

ITEM 3.2. WESTCONNEX

FILE NO: S051491

MINUTE BY THE LORD MAYOR

To Council:

The NSW Government has released an updated WestConnex Business Case and the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the New M5 St Peters Interchange.

These documents confirm that WestConnex will be a disaster for our city and that the impacts of the St Peters Interchange will be even worse than previously feared.

The financial and opportunity costs of this project are massive and increasing. Substantial traffic will be channelled onto congested inner city streets, and the project will not deliver on its stated aims of providing access to the Port Botany and Sydney Airport.

Business Case

The WestConnex Business Case released on 20 November 2015 covers Stages 1, 2 and 3. It has more detail than the previous Business Case Executive Summary, ***but key sections have not been released, including the capital cost breakdown, operating and maintenance costs, and lifecycle costs.*** This is a shocking lack of transparency for a project with enormous unacceptable costs and impacts for Sydney.

The cost of the project is now estimated to be \$16.8 billion, up from the most recent estimate of \$14.8 billion and substantially over the original estimate of \$10 billion in 2012. This does not include additional stages such as the Western Harbour Tunnel and the northern beaches link which are largely locked in by earlier stages. The total cost could be up to \$25 or \$30 billion.

The Economic Appraisal of WestConnex by KPMG, included in the Business Case, concludes that the costs of Stages 1 and 2 are greater than the benefits - they have a negative Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR). Stage 3 needs to be included to achieve a positive BCR, ***although there is no detailed design and no secured funding for that stage and it might never be built.***

The Business Case also includes disturbing new information about the impacts on the City of Sydney if all three Stages are built. A new tunnel portal will be constructed in Camperdown, just to the east of Missenden Road, next to the ***Royal Prince Alfred Hospital and Sydney University***. This will put an additional 20,000 vehicles a day (33 per cent increase) on Parramatta Road east of the portal with no reduction in the number of trucks.

A massive new interchange will also be constructed at the ***Rozelle rail yards***, compromising the ***Bays Precinct renewal***. This will see an increase of 18,000 vehicles a day on the Anzac Bridge into the CBD, which does not have the capacity to handle the traffic.

New M5 St Peters EIS

On 27 November, the Environment Impact Statement (EIS) for the New M5 St Peters Interchange was released. With submissions due 29 January 2016, councils and community groups will need to analyse and respond to thousands of pages of technical information during the holiday period.

The City's initial assessment of the EIS shows that the impact of the project is worse than we had feared:

- **Massive volumes of new traffic:** Euston Road and Campbell Roads, the two lanes roads on the southern and eastern sides of Sydney Park, will become six lane highways. Traffic on Euston Road will increase from 5,000 to 50,000 vehicles a day. This traffic will be directed onto already congested surrounding areas like Green Square, Alexandria, Erskineville, Ashmore and Redfern. Disturbingly, the Government Media Release for the EIS announced the St Peters Interchange will ***"take motorists to areas such as the southern part of Alexandria, Green Square and Redfern"***, but there is no information or assessment on how the existing road network would handle this huge increase in traffic.
- **Impact on Sydney Park:** The St Peters Interchange will surround Sydney Park with high-volume multi-lane freeways. The widening of Campbell and Euston Roads will impact the park and result in the ***loss of a row of mature paper bark trees on Euston Road***. The Interchange includes ventilation stacks next to Sydney Park and a construction compound on parkland in the south of Sydney Park.
- **King Street threatened:** Despite assurances that King Street will not be affected, the increases in traffic will inevitably create pressure to introduce clearways and threaten the character and viability of Sydney's most successful main street.
- **Air quality affected:** The huge increase in traffic will worsen local air quality.

The EIS shows that the new and old M5 East tunnels will carry fewer vehicles than the current M5 alone when the St Peters Interchange opens in 2019. This is primarily due to new tolls on the M5 East that will push drivers onto toll-free surface roads.

The City will prepare a detailed submission to the New M5 St Peters Interchange EIS ahead of the January submission deadline. We will also provide support to community and business groups who have requested assistance in responding to the EIS.

Support for Newtown Precinct Business Association

The Newtown Precinct Business Association is seriously concerned about the impact of the St Peters Interchange on King Street and has designed and produced "Save King Street" banners for poles along that street. The Association has asked Council to waive installation, removal and hiring costs for the month of January. Given the importance of King Street to our local government area, I am recommending Council support this.

RECOMMENDATION

It is resolved that:

- (A) Council express serious concerns about impacts of the WestConnex project confirmed by the updated Business Case:

- (i) the cost of Stages 1, 2 and 3 has increased to \$16.8 billion from an original estimate of \$10 billion three years ago, representing an unacceptable financial and opportunity cost;
 - (ii) to achieve a positive benefit cost ratio, construction of the first two stages necessitates construction of additional stages that are unfunded; and
 - (iii) portals and interchanges would be constructed at Camperdown and Rozelle that will deliver thousands of additional cars onto narrow and constrained CBD streets;
- (B) Council express serious concern about the impacts of the New M5 St Peters Interchange as confirmed in the Environmental Impact Statement:
- (i) substantial additional traffic is being channelled into already congested surrounding areas, with traffic on Euston Road alone increasing to 50,000 vehicles a day;
 - (ii) Sydney Park will be surrounded by multi-lane, high volume roads; mature trees will be removed for road widening, and a construction compound will be located on the park;
 - (iii) high volumes of additional traffic will inevitably impact on King Street and increase pressure for clearways; and
 - (iv) increased traffic and new ventilation stacks will worsen air quality;
- (C) Council approve value-in-kind support to the Newtown Precinct Business Association up to \$10,000 for hiring, installation and removal costs associated with the installation of 27 banners along King Street for the month of January 2016; and
- (D) authority be delegated to the Lord Mayor to finalise the City's submission on the New M5 St Peters Interchange EIS before the 29 January 2016 deadline, following circulation of a draft to Councillors.

COUNCILLOR CLOVER MOORE

Lord Mayor