

LEICHHARDT MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

REPORT

DIVISIONS: INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICE DELIVERY
ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT

SUBJECT: ITEM 15B VICTORIA ROAD UPGRADE & DUPLICATION OF IRON
COVE BRIDGE

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DIRECTOR'S SUMMARY - ORGANISATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications: Nil

Policy Implications: Nil

Strategic Plan Objective: Accessibility
Place where we live and work
A sustainable environment

Staffing Implications: Nil

Notifications: City of Canada Bay Council

Other Implications: Nil

1. Purpose of Report

To assist in Council's formal submission to the RTA in relation to the exhibited concept proposal for the upgrade of Victoria Road, Rozelle including the duplication of the Iron Cove Bridge.

2. Recommendations

That

1. the report be received and endorsed
2. Council prepare and forward a submission to the RTA by 3 March 2008:
 - a. recommending that the RTA not proceed with the current proposal to upgrade Victoria Road and duplicate Iron Cove Bridge until such time as an Integrated Transport Plan has been prepared for the Metropolitan Area, such plan to: -
 - i. integrate land use and transport planning so as to promote public transport and address car based mobility, passenger and freight movements between the CBD and middle and outer ring suburbs
 - ii. consider significant standalone infrastructure projects such as the Victoria Road upgrade in context of such an integrated land use and transport plan
 - iii. address the broader traffic and transport matters affecting inner-western and metropolitan Sydney and consider how the proposed upgrade to Victoria Road would integrate with other major development proposals currently being considered by Leichhardt Council or key infrastructure upgrades including the extension of the M4 and future land uses at White Bay and Rozelle Bay
 - b. requesting that the RTA not proceed with the proposal until such time as it has:
 - i. considered localised traffic impacts including bus routes crossing Victoria Road including at its intersection with Darling Street, as the proposed upgrade is likely to place greater emphasis on movements along Victoria Road at the expense of Leichhardt Community
 - ii. included major redevelopment proposals currently being considered by Leichhardt Council as part of any traffic modelling undertaken and that all modelling results in relation to the Victoria Road proposal be made available to the public
 - iii. considered impacts to safety along the corridor to motorists and pedestrians given the proposed removal of medians and additional capacity along the Victoria Road corridor

- iv. given detailed consideration as part of any environmental assessment to a number of environmental, social and economic issues included in this report including:
 - 1. traffic environmental impacts on the local road network including Rozelle and Drummoyne
 - 2. alternatives to the proposed concept including a short tunnel under the Darling Street intersection or a longer tunnel under Victoria Road from Drummoyne direct to the ANZAC bridge as part of an integrated transport strategy for Inner – western Sydney.
 - 3. reduction in bus stops on Victoria Road within Rozelle
 - 4. impacts on King George Park associated with the western bridge option
 - 5. integration of pedestrian and cycle-way facilities along Victoria Road particularly from Iron Cove to the Crescent.
 - 6. include options for traffic flows on Victoria Road that will reduce dependency on private vehicles, particularly single occupancy trips and a wider use of dedicated bus lanes and bike lanes in both directions on Victoria Road i.e. introduce a bus lane in the westbound direction in the PM peak period.

3. Background

In November 2006, the NSW Government released its Urban Transport Statement which establishes the approach the State Government will take to plan and deliver its existing approved program of scheduled works of urban transport initiatives, including major road transport projects and metropolitan rail expansion.

A key project of the Statement was upgrading of Victoria Road as part of a strategic bus corridor program. The Statement identified that it primarily aimed to improve the efficiency and reliability of Victoria Road bus services and assist in alleviating general traffic congestion on Victoria Road.

Specifically the project was proposed to include:

- § duplication of the Iron Cove Bridge that will comprise three additional general traffic lanes and a bus lane eastbound
- § introduction of a tidal flow traffic scheme through Drummoyne and Rozelle to further improve traffic flow
- § bus overtaking bays through Drummoyne and Rozelle to allow 'limited stops' bus services to overtake 'all stops' services.

In February 2007, the Roads and Traffic Authority released advice that it proposed to introduce peak direction bus lanes on Victoria Road between Gladesville Bridge and The Crescent and this required duplicating Iron Cove Bridge, introducing a tidal flow scheme and providing bus overtaking bays.

The Roads and Traffic Authority released further advice on the proposal by issuing a Briefing Paper and distributing its Community Update brochure which sought community feedback in December 2007.

Council Officers were invited to attend a planning focus meeting on 13 December 2007 which included representatives from Roads and Traffic Authority, Department of Planning and relevant government stakeholders including Canada Bay Council. The aim of the planning focus meeting was to determine what matters would need to be considered as part of any environmental assessment for the proposed Victoria Road upgrade.

On 19 December, 2007, the Minister for Planning declared the Victoria Road upgrade a project to which Part 3A of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 applies. In response to discussions had at the planning focus meeting and issues raised by relevant agencies, the Department of Planning issued its Director-General requirements for the environmental assessment of the project on 14 January, 2008 (refer *Attachment A*).

The Roads and Traffic Authority lodged a project application with the Department of Planning on 21 January, 2008 for the development of the Victoria Road upgrade including:

- § Provision of a new bridge adjacent to the existing Iron Cove bridge
- § Implementation of bus priority and traffic management measures between Westbourne Street, Drummoyne and The Crescent, Rozelle.

Community input is being invited on the concept proposal to Monday, 3 March 2008 which was extended from 4 February primarily based on requests from Leichhardt and Canada Bay Councils.

4. Report

At its December Ordinary Meeting Council considered a Mayoral Minute in relation to the Victoria Road upgrade proposal and resolved as follows:

“That Council write to the NSW Government and the RTA outlining Council's initial comments and concerns about the proposal; including reaffirming its request to extend the consultation period at least until the end of February 2008 to allow a public meeting and report to Council on the 26th February 2008. Council also express its serious concerns that no traffic modelling is currently available and Council ask that traffic modelling be urgently provided for Victoria Road and that this includes the impact on side residential streets.”

That Council calls a public meeting at the end of January 2008 to discuss the issue and to obtain feedback from the community for submission to the RTA and consults with Canada Bay Council on the option of a combined meeting.

Council's submission to include its concern over the proposed decrease in bus stops on Victoria Road.

That Council request clarification on the impact of King George Park with the West Side Bridge Option."

Based on discussions had at the planning focus meeting and an internal assessment of the concept proposal undertaken by Council Officers, a detailed response was forwarded to the Major Infrastructure Assessments section of the Department of Planning on 20 December 2007 which outlined Council's primary concerns and views on the project.

Matters identified for consideration as part of the project development and refinement phase included:

- § The proposal does not address the broader traffic and transport matters affecting inner-western and metropolitan Sydney with no apparent consideration how this proposed project would integrate with other major development proposals currently being considered by Leichhardt Council or key infrastructure upgrades including the extension of the M4 and future land uses at White Bay and Rozelle Bay.
- § The proposal is likely to introduce significant noise and vibration impacts to existing residential areas along Victoria Road. The location of any additional overpass / ramps would traverse lands within close proximity to a number of residential sites and would also substantially reduce existing residential amenity.
- § No assessment seems to have been undertaken of the impacts to the local road network, especially the impact to accessing the Balmain Peninsular noting the elimination of the right turn bay in Victoria Road at Evans Street. It is acknowledged that the key outcome of this project is to maximise bus patronage movements and reduce bus delays along Victoria Road. However, impacts to the local road network that generally comprises residential areas must be considered and increased congestion quantified. It is requested that traffic modelling undertaken by the Roads and Traffic be made publicly accessible so as to appreciate the impacts on all approach roads to Victoria Road.
- § A PM peak bus lane is considered an essential requirement for this project given the need to increase bus efficiency west bound and to add certainty to public transport users that undertaking of the upgrade works would also support and improve PM bus trip times.
- § No consideration has been applied to alternative options including tunnelling beneath Victoria Road at Darling Street or a long tunnel option from Drummoyne to the Anzac Bridge. An impact assessment of this option should be undertaken as part of any environmental assessment to consider improvements by way of bus and vehicle travel times and to determine whether such an approach would also address travel speeds within the corridor.

- § Removal existing right turn bays from Victoria Road at the following location:
 - removal of right turn into Evans Street west bound. This obviously restricts access into the Balmain Peninsular for westbound traffic, primarily in the PM peak period and would redirect traffic to either Robert Street, Darling Street or Terry Street which are currently experiencing heavy loads during the PM peak period. The proposal would require more detailed assessment to quantify the additional loading on the remaining signalised intersections.
 - removal of right turn into Gordon Street east bound. This removes access into Rozelle from Victoria Road into a Regional Road and similarly requires detailed assessment for the impact of the redirected traffic i.e. to Darling Street especially noting the reduced storage capacity in Victoria Road in the AM peak for eastbound traffic turning right into Darling Street to travel southbound. This southern section of Darling Street is also a classified road and State Road providing an important regional link through to the City West Link and Canterbury Road to the south.

- § It is unclear as to whether a bikeway has been included along length of the project. Victoria Road forms part of the Roads and Traffic Authority's Regional Bike Plan and therefore should be reinforced through this project.

- § The proposal does not indicate how pedestrians and cyclists along the Bay Run would access the Iron Cove Bridge and whether the seamless access would be provided. Also, it does not indicate any connections from the bridges to the existing regional shared cycle route on the northern side of Victoria Road.

- § A number of pinch-points currently exist for cyclists along Victoria Road particularly at bus stop areas. The proposal does not indicate how this issue would be resolved. Details of pedestrian and cycle infrastructure improvements needs to be clearly identified in the project. Also, any changes to bus shelters will need to be clearly identified and any costs be met by the RTA.

- § Any air quality assessment undertaken as part of any environmental assessment should be undertaken for the entire length of the corridor and include sensitive land uses adjoining and in proximity to Victoria Road.

- § The project proposes to remove a row of palm trees within the median of Victoria Road and there is no indication of a proposed replacement programme along the corridor as this relates to air quality as well.

- § A detailed aquatic flora and fauna impact assessment should be considered particularly in light of potential contamination within Iron Cove that may be disturbed during the construction process.

- § Proximity of the western option to the play area within King George Park would impact on this area and create overshadowing in the AM.

- § It is difficult to assess the proposed outbound bus bay (indented parking areas) near Toelle Street due to lack of detailed information and the rationalisation of bus stops on both sides of Victoria Road with the net loss of three bus stops is of concern as this will significantly increase the distance between bus stops both in a linear and radial direction thus impacting on access for local bus commuters which seems to be in direct conflict to the bus improvement nature of this project.

- § . The project does not indicate any improvements to street lighting especially at bus stops and this needs to be adequately addressed.
- § . Any changes to parking needs to be provided in greater detail to quantify the impacts.

In response to Council's submission to the Department of Planning which sought clarification and assessment of the above items, the Director General requirements issued in relation to this project required consideration to be given to areas of critical concern to Council including:

- § Need to identify alternatives to the preferred project as part of the project justification
- § Road network performance and efficiencies, including impacts associated with the direction of traffic due to altered access to and from Victoria Road
- § Potential constraints of the existing road network
- § What affect major land use changes in the locality may have on traffic assessment outcomes (Tigers and Multiplex)
- § Identify measures on how to maintain or enhance pedestrian and cycleways
- § Addressing impacts on King George Park and the Bay Run including overshadowing impacts
- § Considering business viability and sustainability including parking and access changes.

A copy of the Director-General requirements have been attached for information.

The Victoria Road Community Committee VRCC met with the Minister for Roads, on Monday 4 February 2008. Present at the meeting were five representatives from the VRCC, including the VRCC spokesperson, the Mayor of Leichhardt, the Mayor of the City of Canada Bay Council, the CEO of the RTA and a senior RTA officer, Minister's representative and Leichhardt Council's Traffic Manager.

At the meeting the VRCC asked the Minister to halt the project so that other alternate options could be considered by the community. The Minister reiterated the Government's commitment to the project and its aim to improve bus travel times in the morning peak hour period along Victoria Road to the City whilst maintaining the existing traffic flows for the 80,000 vehicles per day that use Victoria Road. The Mayor of Leichhardt asked the Minister to consider converting the existing T3 lane to a Bus Lane during the morning peak hour and provide a Bus Lane during the afternoon peak period on a trial basis. The Mayor also raised the likely impacts the proposed Tigers and Multiplex developments would have on the proposal and the RTA representative advised that the Roads and Traffic Authority was taking on board these developments as part of its traffic modelling for this project.

The VRCC organised a public protest rally and march which was held on Sunday, 10 February with approximately 1,000 people in attendance. The rally commenced in King George Park, Rozelle and marched under Police escort across the clip lane of Iron Cove Bridge to Bent Park, Drummoyne.

The Mayor of Leichhardt and the Mayor of City of Canada Bay Council both addressed the rally raising areas of primary concern in relation to the proposal and the need to consider transport within an integrated transport framework.

Victoria Road upgrade modelling

Traffic modelling in relation to the proposed upgrade to Victoria Road including bridge duplication at Iron Cove is currently being undertaken and will inform the environmental assessment for this project. The Roads and Traffic Authority have provided that the model is primarily a *corridor model* and will therefore primarily assess traffic implications along Victoria Road.

Council Officers continue to raise concern over the need to consider implications for the local road network should the proposal proceed. The proposed closures of right-turns off Victoria Road into Evans Street and Gordon Street will require additional traffic to navigate through residential streets thus adding congestion to the local road network.

This issue will be reiterated in further correspondence to the Roads and Traffic Authority to ensure adequate and appropriate consideration is provided to this issue.

Relationship to NSW Urban Transport Statement

In November 2006, the NSW Government released its Urban Transport Statement which outlined its program of scheduled works of urban transport initiatives, including major road transport projects and metropolitan rail expansion.

In May 2007, Council considered a report and submission in relation to the NSW Government's Urban Transport Statement outlining Council's position on the proposals identified in the Urban Transport Statement with primary respect to projects likely to impact on the Leichhardt local government area.

Council as part of its submission reiterated its firm position that an integrated public transport system would be a far more efficient and effective way of moving people and freight between the west and south west and the Sydney CBD through the inner west.

Council also recognises the transport challenges facing the Sydney metropolitan area will increase as Sydney grows. However, without an appropriate and holistic integrated land use and transport plan to counter congestion and car based mobility, passenger and freight movements between the CBD and middle and outer ring suburbs will continue to add increasing pressure on inner city suburbs, affecting their quality, accessibility and liveability.

Council continues to support the provision of public transport including dedicated bus ways in the absence of mass transit infrastructure. Any increase in the provision of public transport must be as part of a concerted plan to increase public transport patronage and over all network efficiency.

Although the proposed upgrade works to Victoria Road aim to facilitate bus movements (express and all stop services), it is expected that the proposed works would lead to local impacts within the local government area particularly affecting north-south vehicular movements to and from the Balmain peninsula with similar concerns for the Canada Bay local government area.

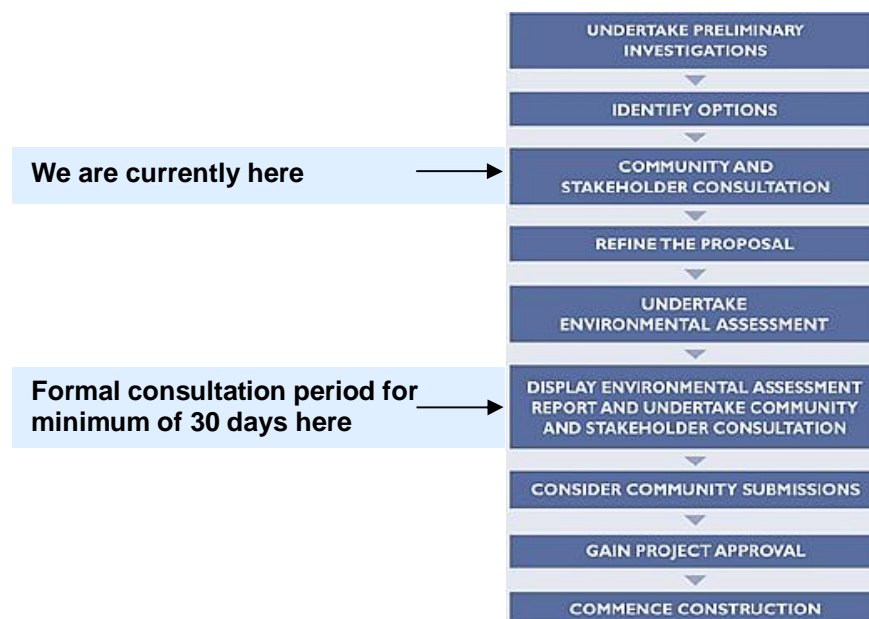
Critical to ensuring adequate local vehicular access would be the retention of local vehicular movements off and on to Victoria Road so that minimal disturbance occurs to residents and business operators and that vehicular and pedestrian accessibility to the Balmain Peninsula and Rozelle is maintained and improved.

As part of its submission, Council also raised concern that the duplication of the Iron Cove Bridge will shift a bottleneck from Drummoyne to Rozelle in the A.M. peak and requested further assessment and discussion with Council on addressing any anticipated downstream impacts of the duplication, particularly if it is shown that this will create further congestion or impacts on turning movements and pedestrian accessibility across Victoria Road. In response to this, discussions in relation to preliminary proposals are being discussed with Council Officers.

Part 3A Assessment Requirements

As part of the environmental assessment provisions under Part 3A of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979, the Director-General of the Department of Planning issued on 14 January 2008 specific requirements that would need to be considered by the Roads and Traffic Authority (or its consultant) in assessing the environmental implications likely to stem from the construction and operation of the proposal.

This is an early however key step in the assessment and determination process. The process that must be undertaken is illustrated below:



The Roads and Traffic Authority will, based on input provided by relevant government agencies and Director-General requirements, refine the proposal and undertake its detailed environmental assessment.

Further and formal consultation will be undertaken once a comprehensive proposal is developed at which time the public will have the opportunity to comment on a particular design alternative. This is required to be for a minimum of 30 days.

5. Summary/Conclusions

Although the Victoria Road upgrade would facilitate bus and vehicular movements along Victoria Road, it has the potential to further reduce permeability across Victoria into the Balmain Peninsula. This has been recognised to be of a key limiting factor to further change and improvement to this area.

Council recognises the transport challenges facing the Sydney metropolitan area. However, to effectively manage this challenge, a holistic integrated land use and transport plan is required to promote public transport and to address car based mobility, passenger and freight movements between the CBD and middle and outer ring suburbs is required. Consideration of significant standalone infrastructure projects such as the Victoria Road upgrade must be made in context of such a integrated land use and transport plan.