

Central West Transport Forum

Submission to the Bells Line of Road Long Term Strategic Corridor Plan.

The Central West Transport Forum welcomes this investigation provided an assurance is given that it will be a FULLY comprehensive examination of all related issues.

With at least four costly inquiries and numerous other reports written about this venture in the past, we are hopeful that a fresh approach by contractors Arup, using more effective investigative procedures, may show a departure from these previously failed planning efforts.

We believe that the primary purpose of the highway system is to provide inter-regional connection. Local connection is a secondary function. This would ensure that future planning of highways must remain fully outside the speed restricted zones of urban development but at the same time, seek to maximise connection benefits to these areas. Furthermore, we see this increasing highway development problem as being common to most large towns throughout New South Wales although it probably applies on a wider national scale.

Having adopted this policy, we believe the real question for this inquiry is “How can the most efficient and cost effective express road crossing of the Blue Mountains be achieved” rather than “How can we upgrade the Bells Line of Road”? We are concerned that the terms of reference, confining this inquiry to Bells Line only options, will prevent the holistic investigation necessary.

We also believe that previous planning attempts have exposed serious weaknesses in the planning processes used by the RTA. Direction of this special land use and infrastructure planning task should be coming from guidelines set down by the Department of Planning. Failure to provide a productive course for this investigative work has resulted in creating considerable waste and public scepticism. Alert consultants previously working on this issue should have warned of this basic deficiency in planning process.

We believe that productive planning cannot depart from the long-standing problem solving techniques based on the following steps.

- Problem identification and analysis
- Establishment of goals
- Research relating to the achievement of goals
- EVALUATION OF FEASIBLE OPTIONS
- Best option selection
- Project implementation

The restrictive Terms of Reference given to this inquiry, which appears to be starting at the “best option” stage, amounts to what we believe is an administrative deficiency.

There has been limited information released about the evaluation process which presumably must precede the selection of the best option

We also believe that this matter of highway development planning raises questions of openness in the overall assessment process.

Attached are copies of our submissions to previous inquiries taken from our Central West Transport Forum website. This information outlines what we believe is a much more productive option for an expressway connecting the Central West to the Sydney region. The basic engineering criteria for this alignment have been chosen to allow grades no steeper than 5% and minimum curve radii of no less than 600 metres. We understand that this is the required minimum for 110km RTA road standards. The route allows a staged development program and enables construction of a fully surface road (needing no tunnels) which bypasses yet allows connections to, all town areas across the Blue Mountains. There are however, the unavoidable exceptions of Wentworth Falls and Glenbrook which would need some modifications to accommodate the route. Current traffic volumes created by the 70,000 residents living across the Blue Mountains, combined with the through traffic from the Central West ensures that this option would have much greater service potential than any Bells Line option.

For a better understanding of this proposal, study of the twelve, 1:25,000 standard topographic maps covering the full Blue Mountains area is essential. These maps, with the route proposal marked, can be made available on request.

We would also welcome the opportunity to discuss further the matters raised in this submission.

Graham Dun

Central West Transport Forum

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