

Marchers demand rethink of bridge duplication

Jordan Baker
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Double trouble ... more than a thousand protesters cross the Iron Cove Bridge yesterday.

Photo: Dean Sewell

THEY came with their prams, dogs and Sunday morning coffees. They wore running gear, protest T-shirts or their church best. They had one thing in common: anger over the Government's plan to duplicate the Iron Cove Bridge.

More than 1000 inner-west residents marched from Rozelle, along Victoria Road and over the Iron Cove Bridge to Brett Park in Drummoyne yesterday, where they accused the Government of failing to consult them and called on it to scrap the plan.

The Victoria Road Community Committee said the bridge's duplication would come at a cost of \$150 million, but would result in only a 50-second saving for motorists at peak hour. They want the money spent on improving public transport to the area.

"We say it's not going to work," said a spokesman, Alex Elliott. "The council says it's not going to work. We would like to see everyone sit down and start again."

Mr Elliott said the Government's traffic modelling did not take into account traffic created by several building developments, such as Callan Park. An EcoTransit activist, Gavin Gatenby, said it was just one of the Government's "loony road projects".

The crowd passed a motion of no confidence in the local state MPs Angela D'Amore, of Drummoyne, and Verity Firth, of Balmain. The protest march had the support of Leichhardt and Canada Bay councils.

Victoria Road has suffered congestion problems for years. Before last year's election, the State Government pledged to improve traffic flow by creating a three-kilometre peak-direction bus lane along the road.

The Roads Minister, Eric Roozendaal, said yesterday the bridge's duplication would go ahead. He understood the public's concern, but the project was an election commitment and would be delivered.

He said bus commuters would save eight minutes. "We will hopefully have more people using public transport, and a better run for public transport."

An independent transport expert, Ann Turner, said the bridge would do little to improve traffic times over the route. "When you see a community this angry, one wonders if the Government is effectively consulting."