M5 corridor expansion – the need for 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 details on the need for the proposed expansion.

Why is the expansion required?
Traffic levels and the number of heavy vehicles on this route mean the corridor is operating at or near capacity during peak periods. This situation will be compounded by the planned commercial and industrial growth at Port Botany and Sydney Airport as well as planned population and employment growth along the M5 corridor.

In total, the proposed expansion of the corridor would result in over $6 billion of travel time savings over a 30 year period.

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.

Aren’t the current roads enough?
Sydney’s road network meets the needs of motorists and other road users most of the time. However many key routes, including the M5 corridor, are experiencing increasing traffic congestion during peak travel times. It is vital that action is taken to address this congestion and plan for the needs of road users into the future.

What will drive this travel demand?
A mix of population and employment growth along the corridor will drive travel demand into the future.

The NSW Government’s planning strategies identify land along the M5 South West Motorway to be developed to intensify employment. The strategic locations along the corridor are Milperra/Bankstown Airport, Moorebank, Ingleburn, Minto and Campbelltown. As these develop into more intense employment areas they will generate demand for commercial and freight transport in the corridor.
Sydney Airport and Port Botany

Airports and ports must operate efficiently in a global city. Sydney Airport is an international gateway, exporting and importing 400,000 tonnes of goods, and 30 million business travellers and tourists per year. (Sydney Airport Masterplan 2009).

Sydney Airport and Port Botany will experience significant growth in the next two decades with passenger and freight levels predicted to more than double. (Sydney Airport 2006; 2006 Airport Ground Travel Plan; Sydney Ports Corporation 2009; Port Botany Container Terminal Expansion brochure, October 2009)

This growth will place pressure on Sydney’s road and rail network, and will be felt greatest on the M5 South West Motorway and the M5 East Freeway.

The NSW Government is working to increase the movement of containers by rail to 40 per cent within the next decade. However, with the expected growth in container cargo, this means up to 1.7 million containers would still rely on road transport to and from the port by 2020 (Sydney Ports Corporations 2009).

Inner southern Sydney corridor

To accommodate Sydney’s future growth and changes in household size, it is planned that 60 to 70 per cent of new homes will be in existing urban areas including inner southern Sydney (Department of Planning 2007).

Growth is focused on enhancing the economic role of this area. Substantial growth will occur in the suburbs of Redfern and Waterloo with accommodation for 4,000 new residents and 18,000 jobs planned.

Green Square is planned to accommodate 33,000 new residents and 28,000 new jobs over the next 25 years.

South West Growth Centre

The South West Growth Centre, which spans the local government areas of Liverpool, Camden and Campbelltown, is planned to accommodate around 110,000 new homes in the next 30 years.

The South West Growth Centre covers approximately 170 square kilometres or over twice the size of the Bankstown local government area. Land is progressively being released at Edmondson Park. The growth centre will require a transport network to provide access to education, work, recreation and health facilities.

Western Sydney Employment Area

Located at the junction of the M7 and M4 motorways, the Western Sydney Employment Area comprises 1,500 hectares of industrial land. Distribution centres for companies that import goods from overseas are well located in this area, situated at the junction of two motorways. Containers of goods delivered to Port Botany are transported to these distribution centres and unpacked and distributed more widely across Sydney and other regional centres, primarily by road transport.

What else is being done?

Completed and current initiatives

A number of road initiatives and infrastructure improvements have commenced in recent years that will improve the operation and movement of freight, commercial, commuter and passenger travel.

The Sydney Orbital Network

The Sydney Orbital is a 110 kilometre motorway that circles Sydney. It was completed in March 2007 with the opening of the Lane Cove Tunnel.

Since opening, the orbital has opened up access to major industrial and commercial centres, including Port Botany and Sydney Airport, reduced traffic congestion in residential areas, improved traffic flow and removed heavy vehicles from key local roads. It included the M7 Motorway, a 40 kilometre motorway linking the M5 South West Motorway at Prestons, with the M4 Motorway at Eastern Creek and the M2 Motorway at West Baulkham Hills.

The M7 Motorway meets the increasing travel demand generated by employment and population centres within and around the corridor.
Since 2005, the Westlink M7 has improved travel times, reduced the amount of traffic using local roads and generated new land development in western Sydney.

Widening F5 Freeway between Camden Valley Way and Narellan Road
The F5 Freeway is connected to the Sydney Orbital at Prestons and extends south of the M5 South West Motorway. To cater for current and planned traffic volumes, the RTA is already widening the freeway between Camden Valley Way, Prestons and Narellan Road, Campbelltown.

Work on parts of this section – Camden Valley Way to Brooks Road – was completed in 2008. Work on the remainder of the route – between Brooks Road and Narellan Road – began in 2009 and is due to be completed in 2011.

What happens if we do nothing?
Future transport demand in the M5 corridor represents a significant challenge to Sydney and NSW.

Traffic modelling shows that average morning travel speeds in the M5 corridor will drop to 43km/h westbound and 33km/h eastbound if there are no improvements to the corridor.

The M5 corridor is already experiencing significant congestion during peak times, with times of high demand spreading further throughout the day and across the weekend. Population and employment growth along the corridor will only add to the pressure.

Doing nothing to expand the M5 corridor will mean:
- Increasing travel times and longer AM and PM peak periods.
- Poorer access to community facilities and key residential areas.
- Difficult in supporting future growth.
- Reduction in Sydney’s economic competitiveness.
- Increased vehicle emissions as cars are stopping and starting.

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.