

3 April 2007

## **Submission to the Review of the F3 to M7 Corridor Selection**

TTF Australia (Tourism & Transport Forum) welcomes the opportunity to provide the following comments to the Review of the F3 to M7 Corridor Selection.

### *Introduction*

TTF Australia is a national, member-funded CEO forum, advocating the public policy interests of the 200 most prestigious corporations and institutions in the Australian transport, property, tourism & infrastructure sectors. TTF Australia's membership includes the major operators and investors across tourism, transport and infrastructure.

TTF Australia has an interest in improving the quality of passenger transport across the country. TTF counts amongst its members public transport operators, investors, infrastructure developers, consultants and many others with an interest in improving accessibility in Australia. TTF Australia is working to give people genuine transport choices that meet their needs, and is concerned with integrating land use planning, infrastructure development and community requirements.

This submission will not address future concerns such as surface road closures, safety issues or procurement options for construction, but will rather address the terms of reference and argue the case for this critical piece of transport infrastructure.

### *Value of an F3-Sydney Orbital Link*

The claim that Sydney's Orbital Motorway is complete is undoubtedly now true. However, the Orbital Motorway does not currently operate in a completely ideal way due to unbuilt missing feeder roads, such as the M4 East, the F6 Extension, and the F3-Sydney Orbital.

TTF Australia notes that the lack of these roads is causing increased congestion, and having a detrimental effect on the economic and social welfare of New South Wales. The cost of congestion in NSW alone is expected to increase to \$8.8 billion per annum by 2015 if not addressed<sup>1</sup>. Research undertaken by the NRMA also confirms the detrimental economic impact of congestion on Sydney's roads.

TTF Australia has instigated a strong lobbying platform for these feeder roads, and has consistently advocated for their expedited planning and construction. TTF Australia has also been supportive of the 2004 SKM study and notes that it met the requirements of the brief.

Despite being an important route for freight, and recognising the important contribution the link will make for freight movements, TTF Australia draws attention to the point that the road would be serviced primarily by private motor vehicles. The link would save considerable time on passenger journeys, particularly for commuters from the central coast, but also for long-distance commuters arriving to Sydney from the north. Delivering traffic flow directly into the Sydney Orbital motorway would provide passenger vehicles with improved access to activity centres.

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<sup>1</sup> Bureau of Transport Economics (1999) *Urban Transport: Looking Ahead*, Information Sheet 14.

While it is not the direct goal of the Review to decide upon public transport options for the route, TTF Australia encourages such options for this important link. Public Transport links could include dedicated busways, new rail links or other options.

### *Applicability of the April 2004 SKM Study*

The study of the F3-Sydney Orbital undertaken in April 2004 by consultants Sinclair Knight Merz (SKM) represents best practice in terms of the conclusions drawn from the data at hand. TTF Australia asserts that the study came to acceptable conclusions and decided upon the most appropriate option for the road.

The triple-bottom-line approach undertaken by SKM took into account the various factors involved in motorway construction. TTF Australia notes that the study is as applicable in 2007 as it was in 2004. While traffic flow numbers and other factors may have changed somewhat in the years since the study was complete, the underlying factors defining route selection and the demand for the road itself remain static.

That said, traffic flow projections are potentially the most important factor determining the validity of a motorway and the applicability of the options for construction, and the Review should recommend to carefully examine whether changes have indeed occurred during the time that this project has been stalled.

More recent traffic modelling undertaken by Transurban shows that the Purple and Yellow (Type A) options are not as disparate in traffic flow as was first thought. It has been noted by some that the Yellow option may be a more appropriate route<sup>2</sup>. TTF asserts that the Purple option is suitable due to the linkages it has to other roads and areas, despite the applicability of the Yellow option.

Decisions informing the process of deciding whether to construct a two or a three lane motorway are paramount in the planning process. Lack of accurate foresight, as well as incorrect modelling in other projects has created motorways (such as the M5 East) too small to meet the demand. TTF Australia suggests the Review examine whether increases in traffic flow since the 2004 SKM study warrant a recommendation that a three-lane road be the preferred option.

TTF Australia also cautiously agrees with the MWT report that the study should not rule out a Type C corridor in the long-term, as the F3 itself will reach capacity in around fifteen years and will require some means to improve traffic flow. Planning should commence for this. The caution in urging for this stems from TTF Australia's lack of support for simply waiting for such further capacity constraints to occur – the F3-Sydney Orbital needs immediate prioritisation.

### *Changes since the April 2004 SKM Study*

Perhaps the largest changes in road infrastructure since the 2004 SKM study are the completion of the Westlink M7, Cross City Tunnel and Lane Cove Tunnel. The completion of these roads make the F3-Sydney Orbital Link an even more pressing priority as it stands out as the largest missing link in the north of Sydney.

According to the Terms of Reference for the Review, one of the prime reasons behind this study review is to determine whether changes in traffic should change the outcome of the study. The SKM study notes that

total road traffic demand along the F3 corridor is projected to increase at an average rate of around 1.5% per year<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Masson Wilson Twiney (2006) Interim Traffic Report: F3 to Sydney Orbital Corridor Review

<sup>3</sup> Sinclair Knight Merz (2004) F3 to Sydney Orbital Study: Main Report

If this has indeed been the case, then traffic volumes will have increased by around 4.5% (cumulative) since the study was written in 2004. TTF Australia asserts that since the study was completed, the need to build this link has only grown more pressing.

It is the view of TTF Australia that the F3-Sydney Orbital represents a piece of "critical infrastructure" for Sydney's road network. If the road is to be a success, there will need to be strong community consultation (as there was during the 2004 SKM study). Decision-makers could be better prepared to handle the consultation process by planning for the concerns of localised vested interests that will inevitably come forth during the planning stages and in submissions.

Community consultation is paramount in the process, and issues should be addressed if major community concerns emerge. However the F3-Sydney Orbital *is* critical infrastructure and should not be delayed if only trivial qualms come to the fore.

The NSW Government is also now better equipped to tackle the F3-Sydney Orbital due to the formation of the Infrastructure Implementation Group, and the young but burgeoning Centre for Transport Planning and Product Development. While the experiences of the Cross City Tunnel have hampered public support for tolled motorways (despite the fact that the CCT is highly effective infrastructure), the Lane Cove Tunnel is operating successfully and it can be argued that Governments are now better prepared for such projects having learned from the past.

The NSW Government's Urban Transport Statement has been released since the SKM study, however it does not negatively affect the relevance of the motorway, and in fact includes provision for the F3-Sydney Orbital (referenced as the F3 to M7) in its future priorities.

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#### ***TTF Australia Prime Recommendations***

- That the Review notes the lack of "orbital feeder" roads in Sydney is causing increased congestion, and having a detrimental effect on the economic and social welfare of New South Wales.
- That the Review examine whether increases in traffic flow since the 2004 SKM study have occurred, and decide if such changes warrant recommendation of a three-lane road being the preferred option.
- The Review recognise and plan for the important contribution the link will have on passenger transport and private motor vehicles, and not become overly focussed on freight transport.
- The Review notes the importance and the potential of integrating public transport infrastructure and/or services along the F3-Sydney Orbital corridor.
- That the F3-Sydney Orbital is recognised as critical infrastructure and is not delayed if trivial qualms come to the fore.
- That the review recommends long-term planning for future upgrades to the F3 route south of Brooklyn without being at the expense of the F3-Sydney Orbital Link.

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TTF Australia thanks the Review Chair for the opportunity to make these comments on this important missing link.

Regards,



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