

Response to the Draft Bells Line of Road Long Term Strategic Corridor Plan

Submission

August 2012



CENTRAL NSW
COUNCILS



Centroc's Mission is to be recognised as the lead organisation advocating on agreed regional positions and priorities for Central NSW whilst providing a forum for facilitating regional co-operation and sharing of knowledge, expertise and resources, effectively nurturing sustainable investment and infrastructure development.

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Reference: pm:vp 081230
Enquiries: Ms J Bennett: 0428 690 935

Ms Diana Loges
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Dear Diana,

Re Response to the Draft Bells Line of Road Long Term Strategic Corridor Plan

Thank you for your feedback regarding questions raised by the Draft Long Term Strategic Corridor for the Bells Line of Road (the draft Plan).

The Executive of the Board have considered advice from the engineers of the region who met 20 August to provide feedback. Where Centroc has been party to consultation and provided submissions regarding the Bells Line including to the development of this draft Plan, the region makes three key points regarding possible changes before it becomes public.

Briefly, these are

- The 25 year constraint on securing the corridor in the terms of reference was too limiting
- Given the challenges of securing a corridor and that it will never be any easier that it is now, when securing a corridor, why not secure the corridor instead of just the eastern section to Kurrajong and
- There is significant scope for short term safety works, with the exception of the area around Mount Tomah, and these should be expedited with recommendations for an enhanced program included in the Plan

The 25 year constraint on securing a corridor was too limiting for the Plan

As advised in previous submissions, it is the view of this region that the securing of the corridor is about making provision for a future need for a safe swift link between Sydney and Central NSW. While noting that the terms of reference limited the outlook to 25 years, the region suggests that it will never be any easier to secure the corridor than now.

It is noteworthy in this context that the traffic analysis draft working paper provides advice that travel times for the Bells Line is 58.5 minutes while for the GWH is 1hr22min (p. 36). It is acknowledged that

- travel times are directly affected by destination;
- the link to the M7 or all the way to the CBD of Sydney could also be compared and
- there are road works along with GWH.

It should also be noted that road works for the GWH between Lithgow and Mount Victoria will continue until at least 2016. Centroc members submit that the slower travel time over the GWH is not likely to improve substantially into the foreseeable future where growth of road use will increase and the road is already limited by changing speed zones, school zones, traffic lights etc.

It is recognised that this is primarily a philosophical view and is profoundly different from that expressed in the draft Plan.

Given the challenges of securing a corridor and that it will never be any easier that it is now, when securing a corridor, why not secure the corridor instead of just the eastern section to Kurrajong

It is noted and welcomed that securing the corridor to Kurrajong is recommended where, in the background advice, sequestering the corridor to Bilpin has less of a case and comes out as a not as necessary. Given the heartache of securing a corridor, surely it would be better for the future need for the road to secure it to Bilpin. Indeed it is arguable that given the heartache, securing the corridor for the whole road would be worthwhile. Further, the corridor needs to allow for HPV, specifically special access vehicles throughout, for example B Doubles with higher mass limits, to future proof the route for future vehicle development.

It is therefore recommended that the draft Plan be amended to secure the corridor in its entirety or if this is not feasible, then at least to Bilpin.

There is significant scope for short term safety works, with the exception of the area around Mount Tomah, and these should be expedited with recommendations for an enhanced program included in the Plan.

Currently the short term recommendations appear to follow a "fit with budget and current vision for the road" approach rather than ramping up improvements to the road with a view to rapidly moving it to a safer driving experience.

There is extensive advice in the draft Plan around the inadequacies of the road, and yet the short term recommendations for 0-5 years are for reviews and the current maintenance strategy.

Members noted that, with the exception of the area around Mount Tomah, there is significant scope for safety improvement works including over taking opportunities, to improve the Bells Line of road to deliver a 3R capability of 110ks. While it is acknowledged that manifold speed variations are confusing, a concerted effort in the short to medium term to have the road generally at 100ks is preferable and this should be part of the recommendations.

Finally, on behalf of the Centroc Board I would like to thank you for your efforts and for those of the various teams and committees.

Please contact the Centroc Executive Officer Ms Jennifer Bennett on 0428 690 935 for any further questions.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke.

Cr Phyllis Miller OAM

Chair

Central NSW Councils (Centroc)

