

**Submission
No 487**

**INQUIRY INTO IMPACT OF THE WESTERN HARBOUR
TUNNEL AND BEACHES LINK**

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Having resided in the Mosman/Cremorne/Neutral Bay corridor for almost three decades, given how this project has been managed to date, I feel obliged to make this submission to improve the project's quality.

Sadly, NSW's transport infrastructure, and Sydney's in particular, was neglected for too long. Despite the planning of Dr JJC Bradfield, the Department of Main Roads and others, the holistic plans for Sydney's transport modes lost their way. The result of that is the need to play catch-up, and, in turn, the consequences of that are short lead times and poor decision making based on inaccurate or incorrect information.

So it seems with the Western Harbour Tunnel (WHT) and the Beaches Link (BL). Holistically, we need to "join the dots", with Sydney's harbour crossings increasing in congestion and the crossing of Middle Harbour at The Spit a massive bottleneck, even before considering that it's an opening bridge! Given the development in and around these areas, tunnels make sense. However, the devil is in the detail, particularly the detail around the choice of mode(s), the entry and exit points, the re-routing of local traffic and associated access points, and the trade-off in local amenity (including air quality).

THE CHOICE OF MODES

The recently opened B-Line from the city to the northern beaches seems superficially to make sense. However, the trade-off has impacted the suburbs through which it passes, particularly the lower North Shore corridor. Here local bus amenity has diminished, on-street parking has decreased with little to no improvement in congestion.

Within this context, and the general trend for new roads to quickly fill upon completion, where is the business case for building a tunnel that houses both road and rail, especially given our mandate to move to zero emissions? Where is the business case to assess other options for servicing the northern beaches, such as rail extending from Chatswood to Dee Why (or thereabouts)? With Sydney's population density increasing, and likewise road congestion, plus the lessons learned from benchmark cities with excellent mass transit systems (e.g. Tokyo, London), why is mass transit not a vital component of the solution?

ENTRY AND EXIT POINTS

Whether at Balgowlah, North Sydney or Seaforth, the access points require a major rethink. Each of these areas will be massive pinch points once complete. Furthermore, the impact on the local community during construction and once operating will be significant. This does not appear to have been adequately considered. More work needs to be undertaken to improve these outcomes.

LOCAL TRAFFIC RE-ROUTING AND ACCESS

As a toll road, traffic volumes are required. However, local traffic access has been neglected in driving traffic onto the toll roads, and new pinch points created. Residents west of Spit Road and north of Military Road, under the proposed re-routings, will not be able to practically access their homes coming from north of the Spit Bridge, practically access Military Road during peaks and will lose the Ernest Street ramps completely. The recommended "solutions" require residents to drive FURTHER and create a series of major pinch points throughout the lower North Shore. For what benefit? Especially when data suggests traffic on Military Road will quickly return to pre-tunnel links!

LOCAL AMENITY

All the points above impact negatively on local amenity. Furthermore, the location of exhaust stacks creates more negative impact, and the science being used to support their local and lack of filtering is questionable. Yet further is the loss of open space in numerous locations such as Balgowlah, Cammeray, North Sydney and Seaforth. The local residents bear the cost of this loss of space, but the benefits attribute to others.

CONCLUSION

We're a long way behind with our transport network, so we need to catch up and build a suitable network for Sydney's future. However, that does not provide a licence to make poor decisions to save time. If the best decisions are made, the time will be insignificant.

Currently, we have a plan, but it's not good enough. Further development and expertise can make this the best possible solution for all, but at the moment, until the best possible solution is developed, this project should not proceed.