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March 16, 2020

PORTRUSH-MAGILL ROAD INTERSECTION UPGRADE

In the Department of Planning Transport & Infrastructure's (DPTI) own words: 'A sustainable and high performing multi-modal transport network must operate in a way that is efficient, reliable, co-ordinated, environmentally and socially responsible, and safe.' (Keeping Metro Traffic Moving Report)

Taking this statement as the measure to evaluate DPTI's modus operandi in relation to the proposed Portrush-Magill Road intersection upgrade, the Norwood Residents Association (NRA) strongly objects to this initiative on a number of grounds.

1. CONSULTATION

DPTI's efforts in this area have been woefully inadequate.

The TWO recent short notice community information sessions organised were neither 'informative' nor productive. Serious questions seeking clarity were deflected with non-committal answers and people directly affected by this development were left feeling frustrated, powerless and none the wiser. This modus operandi has evidently been par for the course since March 2019, when DPTI first released a project notice to 1500 properties in close proximity to the intersection, but provided negligible follow-up to repeated requests for further detail.

As late as August and September last year, DPTI meetings with the Norwood, Payneham & St Peters (NPSP) Council affirmed the project was still in its concept design stage. This effectively limited crucial and timely input into a development that has major ramifications for this area, because Council believed it would be advised before any further stakeholder/community engagement occurred. This was NOT the case. DPTI was at that point already approaching and 'negotiating' with people directly affected and steadily acquiring property without community consultation or presenting its promised proposals to Council.

Affected residents complain that reasonable requests for information via email or from DPTI officers attending targeted sites have been consistently ignored and those living one house back from the main road (e.g. Prosser Avenue) had not been made aware of the potential impact of the road widening on their quality of life.

The February 2020 'Fact Sheet', site map, feedback sheets and general DPTI approach do not reassure people that the development is any more than a fait accompli as opposed to any genuine/democratic attempt to involve citizens in decision making affecting their communities.

2. RATIONALE

The Federal and State governments are promising to 'bust congestion', which is the latest slogan to cover a hollow promise that has been made by governments for at least the past sixty years. This joint government project to overcome traffic snarls and keep traffic flowing, aims to:

- improve travel times
- increase safety for all users (cars, trucks, cyclists and pedestrians)
- improve network reliability and
- increase economic productivity

In the case of Magill Road/Portrush Road, even the promise of short term relief from congestion is hard to believe, since Portrush Road traffic backs from The Parade and Payneham Road intersections almost to Magill Road already. It appears to us that widening Portrush Road at Magill Road might allow traffic to move freely for just one block before joining the back of the queue waiting at the next intersection.

Perhaps common-sense suggestions proffered by local sources/stakeholders on ABC radio might generate better solutions. These include:

- bus offsets to maintain steady traffic flow
- re-routing the numerous trucks/semi-trailers which significantly add to congestion, according to Don Rosella's (Castle Motors) observations over the past 20 years

This intersection forms part of the Outer Ring Route, providing major north-south traffic and freight access. While the proposed road and rail transport corridor east of the Adelaide Hills to connect Victoria and northern Adelaide was ruled out by the government because the overall Global Link business case was deemed economically unviable, perhaps the concept of an alternative trucking route that minimises rather than encourages heavy trucks through our suburbs (as this 'upgrade' will do) needs revisiting.

Will this project be an end in itself or part of a flow-on effect? When this issue was raised at DPTI's information session, we were told that the Department is 'looking at' what to do about congestion at the Payneham Road and Parade intersections. What **will** they do? The Payneham Road/Portrush Road intersection is already one of Adelaide's ugliest, most unpleasant locations. The whole approach smacks of a quick bureaucratic response to an election promise, rather than a co-ordinated, well researched, considered, strategically managed roadworks program.

At the intersection of The Parade and Portrush Road, three of the four corners are occupied by buildings on the State Heritage list, including the Clayton Wesley Uniting Church, which provides the most iconic image of The Parade. To the NRA it is unthinkable that these buildings could possibly be destroyed as part of a 'greater plan'.

We hope that the State government feels likewise, but with DPTI's engineers apparently convincing the government that the treasured Urrbrae Gatehouse (also on the State Heritage list) is disposable to make way for another intersection 'upgrade', we are not so sure.

COST

We understand that it will cost \$98m to widen the intersection, with the acquisition of 47 properties. Buildings will be demolished, businesses will close and residents will have to find somewhere else to live. Homes that are currently buffered from the main road by other buildings, will in turn be exposed to more traffic, noise and lower property values. Where a caveat is placed on resumed property, people can't access their equity to purchase something else, despite orders to vacate the premises by June 2020. How is this considerate, fair or 'socially responsible'? We know that the residents of at least one of these houses are devastated by being forced to sell and relocate, having made the beautification of their 'forever' home a total commitment for the past 6-7 years. Even more reprehensible is the fact that any financial 'compensation' for that lost dream is a price well below market value.

There is also the irredeemable loss of heritage buildings (e.g. Kozy Kids Family Childcare), the removal of 40-50 established trees (with unequal replacement) and the increase of asphalt, which adds to a heat island effect and subtracts from amenity.

What will be the benefit of all this cost? Despite DPTI assertions, local community gains are unclear.

SAFETY

An intersection 'upgrade' should deliver better road conditions and safety for ALL road users - pedestrians, cyclists, cars, trucks, buses et cetera.

Under this new scheme, pedestrians/public transport users now face greater walking distances to cross the road and smaller corner traffic islands affording a measure of protection.

Cyclists are also far more vulnerable. While designated bike green lanes are a good idea to highlight cycling areas (and this colour coding should apply to ALL such lanes), it does not compensate for the longer distances cyclists will travel in between lanes of moving traffic. We also do not consider 1.2m width bike lanes adequate for a 60Km/h road with a high proportion of heavy vehicles.

With cars there is the danger of side-swiping each other as they merge from 3 lanes back into 2. While hard data on the frequency of such accidents in SA is not readily available, anecdotal evidence suggests that merging lanes create problems for drivers, even though these are generally not life-threatening.

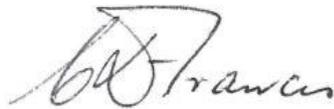
There is also the reality that more lanes will ultimately attract more traffic, thereby short-circuiting any early gains in reducing congestion.

CONCLUSION

In summary, the road widening project at the Magill Road/ Portrush Road intersection will cost an enormous amount of money and cause incalculable heartache for residents whose homes are compulsorily acquired. Public sentiment is quite negative, since many feel the upgrade will be done for trivial (if any) benefit and at substantial monetary and social cost to the wider community. There is also considerable resentment regarding DPTI's appallingly inconsiderate treatment of people who are innocently caught up in this process and its apparent disregard for people's civic rights.

The State government should not implement this upgrade until it at least explores all workable options, is honest with the community about its intentions for the corridor as a whole and ensures that any property resumed for the greater good realises fair market value for its owners. From a community perspective, it also needs to far more convincingly 'operate in a way that is efficient, reliable, co-ordinated, environmentally and socially responsible, and safe.'

Sincerely,



Chris Francis
NRA President



Tom Smith
NRA Secretary

CC

Hon Steven Marshall, Premier
Hon Vickie Chapman, Deputy Premier
Hon Stephan Knoll, Minister for Planning
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