

**BEECROFT - CHELTENHAM
CIVIC TRUST
INCORPORATED**

PO Box 31, BEECROFT, NSW, 2119

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This Bulletin

This third Civic Trust Special Bulletin provides more information on the North West Rail Link (NWRL), to assist residents in understanding its impact on Beecroft and Cheltenham. The Trust has been fortunate in being assisted by a panel of professional advisors who have assessed the Transport Infrastructure Development Corporation (TIDC) *Environmental Assessment and Concept Plan* from a robust technical perspective. Their advice forms the basis of this Bulletin.

The North West Rail Link

The North West Rail Link forms part of the *Metropolitan Rail Expansion Program*, which also includes the South West Rail Link to Leppington and a new CBD Rail Link under the harbour and through the CBD.

The key features of the project for which TIDC is seeking approval – the current State Government's preferred option (the 'Project') include, in our area:

- Two additional tracks (four total) in 2.5 kilometres of the Northern Line between Epping and Beecroft
- A six track 'dive' between The Promenade and the Village Green that will require clearance of all trees in this part of the rail reserve, major construction and noise walls, and shallow tunnelling under Beecroft Public school
- Works at Cheltenham Station to provide for quadruplication and 'easy access' lifts and footbridge similar to Rhodes and West Ryde.

The North West Rail link proposal will be devastating for Beecroft and Cheltenham.

Quadruplication, and a huge six track dive structure will clear most of the remaining trees from the rail reserve, and turn Cheltenham station into another West Ryde.

TIDC has offered an alternative that improves both the environmental impact and the operations.

The surface proposal will create one of the most complex railway junctions in Sydney, and is completely at odds with the State Government's current spending of at least \$1.5 billion on 'Clearways' to reduce complexity and unreliability.

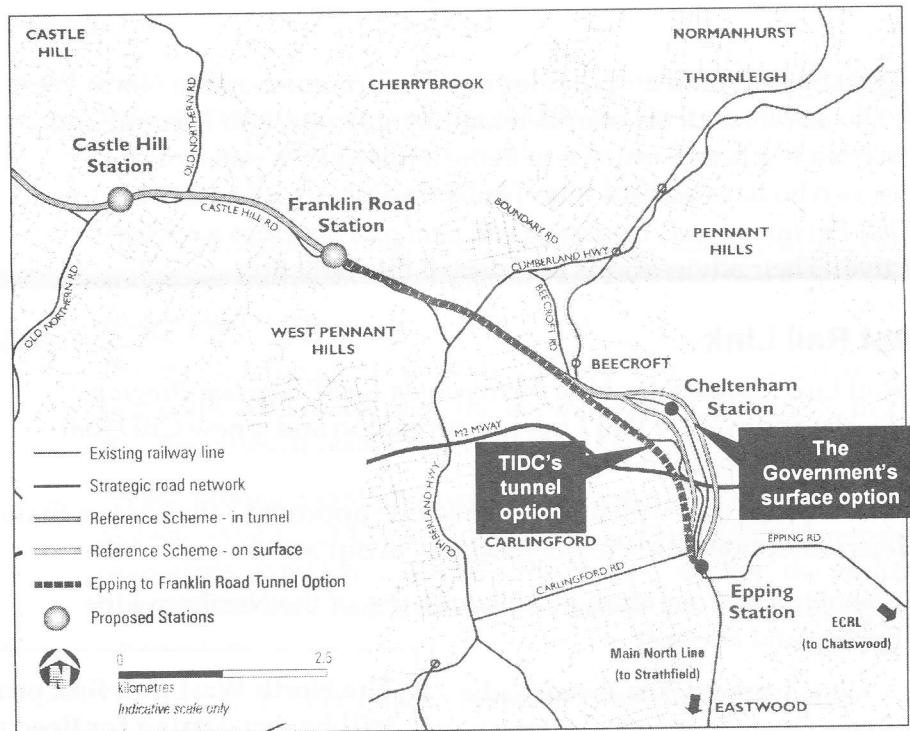
Are there alternatives?

Yes, there are. TIDC has offered an alternative to the devastation of the Project for which concept approval is being sought. This alternative comprises an underground connection to the Epping-Chatswood Rail Link and a tunnel underneath Beecroft Road, as shown on the plan on the next page.

This alternative proposal is not only better environmentally, but it is a preferable transport solution for the long term.

What is the TIDC tunnel alternative?

Stub tunnels were provided by TIDC for the Carlingford-Parramatta connection, which has been deferred indefinitely. These were designed to provide a grade separation – a sort of underground flyover – for the continuation of the line to Parramatta. For its Epping-Franklin Road option, TIDC has proposed to use these to connect the North West Rail Link to the line to Chatswood. The line would go under the M2 and continue in deep tunnel under parts of Beecroft Road as shown below.



The tunnel will provide service as good or better than the surface project

The tunnel option's underground junction provides the same or better level of service to the North West that the current proposal – exactly the same operating pattern and timetables. Our trains would be unaffected, and would run to the city via Epping and Chatswood using the Epping-Chatswood link (ECRL), as presently planned. North West trains are not planned to stop at Cheltenham under any option and so also would be unaffected.

Because the tunnel option avoids mixing different trains, all services are likely to be more reliable. In particular the tunnel does not take away capacity for freight and Central Coast trains – which is why the quadruplication is needed otherwise.

The tunnel option would not allow trains to run from the North West line to Strathfield. However, the only trains that are planned to run via Strathfield to the City from the North will be the Central Coast Intercity and 'all stops' services starting at Epping. They would do so under any option.

The surface option's operation that merges North West suburban trains on to, and then off of, the Main Northern Line in the name of 'operational flexibility' is poor operational practice. Major urban rail systems like those in Hong Kong, Washington and Singapore do not do it.

The impacts of the surface option will be devastating

Noise and Vibration

It is highly probable that EPA recommendations and industrial standards for construction airborne noise will be exceeded throughout the community over a protracted period. Substantial rock-breaking will be required to widen the cuttings. Once the line goes into operation, the number of trains will increase, the outer tracks will be closer to homes and noise walls will be necessary.

Standard railway operating practice requires that train air-horn be sounded on approach to tunnel-mouths and as the train exits the tunnels. Train horns emit 120dB, to be heard 400 metres ahead. People living near the dive and across the valleys will experience this every 3-8 minutes throughout the day and evening.

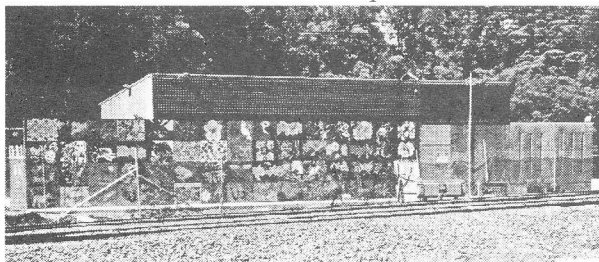
Visual Impact

The six-track dive and the need for drastic noise reduction walls will create a concrete corridor that will be visually intrusive over the full length of the railway between Epping and Beecroft.

TIDC has demonstrated a total lack of urban design skills and no empathy with the Beecroft Cheltenham heritage environment. TIDC does not apply the standards that apply for example in the roads sector, where the RTA publishes very exacting standards to be met with all motorway construction.

Natural Environment

TIDC and RailCorp have progressively destroyed a large part of the remnant forest in the rail corridor over the past decade. Most recently hundreds of trees were



cleared or lopped over the length of the 33kVAC feeder lines from the M2 to Pennant Hills, TIDC removed all street trees in front of its Beecroft Substation, and many more have been taken for access and for spoil and ballast dumps.

Many hundreds more will be lost with the surface NWRL project, including over the full corridor in the vicinity of the dive. Amongst the general vegetation community in the Epping-Beecroft rail corridor there are two endangered ecological communities (one critically so) with respect to the EPBC Act. There are also 5 species of endangered fauna involved.

The Dive structure poses the problem of water discharge and this will be difficult in the area chosen. The surface project would require a water treatment plant which will include a settling pond, or a complete discharge pumped to a station-based facility.

Amenity

Aside from the loss of local amenity from the factors outlined above, the proposal will lose at least half of the parking at Cheltenham, and degrade the area around it due to the scale of what is proposed. A major concern is the proposal to use the Village Green as a construction depot.



TIDC Photo:

**Chatswood Dive under construction
The Beecroft Dive would be 50%
larger, with six tracks instead of four**

What should you do?

You should write your own submission to the authorities listed below, if you haven't already done so. Much more information including a diagram of the proposed tunnel and our two previous bulletins, is available on the Trust website www.2119.org.au

Your submission need only address the preference for the TIDC Epping-Franklin Road tunnel option. **It should absolutely reject the Beecroft Dive proposal, which has major environmental and operational flaws.** Some points you might like to make include:

- The tunnel option will avoid creating an unnecessarily complex junction between the intercity and freight trains and the intensive North West services - reducing complexity and unreliability is, after all, the objective of the government's \$1.5 billion 'Clearways' program.
- The devastation of major earthworks, vegetation clearing, huge dive structure and noisy trains blasting their air-horns all day in a heritage conservation area would not be needed.
- There would be no need for the construction area and disruption of the Beecroft-Cheltenham area, the environmental damage to the Village Green and the years of construction activity intrusion.
- As the Epping-Franklin Road tunnel option would use the stub tunnels already existing at Epping, disruption to the existing construction and rail operations would be minimal. The route is shorter, the additional tunnel length is modest, and it is simpler (and no more expensive) to build than the surface line.
- The tunnel from Epping to Franklin Road would be considerably deeper than the Beecroft Dive option. It will have fewer problems of train noise and vibration during operation, and building damage during construction is less likely.
- Any points from our Special Bulletins 1 and 2 or which are important to you.

You should send you submissions **before the closing date of 2nd February 2007** to

**The Director,
Major Infrastructure Assessments
Department of Planning**
GPO Box 39
Sydney NSW 2001
plan_comment@planning.nsw.gov.au

Minister for Planning, The Hon Frank Sartor MP,
Level 34 Governor Macquarie Tower,
1 Farrer Place,
SYDNEY NSW 2000
office@sartor.minister.nsw.gov.au

and copy to
Minister for Transport, John Watkins MP,
Level 30 Governor Macquarie Tower,
1 Farrer Place,
SYDNEY NSW 2000
dp.office@watkins.minister.nsw.gov.au

You might like to send a copy of your letter to the Civic Trust, PO Box 31 Beecroft 2119 or email to rail@2119.org.au

Thank you for taking time to help our community.