



INNER WEST COUNCIL

Notes from meeting between Inner West Council (IWC) & Roads & Maritime Services (RMS) re Western Harbour Tunnel & Beaches Link

27 April 2017 11am-12noon
at Leichhardt Service Centre

In attendance

Richard Pearson	Administrator, IWC
Rik Hart	General Manager, IWC
John Warburton	Deputy General Manager Community & Engagement, IWC
Kendall Banfield	Manager WestConnex Unit, IWC
Felix Liu	Engineer WestConnex Unit, IWC
Simon Lowe	Strategic Transport Planner, IWC
Ken Welsh	Strategic Transport Planner, IWC
James Hay	Project Director, Western Harbour Tunnel & Beaches Link, RMS
Steve Brien	Senior Communication & Stakeholder Engagement Lead, Motorway Development Unit, RMS

Notes

The purpose of this meeting was for RMS to brief Council on this project. The RMS representatives explained the main features of the project are as follows:

- this is an RMS led-project, not a Sydney Motorway Corporation (SMC) project;
- it is not part of WestConnex, although it will join WestConnex M4-M5 Link at the Rozelle Interchange, near Victoria Road;
- RMS is commencing consultation on this project to gather early feedback;
- geotechnical investigation rigs will be operating in Sydney Harbour shortly and local residents will be notified;
- at North Sydney careful planning is needed to ensure the Western Harbour Tunnel doesn't come too close to the Metro Rail tunnel;
- the Western Harbour Tunnel must be relatively deep under Balmain (around 50 metres below ground) to go under the harbour;
- WestConnex M4-M5 Link will make provision for this project, including tunnel stubs, but there are no details on the connection between these two projects at this stage;
- various tunnel construction options are being investigated – if there was to be a tunnelling site in the Balmain/Birchgrove area, it would be in the harbour adjacent to the foreshore, with spoil removed by barge;
- removal of spoil by barge means there would be no trucks carrying spoil on streets in Balmain and Birchgrove;
- the project will accommodate buses, but there will be no dedicated bus lanes as the tunnel will be designed for free-flow conditions so dedicated lanes would not be required;
- the project creates potential to materially improve bus services, in particular for the Beaches Link part of the project, and to integrate those services with Metro and Rail networks;

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- traffic capacity (number of lanes) has not been determined yet;
- the main destinations of traffic from the Northern Beaches using Beaches Link are estimated to be firstly over the Harbour Bridge to the City and further south and west using WestConnex, and secondly west towards the Lane Cove Tunnel, Macquarie Park and beyond;
- the plan is for both the Western Harbour Tunnel and Beaches Link to be tolled;
- the project is not dependent on future additional development on the Northern Beaches or any other part of Sydney;
- the project is expected to reduce traffic on Military Road and will add resilience to the existing harbour crossings (Sydney Harbour Bridge and Sydney Harbour Tunnel) so they are not so impacted by incidents;
- consultation for this project is starting earlier than was the case for other similar projects. Consultation is extensive, with 15 Community Feedback Sessions now planned, including two at the Balmain Town Hall;
- the cost estimate for this project can't be disclosed at this stage;
- feedback sessions will be 'drop-in sessions', not 'town hall meetings'. Following these sessions, there will also be a series of pop-up displays at key shopping centres;
- WestConnex M4-M5 Link staff will be included in consultations for this project; and
- commencement of this project will occur after commencement of WestConnex M4-M5 Link, and completion of this project will occur after completion of the M4-M5 Link.

The following issues were raised by Council's Administrator and staff:

- RMS should be aware that Balmain residents will object to a tunnel beneath their suburb, and to investigative drilling;
- although it is acknowledged the project will have some private sector involvement, it is positive that implementation will not be managed by a corporation like SMC, as the issue of WestConnex being managed by a corporation has been repeatedly raised by the Inner West community;
- it would be appreciated if RMS could brief Council's 13 June 2017 Local Representation Advisory Committee (LRAC) (RMS representatives agreed to seek approval to attend);
- consultation on this project is likely to coincide with consultation on WestConnex M4-M5 Link - best to ensure consultation on these two projects is co-ordinated;
- when asked if this motorway could run guided electric buses, RMS representatives stated that they were working with relevant parts of Transport for NSW on how the project might support future public transport planning.
- Council staff noted RMS was aware of the need to co-ordinate this project with future White Bay Light Rail and Western Metro through the Bays Precinct; and
- Council representatives stated that RMS is encouraged to take advantage of lessons learned from WestConnex and NorthConnex to ensure that problems are not repeated. This should include considering publication of a business case as part of the planning process.