

10.8 Frenchs Forest Transport Studies

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose

To advise Council on the results of the transport studies prepared by the State Government during 2011, as part of its investigations for the proposed Frenchs Forest Specialised Centre and the proposed Northern Beaches Hospital.

Summary

These transport studies, commissioned by Transport NSW, overwhelmingly conclude that the transport network around Frenchs Forest is already at capacity and needs significant investment in road infrastructure and public transport improvements, to accommodate background growth expected over next five years.

Since these reports were completed, the proposed Frenchs Forest Specialised Centre has been abandoned by the NSW State Government. The NSW State Government is however committed to the new Northern Beaches Hospital proceeding.

The results of these transport studies are still of relevance as an indication of the existing transport situation in Frenchs Forest as well as an indication of what improvements to transport infrastructure are needed in the short term and what improvements should be investigated for the medium to long term. They are also important as an indication of the public transport and road infrastructure upgrades which are likely to be required as part of the future planning and development of the Northern Beaches Hospital.

The results will also be of relevance for any future development proposals in the Frenchs Forest area which will result in an increase in traffic feeding into this Warringah Road transport corridor. For example, Council's Housing Strategy which aims to increase residential densities in Warringah, should take into account the results of these transport studies. In this regard it is noted that Council is in receipt of a letter from the Minister in relation to the status of Council's draft Housing Strategy. Staff are investigating a response and this is scheduled to be reported to Council at the 27 March meeting.

Financial Impact

Potential requirement for road infrastructure upgrades.

Policy Impact

Need for detailed strategic master planning for the Frenchs Forest area, to accommodate the development of the Northern Beaches Hospital and ancillary development.

RECOMMENDATION OF DEPUTY GENERAL MANAGER ENVIRONMENT

- A. That Council note the contents of the Frenchs Forest Specialised Centre - Strategic Transport Assessment report and the Frenchs Forest Specialised Centre - Local Transport Assessment report, as seen at Attachments 1 and 2.
- B. That Council note the infrastructure issues raised by these reports, and these matters, along with the Minister's recent response to Council's draft Housing Strategy be further discussed in

a workshop between staff and Councillors at a time to be scheduled forthwith.

- C. That Council call on the NSW Government to ensure that the planning and delivery of the Northern Beaches Hospital be a whole of government approach that addresses the issues of health service provision, land uses, sustainability principles as well as traffic and transport.
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REPORT

Background

On 17 December 2010, the Minister for Planning declared a large part of Frenchs Forest as a potential State Significant Site (SSS) under the provisions of State Environmental Planning Policy (Major Development) 2005. This proposal identified Frenchs Forest as a potential Specialised Centre for the region.

The proposal was exhibited from 17 December until 28 February 2011 for public comment. In response to concerns raised by Council and the community, the Minister in February 2011 directed NSW Transport to prepare a Transport Management and Accessibility Plan (TMAP) to assess the transport implications of this proposed specialised centre.

NSW Transport, working with Council, Planning NSW and other transport related organisations, prepared a brief for this transport work and in May 2011, consultants AECOM were commissioned to prepare two reports:

- a *Strategic Transport Assessment* for the potential Frenchs Forest Specialised Centre, (including the proposed Northern Beaches Hospital); and
- a *Local Transport Assessment* for the potential Frenchs Forest Specialised Centre (including the proposed Northern Beaches Hospital).

A working party was established, which included Council, to guide and oversee the preparation of the Strategic Transport Assessment. Council was not however involved in preparation of the Local Transport Assessment. A copy of these documents, dated 11 November 2011, can be seen at Attachments 1 and 2.

The Minister for Planning on 16 December 2011, decided not to proceed with the proposed State Significant Site for Frenchs Forest. This decision was in part, based upon the results of these transport studies. However, NSW Health is still proceeding with the planning and construction of the Northern Beaches Hospital. The Minister for Planning, in his announcement, stated that *"the local community would be consulted through the precinct planning process and be given a chance to have their say on what development is appropriate in the area of the proposed new hospital"*.

The purpose of this report is to advise Council of the results of these two transport studies, and to outline the consequences to Council of possible road infrastructure upgrades and future strategic planning demands.

The Strategic Transport Assessment is more of an overview of the traffic and transport situation and identifies short and longer term actions to address issues of concern. The Local Transport Assessment, using the results of the strategic report, looks at more detail at the actual impact of the proposed Specialised Centre and hospital development on traffic and transport in the Frenchs Forest area. It also has short and longer term measures identified, so there is some duplication in their recommendations.

Key Findings - Strategic Transport Assessment

This Study aimed to establish the current strategic transport context, as well as in 2016 and 2036. In examining the existing transport situation it concluded that:-

- All major roads servicing the Warringah area (Mona Vale Road, Military Road, Pittwater Road and Warringah Road) are carrying volumes of traffic in the am peak which are above their designed capacity;
- All key intersections are also operating close to their design capacity in the am peak, especially the Warringah Road/Wakehurst Parkway intersection which operates at Level of Service F;

- Warringah Road carries a high proportion of car trips (70 – 90% private vehicle mode share), because east-west public transport connections are limited;
- Approximately 60% of vehicle trips on Warringah Road through Frenchs Forest originate from Brookvale, Dee Why and Pittwater LGA.

. In examining the transport situation in 2016 – 2036, it concluded that:-

- Traffic models indicate that demand for access to the Northern Beaches will increase;
- By 2016 the am peak demand will exceed the capacity of Mona Vale, Military and Warringah Roads;
- With no improvements to transport infrastructure, peak travel periods will increase, congestion will worsen and longer journey times will result;
- Mitigating measures need to be investigated in the short term (next 5 years) even if there is no extra development at Frenchs Forest;
- With the introduction of the proposed Specialised Centre, by 2016 most arterial links will be over capacity and all key intersections in Frenchs Forest will be at Level of Service (LoS) F. All approach roads to Frenchs Forest will also be nearing their capacity per lane and Warringah Road at the Roseville Bridge will be carrying 1.5 times its capacity;
- By 2036, with the proposed Specialised Centre, the situation would be the same, with Roseville Bridge carrying 1.6 times its capacity.

Taking these matters into account, the study made a number of suggestions and recommendations to address some of these existing and possible future transport issues. The short term measures recommended were:-

- Preparation of a Sustainable Transport Strategy
- Further investigation of enhanced east-west bus services
- Further investigation of signalling the Forest Way/Naree Road intersection.
- Further investigation of the extension of Aquatic Drive to link to Wakehurst Parkway

While Transport NSW is the agency responsible for most of the proposed infrastructure upgrades and public transport improvements, Warringah Council is identified as a partner for the last 2 of these short term measures. Each of these measures are estimated to cost between \$1 and 2 million. Council would also be involved in the preparation of a Sustainable Transport Strategy.

A number of medium/long term measures were also recommended for further investigation:-

- Dedicated Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system from Mona Vale to Chatswood via Dee Why;
- Dedicated BRT system from Mona Vale to the CBD;
- Grade separation of Wakehurst Parkway and Warringah Road intersection;
- Grade separation of Forest Way and Warringah Road intersection;
- Grade separation of Wakehurst Parkway and Frenchs Forest Road intersection;
- The provision of 4 lanes westbound on Warringah Road, from Forest Way to Woodlands Road, to be implemented as a westbound bus lane in peak periods;
- Flood protection and contingency planning for Wakehurst Parkway at Narrabeen Lagoon, to mitigate flooding risk.



Of these medium to long term works, the BRT is the subject of a separate pre-feasibility study currently being prepared by Transport NSW. Of the other measures, the only one earmarked for Council input is the works on Wakehurst Parkway to mitigate flooding risk. This measure is estimated to cost in the order of \$5 –10 million.

This strategic study concluded that the existing Frenchs Forest road network is nearing capacity and will need a significant investment in infrastructure in the short term. The responsibility for most of this infrastructure investment lies with Transport NSW, however Council is earmarked to partner TNSW on some proposed upgrade measures, particularly where improvements relate to the local road network.

An analysis of predicted traffic growth for the area indicates the need for grade separation of the intersections of Warringah Road with Wakehurst Parkway and Forest Way. Indicative costs for these intersection works are in the order of \$100 – 200 million for Wakehurst Parkway and \$50 – 150 million for Forest Way. The report also concluded that any grade separation of intersections along Warringah Road should be undertaken simultaneously with the hospital development.

A review of existing public transport identified the need for improved east-west bus services along Warringah Road to accommodate travel demand. A Northern Beaches BRT (currently the subject of a separate pre-feasibility study by Transport NSW), may provide more detailed analysis of potential patronage along the east-west corridor.

Key Findings - Local Transport Assessment

This report was specifically prepared to look at the transport implications of a Specialised Centre at Frenchs Forest (including the hospital, ancillary health care services, redeveloped commercial properties and a commercial core including 80,000 sq m of retail floor space).

Again, the existing situation was identified with traffic volumes during both peak periods at capacity and with all major intersections operating at maximum limits of their designed capacity as at grade intersections. It also identified that east-west public transport services were limited. It also noted that existing development in the Frenchs Forest area has encouraged car usage, with large carparks provided and that there is a poor level of pedestrian/cyclist connectivity between the north and south of Warringah Road.

This assessment used RTA traffic modelling to estimate future traffic volumes, both with and without the proposed Specialised Centre development. With only background development, the study predicted that by 2016, all key intersections will be operating beyond their capacity in both peaks. By 2036, in the absence of any road improvements, this would be worse with an increase in traffic of 16% above 2011 levels.

The addition of the hospital development into the modelling accelerated the need to signalise Naree Road/Forest Way and the need to increase the capacity of the Frenchs Forest Road/Wakehurst Parkway intersection, along with the Warringah Road/Wakehurst Parkway and Warringah Road/ Forest Way intersections.

Like the Strategic Transport Assessment, this report also concluded that there will need to be significant investment in transport infrastructure just to accommodate existing travel demand and background growth (prior to the area being able to support any additional development).

The report recommended that a number of road infrastructure upgrades should be investigated as part of on-going planning for the Specialised Centre. As the Specialised Centre is not proceeding, these recommendations are still relevant for future planning of the Northern Beaches Hospital. The recommendations, some of which were also in the Strategic Transport Assessment report, are:-

- Forest Way/Naree Road intersection signalisation;
- Frenchs Forest Road (East and West) duplication;
- Warringah Road/Wakehurst Parkway intersection grade separation;

- Warringah Road/Forest Way intersection grade separation;
- Potential grade separated Warringah Road underpass;
- Re-order traffic management at intersections of Warringah Road/Allambie Road and Warringah Road/Frenchs Forest Road East in favour of bus movements and allow easier access to Frenchs Forest Road;
- Introduce a new intersection at Wakehurst Parkway/Aquatic Drive to allow direct access to Wakehurst Parkway and a potential extension of bus routes from Allambie Road to Wakehurst Parkway.

It also recommended that:-

- Any major transport infrastructure works should be undertaken simultaneously with the hospital development;
- The area would benefit from improved east-west public transport services and a review of bus stop locations;
- The BRT pre-feasibility study when completed should identify short term transport options;
- Pedestrian and cycle connectivity should be a key principle in planning of any Specialised Centre.

Discussion

These transport studies have overwhelmingly concluded that the transport network around Frenchs Forest is already at capacity and needs significant investment in road infrastructure and public transport improvements, to accommodate growth expected over next five years.

Since these reports were completed, the proposed Frenchs Forest Specialised Centre has been abandoned by the NSW State Government. The NSW State Government is however committed to the new Northern Beaches Hospital proceeding.

The results of these transport studies are still of relevance as an indication of the existing transport situation in Frenchs Forest as well as an indication of what improvements to transport infrastructure are needed in the short term and what improvements should be investigated for the medium to long term. They are also important as an indication of the public transport and road infrastructure upgrades which are likely to be required as part of the future planning and development of the Northern Beaches Hospital.

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Policy Impact

Need for detailed strategic master planning for the Frenchs Forest area, to accommodate the development of the Northern Beaches Hospital and ancillary development.

Financial Impact

Potential requirement for road infrastructure upgrades.

Group Manager Strategic Planning

Attachment Booklets/CD Frenchs Forest Specialised Centre – Strategic Transport Assessment
Frenchs Forest Specialised Centre – Local Transport Assessment