services. It's also involved in Urban Growth NSW's proposals for high rise redevelopment along Parramatta Road. In fact, AECOM has a massive conflict of interest and a commercial interest in WestConnex going ahead.

According to searches of the NSW tender database and freedom of information searches by online publication New Matilda, the NSW government has already paid AECOM more than $33 million for WestConnex work. Of this amount, AECOM will be paid nearly $5.8 million for the M4 EIS and another $13 million to be the 'technical and environmental' advisor for the M5 tunnel.

While AECOM has used the work of other companies for its air quality, heritage and other studies, it's directly responsibility for the all-important traffic studies. It's on AECOM's traffic modelling that predictions for not only traffic congestion, but also air quality, depend. The public will not be reassured to learn that at the same time as AECOM was finalising its traffic study for WestConnex, its lawyers were quietly mopping up some of the mess that followed its wrong traffic predictions for the failed Clem 7 RiverCity tunnel in Brisbane.

In September, the company got unwelcome publicity when some the world's biggest banks, which claimed that AECOM's work had cost them more than $1.5 billion, settled their claim for approximately $280 million. That still leaves 650 investors pursuing a separate claim for $150 million. Their case alleges that AECOM made forecasts without reasonable grounds, and left critical information out of its report published in RiverCity's disclosure statements. AECOM also allegedly failed to reveal that earlier traffic forecasts it had developed for Brisbane City Council showed traffic volumes substantially lower than those in the RiverCity disclosure statements.

AECOM is defending the action and has made cross claims against directors of RiverCity.

All this sends a clear message that the NSW government should listen to the independent experts and academics who are already suggesting that the assumptions behind AECOM's traffic study that justify a massive investment in WestConnex are wrong. Let's stop now rather than be sorry later.

THE SCIENCE IS CLEAR

Faster road network speed depends on faster public transport

Many resident and community public transport advocacy groups argue that if public transport services in western Sydney are improved, road congestion will be relieved too, because people will have other viable options.

There's good science to back up this argument. It goes like this: public transport operates to a fixed speed, a timetable. Most people will take whichever transport option is quickest. They don't care about the mode. If public transport is quicker they'll catch a train or a bus, freeing up road space. If driving is quicker, they'll jump in their car, adding to road congestion.

Because of this tendency to use the quickest mode, the fixed speed of public transport services plays an important role in determining road speeds. The upshot is that increasing public transport speed is the best available option to governments and communities wanting to improve average road speed and reduce traffic congestion.

There's plenty of evidence to prove the point. When Sydney's train service reliability disintegrated in 2004 and the unusual decision was made to slow the city's rail network, embedding the slower speeds in the 2006 timetable, road speeds fell and congestion increased. Average road speed was sitting on 34 km/h before things went pear-shaped on the rail network.

Afterwards, road speed dropped to about 30 km/hour and has basically stayed there.

This relationship is one of the key mechanisms that make cities tick. It is basic microeconomics — people shift between two different options until there is no travel time advantage in shifting and an equilibrium is found. This relationship can also be seen in data that compares cities internationally. Cities with faster public transport speeds generally have faster road network speed.

On the public opinion front, regular surveys on transport show that a majority of people would like to see the money currently spent on roads directed to public transport. Results vary between surveys from more than half to 70 per cent support for public transport.

When politicians are asked what they think should be done, the majority respond by saying they personally think more resources should be directed to public transport but that the majority of voters want money spent on roads. This unfortunate misconception might be telling us how out of touch many political decision-makers are. Or it may show how powerful road construction and tollway interest groups have become. Strong community opposition to WestConnex is an opportunity to correct the imbalance.

Induced traffic

What it is and how it happens

Induced traffic is the big increase in car trips that occurs after the opening of a new motorway or the widening of an existing road. The increase occurs because, when more road space is added to the network, congestion temporarily drops so that it becomes more attractive for drivers to use the road. This can result in drivers making longer trips or making short trips more often than before.

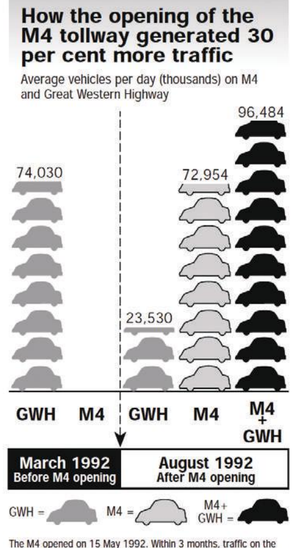
Drivers respond very quickly to new road capacity, so a big leap in traffic typically occurs within months of the new road, or road widening, being opened. As the road becomes congested and travel times increase, the rate of traffic growth slows until it reaches the same congested state it was in before.

Where does the extra traffic come from?

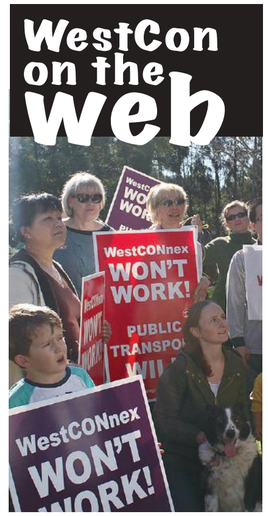
Several types of changes to travel patterns may occur after a new road has been built. These can include drivers changing their choice of route. For example, regular journeys involving the same origin and destination might be made quicker by using the new road. Traffic engineers call this 'traffic reassignment'.

Some drivers choose to go to different destinations. The destination is further away, so the distance travelled becomes greater even though the travel time remains the same. This is called 'traffic redistribution'. In Sydney, shifts from public transport, particularly rail, to private car, are common after motorway openings. If a journey by private car is made quicker, commuters using rail may switch to car use. This is called 'mode shifting'.

The most controversial source of new traffic is 'induced trips'. This occurs when people make greater numbers of trips than they did before. The travel time of a regular trip may be reduced to such an extent that making the trip more often becomes attractive. Induced traffic growth is most common on urban networks that are highly congested. Because urban densities are high, the demand for travel is also high. In these cases, well-coordinated public transport systems offer a more effective solution.



The M4 opened on 15 May 1992. Within 3 months, traffic on the combined M4 and Great Western Highway had increased by 27 per cent.* Two years later it had increased by 33 per cent.
*Source: Confidential report for RTA by TEC Consulting, 1992.



WEBSITES & BLOGS

WestConnex
The proposal's official government website
http://www.westconnex.com.au

No WestConnex Public Transport
Website of anti WestConnex coalition NoW Public Transport. Your gateway to activism.
westconnex.info

Inside WestConnex
Journalist and activist Wendy Bacon's blog
www.wendybacon.com/investigations/inside-westconnex/
Extraordinary series of investigations into WestConnex. Includes an exploration of the vested interests that drive the project, and reports on the campaign by residents and community transport groups to stop it. Required reading.

WestConnex (Wikipedia)
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/WestConnex

FACEBOOK

No WestConnex: Public transport not motorways
www.facebook.com/NoWestconnex
Keep up to date with all the news and community actions against WestConnex.

EcoTransit Sydney
www.facebook.com/EcoTransit

Cyclists Against WestConnex
www.facebook.com/CyclistsAgainstWestconnex

WestConnex Action Group
www.facebook.com/westconnexactiongroup

ON YOUTUBE

Go to EcoTransit Sydney's channel

WestConnex: Greiner's folly
This documentary, in three parts, explains how per-capita vehicle use has fallen to the level of 20 years ago and total vehicle kilometres travelled have been virtually flatlining for a decade, while demand for public transport has surged. In this situation it's possible, with projects and policies far cheaper than WestConnex, to dramatically reduce road traffic and build a more liveable, sustainable, Sydney. It shows how Sydney's road traffic can be dramatically reduced at a fraction of the cost of WestConnex.

WasteConnex – Infrastructure NSW's highest priority project
"WasteConnex is THE highest priority project for Construction, Consulting and Finance. Thirty-three kilometres of tollways will transform tollway revenue collection and provide vital state support for Leightons Lend Lease, Evans & Peck, Transurban and Macquarie Bank ...It'll be finished just as the oil runs out."

This hilarious 2012 spoof on WestConnex's first promotional video is worth viewing, if only to see how radically the route and design has changed in the last three years.

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The origins of Urban Growth's car-based high-rise dystopia

By GAVIN GATENBY*

In the minds of its promoters, WestConnex is more than just a giant motorway, it's the key to a scheme for broad-acre, car-based, high rise redevelopment – vertical sprawl – across vast areas of Sydney. That's why the WestConnex team and the NSW Government's mass property resumption arm, Urban Growth NSW, work closely together.

Motorway-based high rise is a very old and discredited model. The world's first motorway was built by Italian Fascist dictator Benito Mussolini in 1922, but it was an inter-urban affair. It took a Frenchman to imagine a motorway-based *city*. In the same year the influential modernist architect Le Corbusier produced a scheme to 'modernise' the historic core of Paris. Dubbed the Radiant City, it envisaged levelling a vast area of Baron Haussmann's Paris and substituting a regular grid of 60 storey apartment towers served by 8 lane motorways and airfields for small private planes. Trams were to be cleared from the streets to make way for cars and the poor were to be catered for by an underground metro railway.

Of this, only the banishing of trams and the institution of the metro proceeded, but Le Corb's vision struck a chord with the futurists.

At the 1939 New York World's Fair, General Motors sponsored 'Futurama' – a vision of the motorway-based near-future. Designed by Norman Bel Geddes, a theatrical designer who also dabbled in industrial design, Futurama may hold the record for the largest animated scale model in history. Covering an acre, it depicted an American city and countryside as they might look in 1960. It was enormously popular. 30,000 people a day lined up to see it. There was even an accompanying best-selling book: *Magic Motorways*.

Futurama was enormously influential, and not just in the USA. It was the soft-sell for the destruction of the high-capacity tram networks that had, until then, served American cities well, in favour of the private car, and for society's losers, buses. At the end of WW2, this idea was relentlessly implemented.

The outcome was very different from Geddes' shining vision. His rebuilt-from-the-ground-up, high-rise cities, with local, through, and pedestrian traffic rigidly separated (public transport was hardly mentioned) were impossibly costly and energy-intensive. They could never have been built in the 20 years that he envisaged. Miami and Los Angeles attempted the vision but the result was pretty much confined to freeway construction and ripping up tram lines.

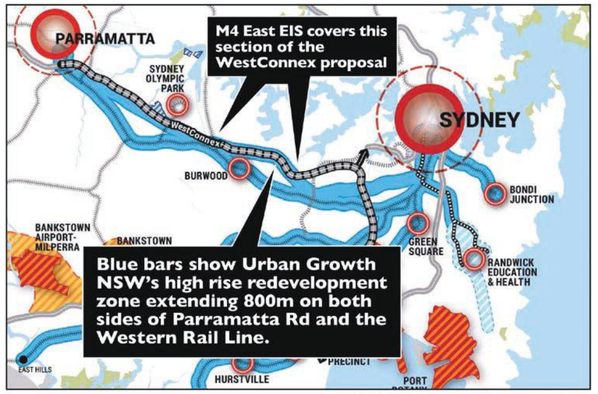
What they got, in place of Le Corbusier's, and Bel Geddes', ludicrously tall high-rise city, was appalling urban sprawl, choking air pollution, gridlock, and vast areas of the city monopolised by parking. That this also entailed a disastrous legacy of climate-changing carbon pollution from petroleum fuel and concrete production would not be understood until decades later.

Magic Motorways

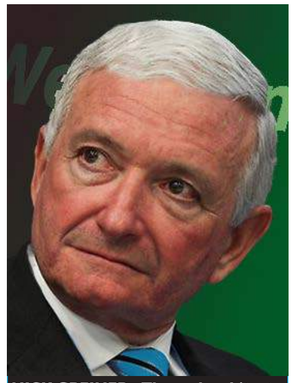
Sydney's road engineers and planners fell under the magic motorways spell. From the end of WW2, the Department of Main Roads assiduously bought up property in the old inner suburbs in preparation for a web of inner-urban expressways designed to "support growth" on Sydney's fringes and funnel traffic into the CBD. There were to be Western, South-Western, Southern, and North-Western expressways, all converging in the CBD and flattening, in the process, thousands of homes and businesses in Pyrmont, Ultimo, Alexandria, Chippendale, and in a broad swathe stretching from Glebe, through Annandale to Strathfield.

It wasn't until 1974, under the Willis Liberal Government, that the first attempt was made to actually implement this gigantic scheme. The opening shot was a relatively minor element of the plan – the North-Western expressway – which was to cut a path through Glebe and Annandale before turning north towards Newcastle.

How WestConnex fits into Urban Growth's 'Plan For Growing Sydney' to 8 million people at the rate of 100,000 + new residents every year ...



Base map source: 'A Plan For Growing Sydney', Department of Planning



NICK GREINER The real architect of WestConnex and Urban Growth.

By 1974, the evidence was in from the US experiment – radial expressways were clearly counterproductive. By then, the rediscovery of the inner suburbs was well underway and public hostility focussed on the bulldozing of a short row of terrace houses in Upper Fig Street, Ultimo. Days of sit-ins and violent arrests threw the Willis Government into crisis. Opposition leader Neville Wran visited the sit-in and promised to scrap the whole inner-urban freeway plan. When Wran narrowly scraped into office 18 months later, he made good on his promise and sold off the DMR's acquisitions. In the following election he was returned with a landslide.

Thwarted and embittered, the DMR engineers changed their strategy. Instead of beginning at the centre and working their way outwards, they'd begin at the periphery, generate extra traffic and funnel it inwards. In the resulting crisis they'd argue for the completion of the "missing links" to the centre.

Forty years on, it's a strategy they're still pursuing, but this time, the motorways are underground and the plan involves the bulldozing of hundreds of hectares of heritage homes for local road widenings and Urban Growth's high-rise "Urban Activation Precincts".

An unprincipled coalition of interest groups has coalesced around the return of the motorway-based high-rise concept. The tollway interests are the leading force. No city has gone further than Sydney in building urban tollways and former premier, tobacco baron and toll company CEO Nick Greiner, a man who styles himself "the father of the urban tollway" is the real originator of WestConnex. The O'Farrell Government created Infrastructure NSW, a pop-up planning agency, now little heard-of, just for Greiner, and WestConnex was its major outcome, throwing transport minister Gladys Berejiklian's preference for public transport development and her NSW Transport Masterplan into chaos.

Failed business model

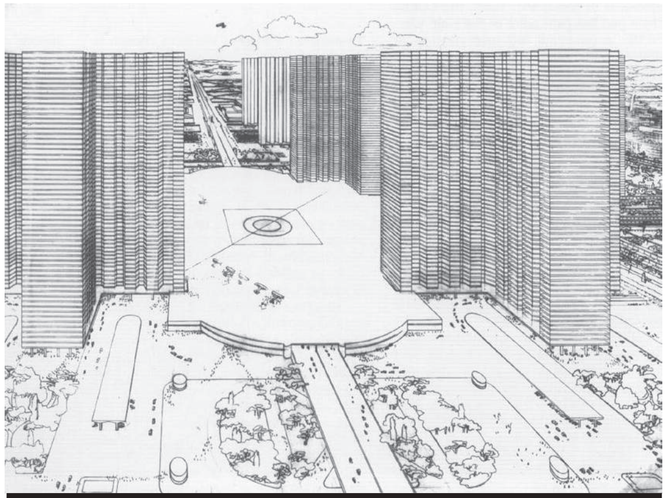
For the tollway operators, the imperative is to shore up a failing business model.

When Sydney embarked on its tollway experiment, per-capita vehicle kilometres travelled were increasing steadily, year on year. The tollroad business model was predicated on Sydneysiders driving more and more each year, but this trend reversed in 2004 as petrol prices started to rise faster than inflation. Total vehicle kilometres travelled has barely increased since then.

For the tollroad operators, the only remaining strategy for boosting toll-paying vehicles is to rapidly increase Sydney's population *and* its car-dependency – hence their enthusiasm for a city of 8 million people, their opposition to street-running light rail, and their determination that any extension of the heavy rail network will be low-capacity privately-operated cattle car metros.

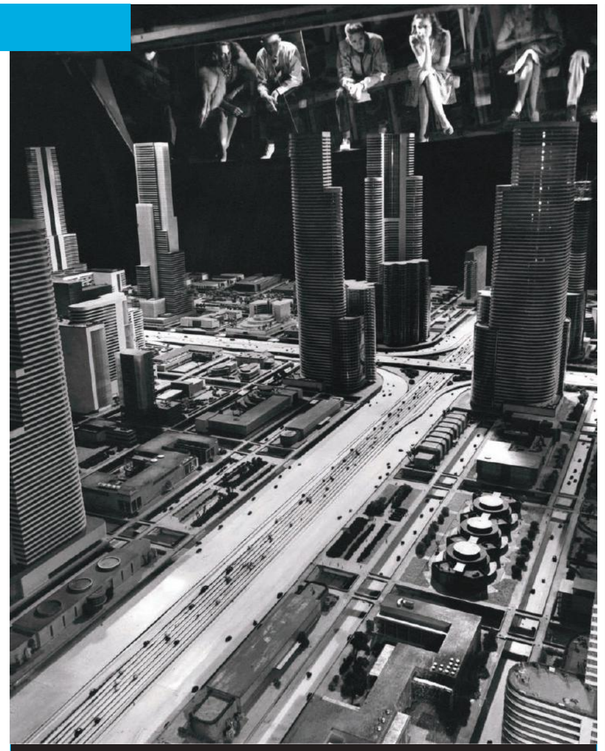
The big developers and the construction companies are the tollway operators' allies in this strategy. The construction giants want a lucrative long-term project and they care nothing about its ultimate impact. The developers want big apartment construction opportunities because their businesses are geared to large-scale project.

This obsolete ninety-year old vision is the real WestConnex agenda.

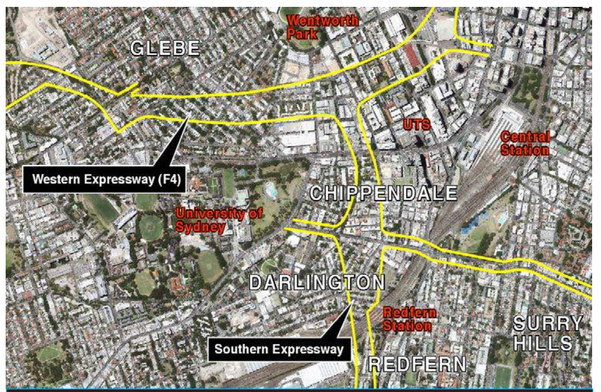


In the early 1920s, modernist architect Le Corbusier dreamed of flattening much of historic Paris to build a freeway-based high-rise 'Radiant City'.

*GAVIN GATENBY is Co-Convenor of EcoTransit Sydney. His so-far four-part video documentary, *Saving Wolli Creek*, which covers the early history of freeways, the post World War 2 Sydney expressway plan and subsequent attempts to implement it, can be found on EcoTransit Sydney's YouTube channel.



GENERAL MOTORS' DYSTOPIAN VISION The Futurama exhibition at the 1939 New York World's Fair imagined a motorways-based high-rise city of 1960. Note the through motorway flanked by local roads. The vision fired the imagination of road engineers everywhere, including NSW's Department of Main Roads.



WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN The DMR's 1948 freeway plan, inspired by Futurama, would have destroyed vast swathes of inner Sydney. The plan was dumped in 1976 after the first attempt to bulldoze homes for the North-Western Expressway led to dozens of arrests at Upper Fig Street in Ultimo.

On EcoTransit Sydney's YouTube channel ...

Saving Wolli Creek

A documentary in four 15 minute parts (a fifth episode is in production).

Beginning in the mid 1970s, the fight to save the bushland of inner south-west Sydney's Wolli Creek Valley from a surface M5 motorway, was Sydney's longest single conservation battle. But this documentary takes a longer view, going back to the 1920s when Italian dictator Benito Mussolini built the world's first expressway. After WW2, the Department of Main Roads pushed for a massive freeway system focussed on Sydney CBD. The first attempt to implement the plan led to clashes between police and protesters after which the Wran Government dumped the scheme. The documentary includes original video of the Fig St clashes. It details the later attempt to begin the freeways on the outer edges of Sydney and force the issue by funnelling traffic inwards towards the CBD, an attempt that began in the late 1970s with the plan to route a surface S-W freeway through the Wolli Valley. The Wolli road proposal was repeatedly delayed and defeated. The Greiner Government announced it had lifted the freeway reservation, but reversed its position within weeks. Subsequent environmental impact statements proved so flawed that the M5 was repeatedly delayed while the Wolli defenders successfully championed the Airport Rail Line proposal. The M5East eventually bypassed the valley by going underground.

We need to build the *cities* of the 21*st* century, not the *roads* ...

BY PETER NEWMAN*

Connex, West. What a road! Let me tell you about my first contact with this concept. I was on the board of Infrastructure Australia – the federal government's infrastructure funding agency. For a couple of years we had been struggling with Sydney and its traffic and freight issues.

We were trying especially to improve access to its ports and airport. Various proposals came in that included potential roads to fix the freight issue. You could never get a benefit cost ratio above about zero point four, which is pathetic. You just don't build projects like that.

Next we heard that a grab bag of roads had been pulled together to bring cars into the equation, because that was the only way to make the benefit cost ratio add up. That's not a great way to plan a city, because essentially what you're saying is: "Let's just find something that gets a better benefit cost ratio and it must be good." Well it may be better, but it won't necessarily be best for the city.

Then there was the problem – who's going to back this? And suddenly along came Tony Abbott who said: "I'll do it. I'll make it part of my 'roads of the 21st century'". Out of the blue we had the biggest road project in the world.

This really dropped out of the sky. It had nothing to do with Infrastructure Australia's processes, nothing to do with our strategic approach to building transport, nothing about getting better economic productivity, let alone sustainability.

We really need to build the cities of the 21st century, not the roads, which is a nineteen sixties approach, it's not 21st century at all.

Around the world, cities are now competing on walkability and good public transport, because the knowledge economy is now the difference between cities. If you have a thriving, productive, creative, innovative, knowledge economy, then you can compete. Young people will stay and work with you, they won't go to Paris and London and New York – they'll stay in your city and they'll do creative things. They want to live in urban situations, they want walkability. A recent report from Smart Growth America says that in Boston, 70 per cent of the young creative people working in the knowledge economy live in these highly walkable areas. They cannot afford the time to spend on long commutes and they must have time to come together with lots of different people in an urban situation.

So the knowledge economy needs spatial efficiency, and spatially efficient transport modes. Public transport, cycling and walking are very spatially efficient.

The other part of the economy is the consumer economy and it's very suburban, it's located around suburban shopping centres. People are getting work dishing out consumption. It's not really very creative. Those jobs are declining, they've never fostered the ability to compete in the global economy. They can happen anywhere and they're easily wiped out by automation.

Abbott's "roads of the 21st century" are going to help the consumption economy only, they won't help the knowledge economy. So let's be clear: there isn't some kind of green conspiracy to stop WestConnex. We're talking serious economic futures for Sydney – potentially our most competitive city in terms of of knowledge economy jobs.

It really needs to increase that competitive edge. It's got a wonderful centre which is mostly for people walking – nearly 90 per cent of people at any time are walking, 80 per cent of people get there by public transport, it's absolutely full as far as cars go, tipping more traffic in there will just destroy it, because they won't have anywhere to park for a start – they'll just be stuck on the roads.

'Around the world, cities are now competing on walkability and good public transport ...'

I went to the NSW Government's White Bay planning conference and it was very exciting to hear talk about a metropolitan strategy that was all about making city centres more walkable and public transport oriented. I thought this was exactly what Sydney needed. But we didn't hear a word about White Bay being used for a giant WestConnex interchange – which emerged a few weeks later.

White Bay will be the next part of the CBD to be developed and it should be walkable, it should have good public transport. To tip more people there in cars will ruin it.

And then the rest of Sydney, including the West, has a number of centres that are doing well, and want to do better. They're going to do better with knowledge economy jobs when they get better public transport and better walkability. Parramatta has been promised light rail – fantastic! It's a very good example of how you can make a centre in the west into part of a global city.

WestConnex just doesn't fit that – it's out of kilter. It's hard to believe the NSW Government would have really wanted this in their array of strategic plans, so clearly it was dropped from on high. It should be stopped. It's not appropriate, and really the next phase is to find out how best to put money and resources and planning into improving the public transport and the walkability in the CBD, White Bay and the regional centres.

We should rethink how to plan for that. Fifteen billion dollars is a very sizeable amount of money – let's put it into that alternative future, because that's where the competitive future is for Sydney, and it'll give us a much more liveable city.

Let's get serious about providing a better future for Sydney and throw WestConnex out.

* Professor Peter Newman, AO, is the John Curtain Distinguished Professor of Sustainability at Curtain University. He was on the Board of Infrastructure Australia for four years.

How to make a submission to the Environmental Impact Statement for the WestConnex M4 East EIS

Submissions close Monday 2 November

Download the EIS and make your submission online ...

1. Go To: ***majorprojects.planning.nsw.gov.au/***

2. Select **On exhibition** and click **view projects currently on exhibition**

3. Select **WestConnex M4 East**

4. Type your submission directly into the email form provided and/or attach a submission **as a PDF file**. If you wish to use the form of words in the form submission at right, it can be copied and pasted from ***westconnex.info*.**

5. Under the 'Your comments' box there's a required box titled 'Your view on the application'. We recommend you select **'I object to it'.**

6. Indicate whether you have made a 'reportable political donation'.

NSW law *requires* persons who make written submissions objecting to, or supporting, a relevant planning application to make a declaration disclosing political donations.

There is a link to a page detailing this requirement and you can download the requirements as a PDF document. You should read this section.

Broadly speaking, a 'reportable political donation' is a donation exceeding $1000 to a party, elected member, group or candidate. However, if separate donations to any one of these, when added up, exceed $1000 in the same financial year they must also be disclosed. *If in doubt please check the requirements. These are downloadable from the email submission page.*

Submitting by mail

If you wish to make a submission objecting to the proposal, you can use the form letter on this page. **Better still, write your own**. It should be headed **Submission: WestConnex M4 EIS (SSI 6307)**. Make sure you use the words "I object" otherwise your submission will be treated as just 'comment'.

At the end of your submission, under a heading 'Political donation disclosure', state whether or not you have made donations exceeding $1000 (see above).

Mail to:

Director, Major Projects Assessments
Department of Planning
GPO Box 39
Sydney NSW 2001

Feel free to mail a copy to:

Ecotransit Sydney
PO Box 630
Milsons Point NSW 1565

or email to:
contact@ecotransit.org.au

The EIS is on exhibition at ...

- Department of Planning Information Centre, 23-33 Bridge Street, Sydney
- Roads and Maritime Services (Head Office): Level 9, 101 Miller Street, North Sydney
- Ashfield Council: Customer Service Centre, 260 Liverpool Road, Ashfield
- Auburn City Council: Civic Precinct Centre, 1 Susan Street, Auburn
- Burwood Council: Suite 1, Level 2, 1-17 Elsie Street, Burwood
- City of Canada Bay Council: Civic Centre, 1A Marlborough Street, Drummoyne
- Strathfield Council: Customer Service Centre, 65 Homebush Road, Strathfield
- Ashfield Library: Level 3, 260 Liverpool Road, Ashfield
- Auburn City Library: Civic Place, 1 Susan Street, Auburn
- Burwood Library: 2 Conder Street, Burwood
- Concord Library: 60 Flavelle Street, Concord
- Five Dock Library: Level 1, 4-12 Garfield Street, Five Dock
- Strathfield Main Library: 65-67 Rochester Street, Homebush
- Nature Conservation Council of NSW: Level 2, 5 Wilson Street, Newtown

Director, Major Project Assessments
Department of Planning
GPO Box 39
Sydney NSW 2001

Submission: WestConnex M4 East EIS (SSI 6307)

I wish to express my strong objection to the WestConnex M4 East motorway proposal. If built it will generate additional traffic, funnelling it into heavily congested middle-ring and inner city roads, requiring the demolition of hundreds of homes and businesses to make way for road widenings on the surface road network to distribute the traffic from the motorway.

I also wish to register my objection to the government awarding tenders for the project before a full business case has been publicly released and before the EIS had been published and the public has exercised its right of participation.

The EIS process is supposed to allow for genuine public input and to result, potentially, in approval, non-approval, or approval with modifications, of the project. The present procedure makes a mockery of that right.

Government funding for this proposal – as part of the whole WestConnex proposal – will claim an extraordinary proportion of the state transport budget for years to come. This being the case, I am outraged that the EIS has failed to honestly and fully discuss its social, environmental, and economic impacts or to explain why it is preferable to other, alternative public- and active transport solutions.

In particular I draw attention to the EIS's failure to:

- Factor into the traffic modelling the very large increase in apartment construction – and therefore of population – that has been promoted by the WestConnex Delivery Authority and other agencies as a major rationalisation for the proposal.
- Honestly discuss public transport and freight rail alternatives.
- Publish a robust business case to justify expenditure of billions of dollars worth of taxpayers' funds.
- Properly describe the long term impacts of air pollution generated by the increased traffic volumes the project is designed to facilitate.
- Consider more sustainable public and active transport options that will produce a lower level of greenhouse gas emissions.

Decades-long global experience of urban motorway construction has demonstrated conclusively that big new urban roads are counterproductive. They generate a flood of new road traffic and rapidly reach capacity. That is why, globally, they have fallen out of favour and are no longer seen as a solution to congestion.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

POLITICAL DONATION DECLARATION
As per the requirements set out in legislation (tick box):

☐ **I HAVE NOT** made any donations exceeding $1000 in the requisite period.

☐ **I HAVE** made donations exceeding $1000 in the requisite period.
DETAILS

SIGNED

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DATE

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