

MINUTES

Great Western Highway Upgrade: Blackheath Co-Design Committee

Date	6 May 2020		
Time	6.30pm – 9.15pm		
Venue	Via Webex Webinar		
Chairperson	Alistair Lunn – TfNSW		
Committee members	Kirstin Fischer Kate Walsh Iain MacLeod NSW Ambulance - Katoomba Fire & Rescue NSW - Katoomba Michaela Durston Gary Parsons Peter Chudek Ally Drinkwater Ross Ingram Damien Mah Gary Moore Eva Johnstone Juliet Bourke Sally Hollis Steven Burger Adele Colman George Vergotis Gary McCue Mick Beltran Greg Nankervis Eric Ancich Community Rep No 4	KF KW IM SL MW MD GP PC AD RI DM GM EJ JB SH SB AC GV GMc MB GN EA Anon	TfNSW TfNSW TfNSW NSW Ambulance NSW Fire & Rescue Blue Mountains City Council Blue Mountains City Council Blue Mountains City Council Blackheath Public School P&C Blue Mountains Historical Society Blue Mountains Cycling Safety Forum Blackheath Area Neighbourhood Centre Blackheath Area Community Alliance Save Centennial Glen Save Station Street (Primary) Save Station Street (Alternate) Blackheath Streetscape Group Blackheath Chamber of Commerce Blackheath Highway Action Group Community Representative Community Representative Community Representative (Alternate) Community Representative (Alternate)
Additional attendees	Paul Peters Tricia Wunsch (Facilitator) Veronica Kooyman Caroline Boyd Emily Mitchell	PP TW VK CB EM	TfNSW KJA KJA TfNSW TfNSW
Apologies:	NSW Police - Springwood	MC	NSW Police

1.	Welcome & Introductions – Tricia Wunsch (Facilitator)
1.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acknowledgment of Country Process and Operations of the Committee

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting agenda and housekeeping • 'Round the room' participant introductions including name, group represented (for stakeholder reps) and you/your group's aim
2.	Background and process – Chair
2.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledgment of Country • How we got here • Why are we here? • Scope of the co-design process • Upgrade benefits • Ongoing consultation
3.	Q&A session – Tricia Wunsch
3.1	<p>I sent a question last Friday to Transport for NSW about consulting with my Board re: decisions that may be sought on confidential material. I have yet to receive a reply?</p> <p>Response (chat room response – TfNSW): Hi Gary, apologies about that. We don't expect that there will be a significant quantity of confidential information discussed at the BCC meetings, so you should be able to discuss most content freely with your Chair of Board and CEO. If a confidential matter arises, we do expect committee members to respect that request for confidence. If committee members feel a specific need to discuss confidential matters, they can raise that discussion at the meeting when the request for confidentiality is made. Hope that's alright, we can discuss tomorrow further if needed.</p>
3.2	<p>Can we have a copy of Alistair's presentation please?</p> <p>TfNSW response: Yes I am happy to share my presentation. I do ask that it is not shared with the media.</p>
3.3	<p>Will the project be funded or will there be a change in State Government priorities in the post-Covid period?</p> <p>TfNSW response: The State Government has committed \$2.5 billion to the Great Western Highway Upgrade and it continues to be a priority.</p>
3.4	<p>What would TfNSW do if the business case is found to be unviable and with negative cost to benefit ratios?</p> <p>TfNSW response: All projects are funded based on BCRs but it is not always the determining factor. There are often broader benefits that cannot be quantified and captured in the BCR (such as social benefits) so it is not a solely determining factor in this project.</p>
3.5	<p>The Government stated many times they were committed to a tunnel through Blackheath yet have now undergone consultation on other options, which includes a main street in Blackheath? You said you'd take into consideration the constraints, and you mentioned environmental, geographical, heritage, cultural, but didn't mention people who live in Station Street nor the businesses there.</p> <p>TfNSW response: People, communities and residents are certainly something we consider, as are the businesses. With regard to the tunnel, Government certainly stated that a tunnel was an option for Blackheath. TfNSW work for all forms of government so we have to make sure our plans are robust and that we have a solution that will stand the test of time with changes of government and funding, so we will be looking at all options. A tunnel is certainly viable from an engineering point of view.</p>

3.6	<p>Can you advise if there is data on the impacts of the safety improvements at Mt Victoria and estimates on what impacts the recently finished Blackheath changes will have?</p> <p>TfNSW response: We don't have that data at this point, obviously those will have some impacts on safety outcomes but they don't address capacity issues. The project is going to take 5-10 years, so safety benefits we'll see from the recent changes will deliver safety for the next 5-10 years. We see that as a good starting point and if we do end up with tunnel or bypass, those safety improvements will still be there forever, whatever our solution is.</p>
3.7	<p>Can you clarify what proportion of this 34km project can be achieved with \$2.5 billion?</p> <p>TfNSW response: We are looking at where we can best invest, with Medlow Bath first. \$2.5 billion won't deliver the full project. We have always been quite open that the \$2.5B will not cover the entirety of the Program delivery.</p>
3.8	<p>I haven't heard the community raise concern about the current highway "dividing" the town. Who has raised this?</p> <p>TfNSW response: A number of people during the initial consultation have referenced the difficulty in getting from East to West in Blackheath. Older residents have to cross train tracks and the highway. People commented that during peak periods, including weekends, it's not worth going out. The highway will get busier, become more congested and become more of a barrier to the East West connectivity.</p>
3.9	<p>Could Alistair please clarify - did he just say that the project was not dependent upon a favourable BCR? And if that was the case, under what criteria is it being judged please?</p> <p>TfNSW response: The BCR is something we take very seriously, it will be strongly judged by INSW. There are a number of other benefits that are hard to quantify. There will be other benefits like amenity for the town, improved connectivity for pedestrians, liveability, accessibility of parks and a number of things we can do that can be seen as a benefit for a community like Blackheath.</p>
3.10	<p>The BCR applies to the whole project as you indicated. The financial benefits of increased and more efficient freight by road to and from the Central West would presumably be a key component of calculating the benefit level of the whole project. Can you confirm this please?</p> <p>TfNSW response: There is a Strategic Business Case for the 34km length, of which Blackheath is a portion. Benefits include liveability for the whole alignment, the Blue Mountains; cyclists, and a wide range of issues which will benefit. Freight is a component, however, half the freight carried on the Highway is freight actually servicing the Blue Mountains - groceries, fuel etc. So it's a lot more than just freight coming through from Central West to fly out or ship elsewhere. Yes, it is a key component, but safety is also very important.</p>
3.11	<p>20 years ago the Great Western Highway was widened through Lawson. The RTA proposed a tunnel under Lawson and Hazelbrook. Studies were done but it never went ahead. What are the chances this will happen with Blackheath tunnel?</p> <p>TfNSW response: The government is very committed to a solution. A tunnel is an option for this route. At this stage, there has been nothing from conversations with Senior Government officials that would suggest a tunnel would not be viable if it emerges as the preferred solution.</p>
4.	Break
5.	Presentation of options: session 1 – Iain MacLeod
5.1	Iain outlined the initial process used to arrive at the four broad options outlined in the community consultation material.

	<p>The four options were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An outer western option around the western side of Blackheath; • An inner option that generally followed the rail line along Station Street; • An upgrade to the existing Great Western Highway corridor; and • Tunnel options – one connecting the two sections via the shortest possible path under the western side of Blackheath and one generally underneath the existing highway. The options connect either under or over the rail line at either end of Blackheath.
6.	Q&A session – Tricia Wunsch
6.1	<p>If we go back to the community with the tunnel option, which tunnel option would it be? Can we agree to that?</p> <p>TfNSW response: Yes we can. It will be a broad alignment. We cannot say precisely where the entry and exit points would be. We could establish if it would go under the rail/road alignment or the other route. That real detail will be worked out as the next stage of the development.</p>
6.2	<p>How would the expanded Highway option be realised given the constraints that already exist? Would it mean removing the trees on the existing route?</p> <p>TfNSW response: As part of the design phase there would be a rigorous urban landscape design process to be followed. It is pretty tight along that route and would involve removing parking and could require moving kerbs. It would be difficult. I can't say trees wouldn't be removed. If they are that close [30 cms to the gutter], they would have to go. Urban design landscape would include rehabilitation of areas affected. If there's no room, it wouldn't be possible to put trees there, we'd have to look at what we could do in other areas. Yes, where we narrow the highway would be close to the shops.</p>
6.3	<p>Can I please check the number of options - it seemed to be more than 4?</p> <p>TfNSW response: We count the two tunnels as one option.</p>
6.4	<p>Either one under the existing road or one closer to Centennial Glen? Will we be able to decide that?</p> <p>TfNSW response: Yes, that's what we'll be discussing over the next few meetings.</p>
6.5	<p>Do you have any early cost estimates on the four options?</p> <p>TfNSW response: we have some extremely high level costs for one or two options.</p>
6.6	<p>Which options did you get cost estimates on?</p> <p>TfNSW response: The Western bypass. It is very high level. It's very early in the process.</p>
6.7	<p>Widening of the existing highway would contribute to massive noise pollution to Station Street. Already have coal trains and freight trains. What noise controls would be offered?</p> <p>TfNSW response: Noise will be a part of the next presentation and I would prefer to defer that question to the next presenter.</p>
6.8	<p>Bearing in mind what we've just been presented with online, 9 to 4 lines on a map, even for experienced engineer like me...we can't form an opinion. What process will you follow?</p> <p>TfNSW response: You make a valid point. We will be looking at each option in much more detail, today is just an introduction to get the committee up to speed, to enable us all to start with a similar level of understanding of constraints. We will be certainly talking in more detail</p>

6.9	<p>It is disappointing that we haven't had the opportunity to look at these numerous options before this meeting so we could contribute effectively.</p> <p>Noted.</p>
6.10	<p>Can we have a copy of Iain's presentation?</p> <p>Response – facilitator TW: already answered.</p> <p>NOTE FOR CLARIFICATION: Alistair's presentation will be made available and Iain MacLeod and Paul Peter's are summarised here. Details on these options and constraints will be provided in the next meetings.</p>
6.11	<p>We need for next meeting, details of all elements of costs, benefits, opportunities and risks to start any detailed discussions. Can you confirm that you can and are willing to do this?</p> <p>TfNSW response: There will be a lot more detailed discussion in the next meeting. Cost is another matter. Request noted.</p>
6.12	<p>From your presentation of options, how many have actually been physically surveyed?</p> <p>TfNSW response: There have been some broad contours studied but we have not yet done any physical surveys, it is very early days.</p>
7.	Presentation of options: session 2 – Paul Peters
7.1	<p>Paul described the process used by TfNSW to identify and assess options for highway upgrades.</p> <p>Factors usually considered include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land use – for example whether it is National Parks or World Heritage, residential or business; • Heritage – Aboriginal and Non- Aboriginal; • Community / Stakeholders views; • Environment for example – noise, air quality, flora and fauna; and finally • Constructability – Hydrology, geotech and building near railways. <p>Paul noted that maps showing how these factors applied to options would be presented at the next meeting.</p>
8	Q&A session – Tricia Wunsch
8.1	<p>Can I ask about social impacts such as access to community services and facilities, specific transport needs of those in home care and disability care, community safety in terms of design and connectivity of use of public domain and other open space etc?</p> <p>TfNSW response: Part of our assessment process when we get to a preferred option includes social impact assessment that looks at exactly those things. At this stage we would like to understand from the community which options might be better for those members from the community. These are all key areas to be considered and addressed through the consultative and design process. They all go to liveability and contributions that this project can make.</p>
8.2	<p>Is another tunnel option to put the railway underground and place the highway over the top (at ground level or a little below for aesthetics)?</p> <p>TfNSW response: Something similar has previously been suggested during the consultation process. Railways are sensitive to gradients and it would require a cut and cover design. This would significantly impact Station Street</p>

8.3	<p>The Station Street option doesn't just affect Station Street. How wide do you think this option would be, how deep and how many cross roads? This is a question residents in the Station Street area have been asking me since the start.</p> <p>TfNSW response: We can show this and discuss it in more detail at the next meeting. It's much easier to see on a map.</p>
8.4	<p>Have you thought about impact on threatened species post bushfires when so much has been lost on Eastern side? The Save Centennial Glen submission included a section on species, and this issues is now amplified.</p> <p>TfNSW response: We have collected information on the extent of the bushfires in the area and as we get into the environmental impact assessment we will identify threatened species in consultation. We will be very interested to understand what impact the bushfires have had. It will certainly be a topic for a future meeting.</p>
8.5	<p>Will the Environmental study be an EIS (Environmental Impact Assessment) or an REF (Review of Environmental Factors)?</p> <p>TfNSW response: They usually start as an REF (Review of Environmental Factors) but can morph into an EIS (Environmental Impact Statement). It is more likely to be an EIS for this project (i.e. the Blackheath component of the overall Program). (Gives an explanation of the acronyms and what each entails)</p>
8.6	<p>I'd like to hear more about your community consultation processes and outcomes. For example, how are the results of the community surveys incorporated into the project planning? I'm asking because one of the earliest slides reported that the community was most concerned with:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. not having any of the options 2. the environmental impact 3. the constitution of the road traffic on the roads through Blackheath <p>And yet, so far I've only heard mention of 'liveability' 'amenity', 'families and pedestrians being able to move about safely'. Is there data that we haven't seen yet from community consultation that explains the TfNSW focus on these aspects?</p> <p>TfNSW response: The community consultation report is coming out in the next few days, it was going through final approvals and edits today. That report talks to all of those items. It's a very detailed report. The team reviews and reflects on all submissions received and specific responses.</p>
8.7	<p>What weight does community consultation have on the outcome? Looking for assurance this process is meaningful to the outcome. I still have questions around if the community aren't interested in the key drivers you are talking about and they aren't our priorities?</p> <p>TfNSW response: Good question. Community consultation is a key part of the process. We know we are behind the eight ball but we can only come to a solution together with the Blackheath community. We have been given a mandate to find a route. We know we need to listen to the community and we are fully open to new options that have not been considered.</p> <p>It's a challenge when people in the community have different views. Certainly there is a broad church of opinions. If there's a bypass, some have concerns about the impact on local business. Some will say, it's really congested here and we need to do something; there are others that like the community the way it is. In the end we hope the project will stand on its own legs as a good outcome.</p>
8.8.	<p>Why is the pink tunnel option in this visual just the one not aligned to the existing road? Do you have a preference?</p>

	TfNSW response: This is a very broad illustration only, we will show more detail in other meetings when we go through each route. We have greater freedom underground. We don't have a preference at this stage.
8.9	<p>Will there be a tunnel component in the Centennial Glen option such as under the school? How to bring up to Radiant street.</p> <p>TfNSW response: I think that is best shown on a map in the next meeting.</p>
8.10	<p>Is RMS aware of an application to add Centennial Glen to an expanded Gardens of Stone National Park which we understand is likely to proceed? Especially since eastern side has been nuked by fire and the west remains unburnt (for the time being).</p> <p>TfNSW response: No we weren't aware of that application. However, throughout the consultation process so far we have become very aware of the importance of Centennial Glen, the walking tracts; we know how highly valued that part of Blackheath is and I am not surprised. We are very aware of the importance of that part of the world.</p> <p>We would welcome a copy of that submission.</p>
8.11	<p>Land use planning question: How will RMS replace any business zoned land lost in a Station Street option? Will there be collaborative efforts with BMCC to rezone residential land to business to replace it, which would have impacts, or will it be lost forever?</p> <p>TfNSW response: Rezoning at the end of the day is really a question for Council. But it is something we would have to address when we understand the impacts.</p>
8.12	<p>I would think that there's plenty of room in the rail corridor to bore a tunnel for one track at a time then progressively move the functioning railway. They need to change the rail infrastructure anyway to fit the new trains.</p> <p>TfNSW response: Thank you for the suggestion. This was answered at 8.2. Further clarification: Tunnel options will be discussed further in future meetings.</p>
8.13	<p>There seems to be no consideration of what happens in the vicinity of the Radiance and Sunbeam - how will this part of Blackheath be treated? Spatially very tight.</p> <p>TfNSW response: Yes it is very tight we'd need to work through that. The project goes all the way to Mt. Victoria and Lithgow. It all needs to be thought about together.</p>
8.14	<p>At what stage will environmental impacts for each of the options be completed? When will we have that information?</p> <p>TfNSW response: We are at an early stage but desktop assessments have been/can be done and can provide a reasonable picture to members of the committee about what some of these options might look like. We have lots more investigation to do, but we have a reasonable understanding of how each option would affect environment.</p>
8.15	<p>Can I suggest that Transport engages an independent social impact assessment beyond the EPA act general requirements given the potential magnitude of the social impacts? Specifically on preferred option.</p> <p>TfNSW response: Yes this will be completed specifically on the preferred option.</p>
8.16	<p>Further to an earlier question – will the community consultation report, that's just been finalised, discuss the reasons why some of the alternate options were considered out of scope for this project (i.e. more freight on rail)?</p> <p>TfNSW response: Yes the report will provide answers to all those issues and, if they are out of scope, why. We are happy to notify this group when it is available on the website as well as our mailing list.</p>

8.17	<p>The tunnel option under the existing highway seems to imply cut and cover style. Is this correct?</p> <p>TfNSW response: Detail of tunnel options will be discussed in future meetings.</p>
8.18	<p>If the number one concern is environment public concern (after no "option"), why is the Outer Option on the table at all?</p> <p>TfNSW response: Environmental concerns need to be weighed against other concerns. We are now acutely aware of the significance of Centennial Glen.</p>
8.19	<p>I understand an EIS was done when the Mt Victoria bypass plans were finalised. Will the Blackheath section also be subject to an EIS?</p> <p>TfNSW response: Yes likely to be an EIS.</p>
8.20	<p>Under present legislation, heavy vehicles with dangerous loads can't use tunnels, what percentage going through Blackheath, will continue to need to travel on surface road?</p> <p>TfNSW response: I don't have figures with me but I can bring these with me to the next meeting. As a point of interest, road authorities around Australia are investigating whether dangerous goods should be allowed through tunnels.</p>
8.21	<p>Will the upgrade be a dual carriageway or allow options for a contraflow? For Emergency Services this is extremely important as the highway is difficult to use in an accident. That would be a dramatic improvement from the perspective of the Emergency Services.</p> <p>TfNSW response: Yes we are talking dual carriageways even with the tunnel option. It is important to build resilience into all road projects.</p>
8.22	<p>What was the source for the figure of 19,000 vehicle movements per day? Can we get access to more data on truck movements and the composition and destination of freight using the GWH between Katoomba and Lithgow?</p> <p>TfNSW response: Yes, this comes from the traffic count data and I can share this information at the next meeting.</p>
8.23	<p>Can we be sent relevant data before the next meeting so we can study it beforehand please?</p> <p>Response – Tricia Wunsch: Yes. Please provide input to us on what you would like.</p>
8.24	<p>Are you able to distribute people's email addresses?</p> <p>Response – Tricia Wunsch: Does everyone agree to have their names published on the website as part of the BCC (except the emergency services which will be identified by organisation only) and email shared with this group?</p> <p>(Note many responded positively and none negatively in the meeting – to be followed up for confirmation).</p>
8.25	<p>Is someone taking minutes for this meeting? There have been a significant number of questions that have been promised answers in the coming meetings? Would it be worth everyone with an unanswered question popping it in the chat to ensure we come back to them and get those answers to help us go forward in a more informed way?</p> <p>TfNSW response: Yes we are taking minutes for this meeting.</p>
8.26	<p>Can we get a copy of the minutes for these meetings?</p> <p>TfNSW response: Yes. We will distribute these to the committee as draft in one week's time for review before finalising them.</p>

9	Next steps, thanks and close – Chair
9.1	A particular note of thanks to everyone for staying through a 2.5 hour meeting online, using the technology and giving their time.

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