

The Independent Review of the F3-M7 Corridor Selection
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10 April 2007

To Whom It May Concern

As a private citizen with an interest in current affairs and issues, I write to make a submission to the Review of the F3-M7 Corridor Selection.

Generally I have found both the Sinclair Knight Merz and the Masson Wilson Twiney reports to be fair, and I agree with both the preferred "Purple Option" route. I see no reason to question the assumptions or data used in either report. However, I call for the Purple Option to be a trench rather than a tunnel for as much of the route as possible. This is for two reasons...

- 1) Better utilisation of an arterial road already 6-8 lanes wide in most sections, and
- 2) Community and practical concerns about road tunnels.

Pennant Hills Road between the F3 and the M7/M2 is already 6-8 lanes wide in most sections, and has been for perhaps more than a decade. The arterial road was widened over the years to cater for increased traffic flows, but ever-increasing traffic has made even this wider road appear inadequate. While the Masson Wilson Twiney Report seemed accurate in terms of how much traffic has increased in the F3-M7 corridor and connecting arterial roads, I suspect that traffic has increased beyond even this report's predictions.

Both reports would suggest that much of that traffic does not turn off this road between the F3 and the M7/M2. Indeed, I have often walked along Pennant Hills Road between Yarrara and Boundary Roads in Pennant Hills in recent years, many times at night, and I know that certainly at night much of that traffic is semi-trailers unlikely to turn into other streets – hence the need for a motorway. But instead of building a new tunnel, I see no reason why much of the widened Pennant Hills Road cannot be made into a motorway with a trench.

The Sinclair Knight Merz report made a few passing mentions of a trench along the route where the road would "daylight". It also referred to community concerns about air quality from having a trench. I feel that this concern is somewhat misplaced. Are we really supposed to believe that air quality deteriorates from having lots of vehicles travelling without stopping, to a greater degree than having them frequently stop at traffic lights, especially semi-trailers and big trucks and other heavy vehicles that generate more emissions than regular cars? Isn't it better for air quality to have the traffic moving along instead of frequently stopping?

Moreover, there are major concerns about building a road tunnel. In recent years, three new road tunnels have been built in Sydney, and all three have attracted negative publicity for one reason or another. Filtration and air ventilation stacks are a major health concern in some areas around two of those tunnels, namely the M5 East and the newly-opened Lane Cove tunnel. How can we believe that a tunnel from the F3 to the M7/M2 will avoid the same issue? The other problem relates to the size of tunnels in relation to trucks. There are restrictions on the size of trucks that are allowed in various road tunnels around Sydney. As much of the traffic on the F3-M7 route will be semi-trailers and other large trucks, larger tunnels than usual would be required, potentially adding to the cost of building a new road. Therefore I believe that building road tunnels along this route generally would be unnecessary and wrong.

Why not use some creative thinking, and utilise the existing arterial road, which is already 6-8 lanes wide in most sections? I cannot believe that it is not possible to convert a number of existing intersections with traffic lights into overpasses with a trench underneath them.

I refer now to Sydney's Eastern Distributor motorway to illustrate what could be done for the F3-M7 link. The Eastern Distributor is a tunnel that starts around Woolloomooloo for southbound traffic and goes under a few suburbs before emerging around Moore Park. When the road was built, South Darling Street was widened and split into northbound and southbound lanes with the motorway running as a trench down the middle. The motorway actually continues for about two kilometres and has another tunnel several hundred metres long that emerges past the Moore Park Supa Centa complex. There are a few entry and exit ramps along this trench for traffic to get on and off, though actually well before or after any intersections with traffic lights. I think that the F3-M7 link could and should be built along similar lines.

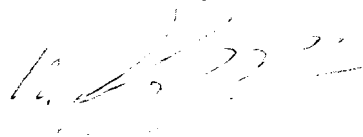
At this point, I can see only two trouble spots for building a trench...

- 1) The intersection of Pennant Hills and Castle Hill Roads (a.k.a. Thompsons Corner), where southbound traffic turning right from Castle Hill Road goes through a short tunnel below Pennant Hills Road before merging with it, and
- 2) The point where Pennant Hills Road passes over the northern rail line near Pennant Hills Station.

There would have to be tunnels to bypass these two spots. But generally, the rest of the F3-M7 corridor should be convertible to a motorway with a trench and overpasses.

In conclusion, I have no real concern about the Sinclair Knight Merz and Masson Wilson Twiney reports on the F3-M7 link, or any reason to question the assumptions and data from which the conclusions of either report were drawn. I agree with the preferred Purple Option route, as well as the idea of building a future link from the F3 before the Hawkesbury River to the M7 around Blacktown. My only suggestion is that, instead of building long tunnels along the F3-M7 route, Pennant Hills Road be converted into a motorway with a trench right down the middle of it and only the odd few short tunnels, as this arterial road is already 6-8 lanes wide and better utilisation of such a wide road would surely be more efficient and less controversial.

Yours faithfully



WARREN GRZIC