

Submission
No 543

**INQUIRY INTO IMPACT OF THE WESTCONNEX
PROJECT**

Name: Name suppressed

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If the purpose of West Connex is to improve road congestion, then since economists view decision making in terms of opportunity cost or the cost of the next best alternative spending, it is relevant that an excellent inclusive train system needs to be considered in conjunction with the road system and road usage projections.

Sydney has a hub and spoke railway system where many passengers have to travel from their station, e.g., Dulwich Hill, to a central hub such as Redfern to go to say Ashfield which is only a few kilometres away yet it is a train trip of around 12km. As you travel out from the central hubs the distance between the spokes/lines increases so that, e.g., the distance from Newtown to the nearest S line station, Erskineville, is less than one kilometre but Wentworthville Station to the nearest S line station, Fairfield, is 10km. What the city badly needs is inter-connections between the lines/spokes to create a grid like rail network as in London. If this were to happen by extending City Rail from Epping to Rouse Hill then one such inter-connection could connect Rouse Hill to Mt Druitt to Badgerys Creek to Campbelltown and there should be a number of other interconnections, esp. inner ones, as well.

The above grid network would mean that masses of people in the NW, W, SW, W and Inner-West of Sydney would ditch their cars for train travel and this would mitigate a lot of negative externalities such as air and noise pollution, lateness and lost work due to traffic delays, hospital, medical, ambulance, mortuary, funeral, panel beating, insurance costs due to car travel breakdowns and accidents. Train travel is faster and much safer than driving and so should be encouraged by planners as the preferred mode of transport.

Instead, much of the \$11 billion Sydney Metro Project is unnecessary. The City Rail Network from Epping to Chatswood to the city to Sydenham to Bankstown functions very efficiently. Why dig up the Sydenham to Bankstown and Epping to Chatswood tracks and replace them with a different gauge tracks for driverless trains with a passenger load only 40% that of the City Rail trains? During the 6 month construction process there will be many replacement buses but some sections of the main roads used such as Parramatta, Canterbury and Epping Roads are already heavily congested in peak hour. Yet more negative externalities whereby huge numbers of people, businesses, hospitals and universities will be adversely affected and all to end up with, the NW section excluded, a Sydney Metro train system that is no better than the current City Rail one.

Like all urban motorway systems West Connex is ultimately flawed because you can always get bottlenecks at exit and entry points and where the number of lanes changes; plus significant delays can occur when there are car accidents and breakdowns. The extra volumes of cars exiting from West Connex at Anzac Bridge and St Peters Park, two already very congested areas, are certain to create a crisis which will, in time, put pressure on planners to build yet more roads in a vain attempt at a solution.

The sensible thing would be to stop further spending on West Connex and Sydney Metro and start spending on an inclusive integrated grid City Rail network that will benefit the majority of Sydney residents bearing in mind that the demographic population centre of Sydney is now a bit West of Parramatta.