M5 corridor expansion – about the project

The M5 transport corridor is the main road freight, commercial and commuter route between Port Botany and Sydney Airport, and south west Sydney. In recent years traffic levels and the number of heavy vehicles on this route means the corridor is operating at or near capacity during peak periods. This impacts on Sydney’s economic productivity and competitiveness.

This fact sheet provides a summary of the project and provides details on how to find out more information.

What is the M5 corridor?

The M5 Transport Corridor is the main road freight, commercial and commuter route between Port Botany and Sydney Airport, and south west Sydney. It is part of the National Highway Network connecting Sydney, Canberra and Melbourne.

The existing M5 Motorway can be divided into two sections:

• Section 1: The M5 South West Motorway – A 22 kilometre tolled road with two lanes in each direction between Camden Valley Way, Prestons and King Georges Road, Beverly Hills, operated by Interlink Roads.

• Section 2: The M5 East Freeway – A ten kilometre road connecting the M5 South West Motorway with General Holmes Drive/ Eastern Distributor. The M5 East Freeway currently includes two, four kilometres tunnels between Bexley Road, Earlwood and Marsh Street, Arncliffe. Each tunnel contains two lanes of traffic.

What changes are proposed?

The proposal will increase capacity on the M5 Motorway, improve travel times and reduce congestion.

Key features of the proposed M5 corridor expansion are:

• Widening the existing M5 South West Motorway from two to three lanes in each direction.

• Widening the M5 East Freeway east of King Georges Road to four lanes in each direction.

• Four new lanes in tunnel next to the existing M5 East tunnel.

• A new arterial surface road from the M5 East tunnel to the airport and the industrial areas of inner southern Sydney.

What are the benefits?

The proposed M5 corridor expansion would deliver much needed additional road capacity, providing:

• Improved access to Port Botany and Sydney Airport.

• Reduced congestion in both the corridor and the surrounding arterial network

• Improved travel times for individuals and businesses using the corridor.

• Economic benefits for people who rely on their vehicles for work, such as tradespeople and delivery companies.

• Enhanced access to health, education and leisure facilities.
• Reduced greenhouse gas emissions from vehicles.
• Improved prosperity, economic productivity and competitiveness of Sydney as a global city.
• Improved air management in the current M5 tunnel.

What are the details for the M5 East tunnel duplication?
Duplicating the M5 East tunnel from Bexley Road, Earlwood, to Cooks River, Mascot, which includes:
• Providing a new, westbound tunnel to provide four lanes. This could be either a single four lane tunnel or twin two lane tunnels, with entry and exit portals in the vicinity of the existing tunnel portals.
• Providing four lanes in the east bound direction by maintaining the existing eastbound tunnel and converting the existing westbound tunnel to east bound.
• Retaining two lanes in each direction from the Marsh Street portals to General Holmes Drive.
• Providing two lanes in each direction from the Marsh Street tunnel portals to the new arterial road to the industrial areas of inner southern Sydney.
• A new air management system.

What is the new surface link from the M5 East tunnel to the airport and industrial areas of inner southern Sydney?
A new surface link comprising:
• A new surface road with two lanes in each direction along part of the F6 corridor.
• Single lane ramps to provide access from this new road to Qantas Drive/ Airport Drive.
• A signalised intersection at the junction of the connection and Campbell Road.

The RTA would also look at the management of traffic, and possible traffic calming, in the residential areas north of Campbell Road.

Why is the new link required?
Currently the main arterial roads around the Airport, Airport Drive/QANTAS Drive and General Holmes Drive are operating at or near capacity during peak periods.

As part of the corridor expansion a new surface link to the airport and the industrial areas of inner southern Sydney is required to:
• Reduce growth of traffic on General Holmes Drive under the airport runway.
• Reduce traffic on General Holmes Drive, Airport Drive and the Princes Highway around the north of the airport.
• Improve access to the Sydney International Terminal, Port Botany, industrial area and the CBD.

How was the preferred option determined?
The M5 transport corridor presents unique challenges as it serves a range of significant needs including:
• Road transport needs of Sydney’s major port and airport.
• Commuter and business road transport needs of the growing southern and south western areas of Sydney.
• Community and environment amenity needs of surrounding areas.

A range of possible improvements were considered to increase the capacity of the M5 corridor including upgrading public transport and freight rail linkages, demand management strategies and enhancing the road network.

Enhancements to public transport, active transport facilities such as cycling or walking, and demand management would complement the proposed M5 expansion, however these measures would not be adequate to address congestion and future growth in isolation.

The greater flexibility of road based transport means it must be a part of the solution. Rail alone cannot cater for the predicted increase in freight.
Each solution was considered against the following objectives. A solution must:

- Support Sydney’s long term growth and global competitiveness by increasing the efficiency of its freight transport system.
- Improve the capacity and flexibility of the transport system to respond to future change and growth.
- Promote efficient and sustainable urban areas by encouraging investment and growth in identified centres.
- Deliver a sustainable transport system that minimises its environmental impact and contributes to a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.
- Provide better and more equitable access to key centres and activities.
- Contribute to quality of life for people in Sydney.

A combination of surface road network improvements, a new road tunnel, new surface arterial connections and demand management strategies was identified as having the best potential to address existing traffic congestion and to meet the future growth of demand for freight and commuter transport in this corridor.

Key findings of the options review are outlined on the website, www.m5corridorexpansion.com.au.

What studies have been undertaken?
Studies carried out to date include strategic traffic modelling, preliminary concept design, environmental impact and economic assessments and project risk assessment.

What happens next?
In the coming months, the RTA will further develop the project’s design to a point where separate environmental assessments can be undertaken on each section of the M5 corridor.

Initial submissions are welcome now and all interested individuals and organisations are invited to submit their comments. These submissions will help identify emerging issues for the M5 corridor expansion. The initial submissions will help scope the environmental assessments.

The environmental assessments will consider and assess the environmental and social issues arising from the project and describe measures to reduce and manage these impacts.

How can I be involved?
Community consultation is essential. The RTA is committed to engaging with the community and project stakeholders.

Consultation will continue during the environmental assessments process. Detailed information will be provided as investigations continue.

Initial submissions are welcome now and all interested individuals and organisations are invited to submit their comments. These submissions will help identify emerging issues for the M5 corridor expansion. The initial submissions will help scope the environmental assessments.

Submissions will close on 19 February 2010. Comments can be submitted by:
- Email: m5expansion@rta.nsw.gov.au.
- Post: RTA, M5 corridor expansion PO Box 609, Pyrmont NSW 2009.
- Website: www.m5corridorexpansion.com.au.

Consultations will then continue during the next step: preparing the environmental assessments.

More information
For more information on the project and the planning and approvals process, please contact the M5 corridor expansion free call number on 1800 633 332, email m5expansion@rta.nsw.gov.au or visit the website at www.m5corridorexpansion.com.au.

Other fact sheets available on the website include:
- Need for the project
- Air quality
- Noise
- Community amenity
- Traffic
- Ecology