

Submission on the Beaches Link and Gore Hill Freeway Connection

1 Unintended consequences of flawed transport planning?

The Committee for North Sydney* strongly objects to a specific aspect of the transport planning for the Beaches Link and related segments of the regional road network.

Proposals for the Beaches Link recognise the opportunity to optimise a *regional transport node* where the Beaches Link, the Western Harbour Tunnel, the Warringah Expressway, the Gore Hill Freeway, the A8 and east-west arterials all intersect – keeping as much as possible of the regional commuter, commercial and freight traffic out of the town centres and suburban streets.

In its present form, transport planning nevertheless directs lower North Shore traffic not only to this regional transport node but into smaller roads with Sydney's highest concentration of schools, and into the heart of the North Sydney city centre, where there are some of Sydney's highest concentrations of pedestrians.

This is destructive and counterproductive. While the Victoria Cross metro station in North Sydney will have positive impacts on the city centre, these benefits are being significantly reduced in two ways.

- The city centre is experiencing a massive increase in private floorspace (in very large office buildings) with little or no increase in pedestrian spaces, public facilities, non-commercial activities and civic functions.
- Instead of recognising and reinforcing the expanding role of public transport in the North Sydney city centre (including priority for buses interchanging with metro and rail), regional commuter and road freight traffic is being funnelled into the city centre, with the flows coming to a maximum outside the metro station.

2 Reconsideration, redesign and repair

The Committee for North Sydney is concerned about the many negative impacts of the Beaches Link on the natural and built environment and on urban amenity – we support the many well-researched submissions that have raised these issues in detail.

There is one aspect of present transport planning for the Beaches Link-Western Harbour Tunnel corridor that is ill-conceived, inappropriate and unnecessary: directing south-bound traffic to Berry Street.

Berry Street runs next to the Victoria Cross metro station. It is a small city street that should offer a good pedestrian-friendly environment. Instead, it is currently little more than a one-way on-ramp to the Warringah Expressway. The intention of the North Sydney Council, to calm the traffic and restore the city qualities of the street, is exactly right and should be achieved as city-centre traffic is managed differently over time. The worst decision that could be made in the meantime would be to funnel traffic through Berry Street to the Western Harbour Tunnel.

* The members of the Committee for North Sydney are eminent practitioners in planning, architecture, urban design and related fields and respected members of their local communities. Their primary purpose: the evolution of North Sydney from a CBD to an appealing *city centre* recognised and supported by the community – a place for people.

3 Solution

There is already an example of how regional traffic should access the new harbour crossing: all traffic accessing the Sydney Harbour Tunnel does so from the *regional transport node* described in the second paragraph above.

Likewise, in the interests of all of the urban activities on the lower Pacific Highway, Miller Street, West Street and other roads leading to the North Sydney city centre, and especially in the interests of all users of Berry Street, access to the Western Harbour Tunnel should be from the *Cammeray regional transport node*.

The Berry Street on-ramp to the Western Harbour Tunnel must be deleted.

This change:

- is essential for the future of the northern sector of the 'Harbour City';
- is feasible and is facilitated by the planned northern portals to the Western Harbour Tunnel; and
- may require a reconsideration of the design of the interchanges with the Western Harbour Tunnel, the Beaches Link and the other elements of the Cammeray regional transport node – a redesign which should begin now.

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For the Committee for North Sydney

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