The Shire of Hornsby

Review of F3 to M7 Corridor selection

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Whilst Council has previously indicated a preference for the purple or blue options outlined in the proposed F3 to M7 corridor study, it has also reaffirmed its support for further investigation of a Type 'C' route option as a longer term solution to transport issues in Sydney generally.

At its meeting held on 11 April 2007, Council adopted this submission to the Review of the F3 to M7 Corridor selection.

An outline of the issues that are presented in Council's submission is presented below:

1. ***Council Position regarding the preferred Type A and Purple Option***
2. ***Need to reconsider the Project Scope and Planning Horizon***
3. ***Need to consider impacts on critical Junctions***
4. ***Need to consider impacts on surrounding local roads and network***
5. ***Need to reconsider transport mix and flows***
6. ***Appropriateness of Traffic Data used***
7. ***Land use and the accuracy/appropriateness of the data used***
8. ***Accuracy and appropriateness of assumptions made in the study***
9. ***Adequacy of addressing previous input provided by Council***
10. ***Tunnel Management***
11. ***Reconsideration of Proposals for Pennant Hills Road***
12. ***Freight, Rail and Public Transport Issues***

A detailed description of the issues outlined in Council's submission is presented below.

1. *Current Council Position*

Having regard to the high level of traffic congestion along Pennant Hills Road and the impact on the amenity of local residents, Council has previously indicated its support for a link road between the F3 and M2, generally along the lines announced by the Federal Government. Subsequently, Council forwarded a submission to the government regarding the proposed F3 to M7 Corridor which clearly indicated a preference for the purple or blue options.

Whilst Council's submission clearly indicated support for the purple or blue options, Council acknowledged that a western crossing (Type C) of the Hawkesbury River is also desirable. However, it should be noted that such an option is not expected to be sufficiently attractive to traffic heading toward the Central Coast from the city and Port Botany areas, and is not considered to sufficiently alleviate congestion on Pennant Hills Road.

The Type C corridor may prove attractive to traffic heading beyond the Central Coast from western Sydney and areas south of Sydney, and Council considers that it would be appropriate to promote the use of rail where possible. In this regard ***particular attention should be given to enhancement of rail and public transport corridors to the Central Coast where appropriate.***

2. *Scope of Project and Planning Horizon*

Planning and project objectives outlined in the 2004 SKM ***F3 to Sydney Orbital Link Study*** included among others the need to:

- *Alleviate existing poor travelling conditions (traffic congestion and high number of road crashes) on the interim National Highway and the surrounding network.*
- *Improve local amenity (reduce traffic, air and noise emissions; reduce severance) for people living and working along Pennant Hills Road.*
- *Serve the future growth needs of long-distance transport.*
- *Provide a high standard link that integrates with the regional transport network.*
- *Provide opportunities for improved public transport.*

Notwithstanding the above listed planning and project objectives, the study appears to have only focused on a highway/traffic solution to address the immediate needs of the national highway link. It was initially envisaged that the preferred option would be completed and opened to traffic by 2011. Since an EIS of the preferred option has not been undertaken, it is very unlikely that the proposed link will be completed and open for traffic by the year 2011. Construction of the link may not commence possibly for another two to three years. In that time, the land use and traffic conditions may be different to that originally envisaged. The planning horizons of 2011 and 2021 used in the traffic models that were developed for the study may not be appropriate and would need to be revised. A longer planning horizon beyond 2021 should in this respect be considered. This may affect the feasibility of the preferred option which is at this stage considered to be a short term solution. In light of a potential planning horizon beyond 2021, the SKM recommendation that a Type 'C' option would not satisfy the project objectives over the 20 year planning horizon (i.e. up to 2021) needs to be reviewed.

It is necessary to broaden the scope and planning objectives of the study to that of finding an appropriate alternative 'transport solution' and link to areas north of Hornsby Shire. This may necessitate detailed studies to identify potential public transport options in the short, medium and long term horizon beyond 2021. ***The study scope of the F3 to M2/M7 should be in line with the original objectives of the 1994 Maunsell study ('Liverpool to Hornsby Strategy Study') that was commissioned by the RTA.***

3. *Consideration of impacts on Critical Junctions*

The 2004 SKM ***F3 to Sydney Orbital Link Study*** does not document any impacts on major critical junctions along the F3 to M2/M7 catchment area. The feasibility analysis of the preferred option should consider the impact on the operation of critical intersections such as Pennant Hills Road/Boundary Road, Pennant Hills Road/Beecroft Road, and Pennant Hills Road/Copeland Road etc. There are several intersections in the F3 to M7 corridor catchment area that have very poor operating characteristics. The study objectives should not ignore the need to upgrade critical locations that are within the catchments of the National Highway Link.

Merely looking at mid block capacity does not reflect the true impact of the preferred option on the performance of the network. Consideration of the impact on operation of critical junctions is required in order to establish or identify any traffic management works that would be required to augment the adopted option. ***A review of potential impacts including identification of augmentation traffic management measures on adjoining roads should be undertaken for all potential options considered.***

4. *Consideration of impacts on surrounding local roads and network*

The 2004 SKM ***F3 to Sydney Orbital Link Study*** does not document any impacts on local and major adjoining roads. Based on information presented in the current report by SKM, it is not possible for Council to assess or determine the impact on local roads until an EIS detailing a preferred option has been completed and made available for comment. By that time it may be too late for Council to change or reconsider its position relating to the preferred option.

The traffic analysis of the options under consideration should provide sufficient information to enable Council and the community to determine the impact of such proposals on local roads.

5. *Transport mix and flows*

The traffic data that was used in the SKM 2004 ***F3 to Sydney Orbital Link Study*** is considered to be out of date. The traffic analysis was based on data obtained by the RTA in 2002 (Source: Traffic Volume Data 2002 – Sydney Region). Since 2002, there has been significant development in the North West Sector and major network changes such as the opening of the M7 and Lane Cove Tunnel which could have changed the pattern of traffic along Pennant Hills Road, Ryde Road, Pacific Highway, Beecroft Road and M2 Motorway.

While there is no current traffic data available to Council, the impact on Pennant Hills Road Levels of congestion is now certainly greater than was envisaged when the study was undertaken in 2004. ***Current traffic volume data for light and heavy vehicles should be obtained at strategic locations in the network to verify the current feasibility and constraints of the preferred option.***

6. *Appropriateness of Traffic Data used*

Having regard to point 3, 4 and 5 above, the feasibility of any Corridor Type (i.e. either 'A', 'B' or 'C') largely depends on its capacity to draw traffic from the adjoining regions. The SKM 2004 ***F3 to Sydney Orbital Link Study*** does not document the magnitude and impact of the preferred option on traffic conditions along routes adjoining the major existing arterial roads such as Pennant Hills Road and Pacific Highway. Particular reference is made to the role and function performed by routes such as The Comenarra Parkway/Yanko Road and Malsbury Road/Sefton Road/The Esplanade/Yarrara Road. During peak periods, these routes provide relief to Pacific Highway and Pennant Hills Road respectively by carrying a significant amount of traffic which avoids the delay and congestion created by traffic signals. While the magnitude of traffic on Pacific Highway may be noted to be in the order of 64,000 vehicles per day (vpd), the parallel route along The Comenarra Parkway and Burns Road carries significant volumes in the order of 46,000 vpd (i.e. 18,600 and 27374 vpd respectively). The magnitude of traffic travelling in the east west corridor from the F3 is well over 100,000 vpd and yet the report by SKM only mentions that south of Telegraph Road, the Pacific Highway carries 64,000 vpd. This anomaly and accuracy of the pattern of traffic entering and exiting the F3 and M2 should be considered in the current review of the F3 to M7 Corridor Selection.

In the absence of relevant traffic data relating to adjoining parallel routes, it is considered that the SKM study did not provide sufficient information to justify the benefits of the preferred option. ***Therefore, further detailed analysis is required to identify feeder roads and any improvements required along such routes.***

7. *Land use and the accuracy/appropriateness of the data used*

It is noted that land use and employment scenarios particularly in the West and North West sector have changed since the 2004 SKM ***F3 to Sydney Orbital Link Study*** was commissioned. The recent changes in land use and employment scenario in Sydney may have affected the feasibility of the preferred option. Recent and more detailed information including data from the 2006 Census and current freight data could provide a different result to that established in the 2004 SKM study. ***Recent data and relevant data should be obtained and used to validate the feasibility of the preferred option.***

8. *The accuracy/appropriateness of assumptions made in the study*

A number of projects that were initially identified in the State Government Policy (*Action for Transport 2010*) have been modified or completely dropped out of the program. Current adopted policies may yield a different outcome with respect to the feasibility of the preferred option.

9. *The adequacy of addressing previous input provided by Council*

The previous Council submission outlined a number of issues which included concerns relating to air quality, interchange arrangement and impact of the preferred option on Council's Dartford Road Site.

i. Details of the northern interchange arrangement relating to each option should be clearly outlined and assessed. The feasibility of the preferred option should also depend on the ability of the interchange to operate satisfactorily. In this respect, the impact of traffic entering and exiting the proposed interchange should be clearly outlined. The ability of adjoining roads to absorb exiting traffic should be documented. This information would assist in identifying options that would have a detrimental impact to the local amenity. Ideally the proposed link should directly interface with the F3 and M2/7 to minimise 'rat runs' or vehicles having to use local roads such as Pennant Hills Road and the routes along Hinemoa Avenue/Havilah Avenue/Hewitt Avenue, Malsbury Road/Sefton Road/The Esplanade/Yarrara Road etc.

ii. The current adopted purple option has significant impact on Council's Dartford Road site. Council opposes any surface road associated with the purple option.

iii. No details are provided regarding local air quality along the preferred corridor. Details regarding proposed standards of filtration, the method by which location of stacks will be determined, height and form of exhaust stacks etc should be provided.

The above issues were not adequately addressed and Council requests that these issues be considered in the determination of the current review of the F3 to M7 Corridor selection.

10. Tunnel Management

Until recently, Australia had been spared from a large-scale tunnel accident. The recent multiple car crash in Melbourne's Burnley Tunnel has raised peoples concern regarding the safety and management of underground traffic systems. There is anecdotal evidence that the potential for accidents increases with the number of freight vehicles and increasing length of the tunnel. ***Best practices involving a comprehensive system of tunnel management and regulation is necessary and could include measures such as limiting the number and type of heavy vehicles using the tunnel.***

11. Reconsideration of Proposals for Pennant Hills Road

It is understood that one of the key traffic requirements of the preferred 'Purple Option' (tunnel under Pennant Hills Road) would be to reduce the number of travel lanes in Pennant Hills Road to two (2) lanes per direction. The purpose of reducing the number of travel lanes along Pennant Hills Road is to provide:

- wider pavements/footpaths;
- Cycle lane;
- Opportunities for bus priority.

From our understanding, the proposal to reallocate road space along Pennant Hills Road would effectively result in only one travel lane per direction if the cycle lane and bus priority measures are provided as outlined in the report by SKM (*Figure 21.10: Pennant Hills Road – Typical Cross Section to Reallocated Road Space.*

It is considered that one travel lane per direction would not provide adequate carriageway capacity for the arterial route along Pennant Hills Road. Furthermore, if a toll is imposed on the new link, traffic (including heavy vehicles carrying hazardous materials) wishing to avoid paying a toll will continue using Pennant Hills Road. As a consequence, congestion will persist and may result in further loss of amenity. This is not acceptable to Council.

However, Council does acknowledge that reallocation of road space on Pennant Hills Road may provide an opportunity for public transport enhancement. Further investigations in consultation with local residents should therefore be undertaken to determine the feasibility of the proposal and actual impact on local amenity.

12. *Freight, Rail and Public Transport Issues*

Council is concerned that false and misleading assumptions in respect of public transport and rail freight may have been relied upon for the analysis and information presented in the report by SKM for the ***F3 to Sydney Orbital Link Study.*** Investigation into the problems of traffic congestion along Pennant Hills Road should include the consideration of other alternatives to road/motorway based solutions such as:

- The Warnervale to Hornsby Rail Upgrade project (This project was included in the Government Policy on '*Action for Transport 2010*'. Preliminary investigations for the Warnervale to Hornsby Rail upgrade project were commenced in 1999. This project now appears to have stalled);

- Introduction of rail efficiency measures and modification of passenger rail stock along the Central Coast Rail line so that passengers can board and disembark from trains more efficiently and quickly;

- Provide peak hour public transport incentives from the Central Coast, particularly from areas that are remote from rail stations so as to reduce the number of people commuting to Sydney by private passenger vehicles;

- Introduction of a carbon tax so that rail freight can become a more attractive option than road based freight transport.