

**ITEM 3.7. WESTCONNEX STRATEGIC REVIEW****FILE NO: S051491****MINUTE BY THE LORD MAYOR**To Council:

On 8 December 2014, Council endorsed my Lord Mayoral Minute addressing concerns that the objectives of the proposed WestConnex project will not be achieved.

Following Council's resolution, SGS Economics and Planning has reviewed information on the project and its report, "Strategic Review of the WestConnex Proposal", is attached.

In the short time that I have had to review the SGS report, I have attempted to summarise the key issues in this Lord Mayoral Minute. I also note the Opposition's recent policy announcement on WestConnex and again emphasise the key concerns about the impact of the project for our City communities.

**SGS: "Strategic Review of the WestConnex Proposal"**

1. **SGS identifies that WestConnex does not align with the Metropolitan Strategy or reflect Sydney's changing employment, land-use and transport needs.**
  - While WestConnex will be the largest continuous motorway in Australia and will influence land use and transport patterns over half of Sydney, its ***purpose and the challenges it is trying to address are unclear.***
  - The State Government's Metropolitan Strategy ('A Plan for Growing Sydney', December 2014) sets out a multi-centre strategy, focused on making it easier for Sydney residents to move between their homes, jobs and the centres where they shop, study and play. The plan highlights the transformation of western Sydney centres (Parramatta, Penrith, Liverpool and the Campbelltown-Macarthur region) through growth and investment.
  - ***WestConnex does not align with the Metropolitan Strategy*** and squanders limited infrastructure funding that is needed for effective transport solutions for western Sydney.
  - WestConnex will not deliver for Western Sydney, or for taxpayers, or the travelling public. Sydney's travel and employment patterns are changing and motorways focused on the inner city do not align with current travel needs, let alone the emerging needs for the future of Sydney.
2. **SGS confirms that the stated freight and urban renewal justifications for WestConnex are out-dated or unsubstantiated.**
  - The first original rationale of ***freight connections to Sydney's gateways of Port Botany and Sydney Airport are no longer a core part of the project***, and WestConnex does not take into account the second airport at Badgerys Creek.

- The Federal Government's commitment to the construction of a **second Sydney airport at Badgerys Creek** was made after WestConnex was announced and its business case completed. The announcement of the second airport itself is sufficient to warrant a review into the merits of WestConnex.
  - By the time WestConnex links to Sydney's existing airport in 2023, planes will be arriving at Sydney's new international airport at Badgerys Creek. When WestConnex finally links to industrial areas in Mascot, most of the area's freight industry and manufacturing jobs will have relocated to the light industrial centres of Eastern Creek, the Broader Western Sydney Employment Area and south-west Sydney.
  - **Alternative freight infrastructure is already being delivered, including the Port Botany Rail Freight upgrade and the Moorebank Intermodal terminal.** These projects will increase capacity to move freight to and from Port Botany by rail. WestConnex will duplicate the M5 East motorway without clear benefits for freight transport.
  - The second original rationale of **urban renewal on Parramatta Road is uncertain** as congestion is likely to continue to undermine amenity along Parramatta Road. No traffic forecasts have been released to justify how this busy road will become any safer, healthier or more liveable, compared with a 'do nothing' scenario. Parramatta Road remains in need of the only real solution to congestion—high quality public transport.
3. **SGS concludes that WestConnex won't increase western Sydney residents' access to jobs and economic development.**
- **Only a small proportion of workers from western Sydney commute to inner Sydney.** Of those that do need to commute to inner Sydney, 90 per cent rely on public transport. Increasingly, commuters are facing crush conditions on the CityRail network approaching both Parramatta and central Sydney. WestConnex will divert funding to a project that will not ease pressure on rail services and which does not serve western Sydney's major employment centres.
  - **Western Sydney needs more jobs close to where people live, and better transport within and to the key centres of Liverpool, Parramatta, Penrith and Campbelltown-Macarthur.** Industrial areas near Mascot are rapidly becoming commercial and residential, and manufacturing jobs have largely moved to Western Sydney.
  - WestConnex will cost taxpayers \$11.5 billion – in direct Government funding and the payment of user tolls for decades, including the introduction of new tolls on roads that are not currently tolled. It is residents of western Sydney who are most likely to be short-changed, with **toll and parking costs of up to \$48 predicted for a single trip.** That's \$240 per week for a commuter who has no reliable access to public transport alternatives.
4. **SGS identifies alternative projects which could deliver more effectively on stated government objectives, including public transport projects focused on Western Sydney.**
- Extending the **North West Rail Link** through the Sydney CBD to Liverpool, **Sydney Rapid Transit (SRT)** would connect the North West and South West to jobs, unlocking critical capacity across the rail network.

- Similarly, the **Western Sydney Rapid Transit** (WSRT) would link Western Sydney to the Sydney CBD via the Parramatta Road Corridor, serving important centres such as Parramatta, Sydney Olympic Park and Strathfield and supporting the renewal of Parramatta Road could also be created.
5. **SGS supports concern that the project has not been subject to proper governance and independent assurance.**
- The **Auditor-General's Report** (WestConnex: Assurance to Government, 18 December 2014) **raised serious concerns around the process undertaken to date** and the adequacy of the project in terms of governance and independent assurance. The report found that the Government failed to implement its own Major Projects Assurance Framework.
  - The Auditor-General's Report found that the **preliminary business case submitted for a Gateway review had many deficiencies** and fell well short of the standard required for such a document. The subsequent business case put to Government still included deficiencies.

**SGS concludes that significant questions remain about the WestConnex project's capacity to achieve its stated aims and meet Sydney's transport challenges.**

#### **The Opposition's Position on WestConnex**

I note that on 19 February 2015 the NSW Labor Party announced an infrastructure plan *A Better Way: Labor's Fully Funded Infrastructure Plan*. The document highlights similar concerns about the WestConnex project, its planning and justification.

However, that announcement retains extensive portions of the WestConnex project that focus motorways on the Sydney CBD, Sydney Airport and Port Botany, rather than providing solutions for a 21st century multi-centric city.

Public transport is the only reliable way to connect areas of more affordable housing to jobs in major centres such as the Parramatta and Sydney CBDs.

#### **Impact on City of Sydney**

WestConnex project will widen and extend motorways, directing increased traffic onto already-congested inner-Sydney roads, especially because the links to Sydney Airport and Port Botany are unfunded.

WestConnex will deliver substantial additional traffic to neighbourhoods around the planned St Peter's interchange, including Newtown, Erskineville, Alexandria, Waterloo and Redfern. WestConnex traffic will seriously impact on King Street, one of Sydney's most successful main streets, which could lead to clearways and destroy businesses.

It will affect Green Square, which will have 53,000 residents by 2030, and already has serious congestion because of state government failure to plan and build adequate public transport for the biggest urban renewal project in Australia.

Part of Sydney Park will be carved off to widen Euston Road and the park will be isolated by fast moving traffic, making it harder to access. Tunnel portals, ramps and ventilation stacks will blight the park's surroundings.

WestConnex is regressive urban policy at a time of accelerating climate change and increasing inner city population densities. Across metropolitan Sydney, people are using public transport more and driving less.

The Metropolitan Strategy focuses on jobs and population growth in centres, supported by bus and rail networks. These trends must be accelerated to make Sydney more sustainable, and liveable. Our urgent priorities are more transport choice and increased investment in public transport.

## RECOMMENDATION

It is resolved that:

- (A) Council express serious concern about the WestConnex project in response to key conclusions in the independent report “Strategic Review of the WestConnex Proposal” by SGS Economics & Planning, including:
- (i) WestConnex will set travel and land use patterns for more than half of Sydney and determine Sydney’s future form and development;
  - (ii) the project does not align with the multi-centre strategy in ‘A Plan for Growing Sydney’, the NSW Government Metropolitan Strategy (Dec 2014);
  - (iii) Badgerys Creek Airport and the Moorebank Intermodal Freight Terminal may make expensive motorways linking Sydney Airport/Port Botany and western Sydney redundant;
  - (iv) urban renewal along Parramatta Road isn’t more likely to be achieved with Westconnex as high levels of traffic will continue to destroy amenity along the corridor;
  - (v) it is highly unlikely that the various WestConnex tolls roads will be financially viable, making Stage 3 connections to the port and airport doubtful;
  - (vi) travel time savings benefits proposed in public documents are not plausible unless all of the proposed road sections are complete;
  - (vii) western Sydney residents who work in the Sydney CBD overwhelmingly (90 per cent) rely on public transport that is increasingly overcrowded;
  - (viii) flawed assessment and governance raise serious questions about whether dis-benefits exceed benefits and whether alternative projects would deliver more effectively on stated government objectives; and
  - (ix) the massive WestConnex investment will undermine Government ability to build alternative infrastructure that responds to future demographic and transport needs in Sydney;
- (B) the Lord Mayor provide the Premier, Minister for Transport and Minister for Roads and Freight with a copy of the “Strategic Review of the WestConnex Proposal” report; and call on the State Government to:

- (i) reconsider WestConnex in the light of the objectives of 'A Plan for Growing Sydney', the new Badgerys Creek airport and alternative infrastructure projects that align with the objectives of the Metropolitan Strategy; and
  - (ii) begin a full public assessment of alternative infrastructure projects, especially intra- and inter-regional public transport projects for western Sydney;
- (C) the Lord Mayor provide a copy of the report to the Leader of the Opposition and call on the Opposition to revise its position on WestConnex and support alternative infrastructure projects that benefit Sydney; and
- (D) the Lord Mayor provide a copy of the report to the Federal Government and call for a review its WestConnex funding in order to support alternative infrastructure projects that benefit Sydney.

**COUNCILLOR CLOVER MOORE**

Lord Mayor

**ATTACHMENTS**

**Attachment A:** Strategic Review of the WestConnex Proposal