



**RACQ SUBMISSION ON
WESTERN BRISBANE TRANSPORT
NETWORK INVESTIGATION**

The Royal Automobile Club of Queensland Limited

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Summary

The Royal Automobile Club of Queensland (RACQ) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Western Brisbane Transport Network Investigation (WBTNI).

The RACQ firmly believes that the combination of WBTNI Options 3, 6 and 15 – named here as the *North West Motorway* - offers a major strategic solution that establishes a well functioning road hierarchy for the Brisbane region. This combination provides the full bypass and ring road solution sought for the west of Brisbane for many decades. By utilising a tunnel, a preserved corridor and an existing arterial road, this major investment in the region's future can be built with minimal disruption to existing communities and roads given the scale of the civil construction task.

The extent of transport and urban planning benefits, as well as other infrastructure cost savings, warrants progression of this solution as a priority.

The RACQ recommends that the North West Motorway be assessed directly against the Northern Link. We are confident that the North West Motorway will emerge as the preferred solution with greater strategic and economic benefits flowing from broader congestion relief and enhanced public transport opportunities.

Subject to progress of the identified solution as a priority, the RACQ agrees with the preliminary government findings that rule out the *Brisbane Valley Bypass* and *West of Mt Coot-tha Bypass* as unviable.

Introduction

The RACQ congratulates the Queensland Government on the extent to which congestion-busting and strategic transport planning have been made key priorities. This includes the recent agreements between the Department of Main Roads and Brisbane City Council (BCC) to integrate traffic management systems and add functionality to the Brisbane Metropolitan Transport Management Centre. Further adoption of Intelligent Transport Systems and improved access management and incident responses are effective and relatively low-cost measures to address congestion.

With the high cost of infrastructure, congestion, safety and environmental impacts, it is important that sound policy and project decisions are made. These need to move beyond the current debate between roads and public transport, toward a long term vision of a sustainable, integrated and resilient transport system that meets all future needs.

This submission details the RACQ's preferred strategic solution (WBTNI Options 3, 6 and 15 – the *North West Motorway*), which establishes a well-functioning road hierarchy for the Brisbane region. This submission also provides brief comments on each of the WBTNI transport network improvement options, including how they are impacted by progression of the North West Motorway.

The RACQ welcomes further discussion of strategic transport issues with government, stakeholders and the community and looks forward to progress on the preferred options put forward by WBTNI.

The following comments provide the RACQ's detailed position and rationale for the North West Motorway as the strategic solution and comments on other corridor options.

RACQ Preferred Solution: North West Motorway

The combination of WBTNI Options 3, 6 and 15 will result in a limited access and grade-separated facility linking the Western Freeway with the Gympie Arterial Road and Airport Link. This combination provides the full bypass and ring road solution sought for the west of Brisbane for many decades. By utilising a tunnel, a preserved corridor and an existing arterial road, this major investment in the region's future can be built with minimal disruption to existing communities and roads given the scale of the civil construction task.

WBTNI Option 3 is a tunnel from the Western Freeway to Stafford Road, providing north-south transport capacity through this densely settled hilly terrain that is lacking adequate surface corridors. WBTNI Option 6 is the upgrade of Stafford Road to form a strong east-west spine that links the major north-south spines of North West Motorway, Gympie/Lutwyche Road and Gateway Motorway. WBTNI Option 15 is a grade separated motorway link from Stafford Road to Gympie Arterial Road at Carseldine, utilising the preserved North West Transport Corridor adjacent to Trouts Road.

The RACQ believes that the North West Motorway should be progressed as a priority because of the broad range of solutions and opportunities associated with it. The North West Motorway provides a full western bypass of the Brisbane urban area. Utilising Stafford Road and Airport Link, it also serves an inner orbital function that connects the north and west of Brisbane with the International Airport. An upgraded Stafford Road provides a high order east-west link about seven kilometres north of the CBD to take maximum advantage of the Airport Link east-west connection and associated upgrade of the Airport roundabout.

Maps of Freight Priority Routes in South East Queensland highlight the absence of any adequate road hierarchy through the north-west of Brisbane, linking the limited access and grade separated Western Freeway with Gympie Arterial Road. The North West Motorway is the only WBTNI option that provides this missing link in our strategic road and freight network.

The additional north-south capacity and east-west link provided by the North West Motorway will take pressure off the Inner City Bypass and allow it to function effectively with the added pressure of the North South Bypass Tunnel (NSBT), Airport Link and Hale Street Link feeding into it. This will also take through traffic off most roads in the north-west of Brisbane, reducing congestion and allowing the lower-order road network to function as originally intended.

The North West Motorway would require a major investment and the support of Local, State and Federal Governments. The RACQ believes this cost would be more than offset by the long-term benefits to passenger and freight traffic through shorter travel distances and reduced congestion, and the local community through amenity, public transport and cycling improvements that could be made available on the surrounding surface road network.

The North West Motorway, by finally providing the strategic bypass and inner orbital functions around Brisbane, also results in savings by reducing or delaying the need for other infrastructure projects. Some of the savings will be to BCC through reduced pressure to upgrade many intersections and roads in the local area. The major savings, however, accrue to the state-controlled road network due to the more efficient travel patterns for freight and long distance trips and, importantly, due to the increased resilience of the strategic regional road network.

Resilience in a transport network becomes more important as traffic levels approach capacity for greater periods of time, making the broad network vulnerable to even slight traffic disruptions. A greater focus on access management and incident response is an important part of improving resilience, but the ability to re-direct traffic to an alternative bypass route is a major advantage.

If there were substantial delays on the Gateway Motorway, Pacific Motorway, Ipswich Road or Gympie Road, many of the long distance freight and passenger trips could be accommodated with relatively minor inconvenience by diverting to the North West Motorway. This would avoid the increasingly regular experience of one motorway disruption leading to major delays for many thousands of commuters and others across much of the Brisbane network.

The major advantages to freight and the linking of much of Brisbane to the airport, as well as the congestion relief, public transport opportunities and completion of a genuine bypass, combine to provide ample rationale for the Federal Government to devote funding toward the North West Motorway utilising Infrastructure Australia or the Building Australia Fund.

The solution for all modes

The North West Motorway is the preferred west Brisbane road solution because it:

- adds capacity where it is needed to reduce congestion (according to the traffic models);
- completes a logical and strategic missing link in the orbital and bypass road hierarchy;
- reduces the need for other road upgrades; and
- improves vehicle travel for trips (eg. cross-city) that do not compete with public transport systems.

The RACQ agrees with the need to improve public transport so that more people have a reasonable alternative to using their car. The northern segment of the North West Motorway alignment is also suitable for the provision of rail lines in the alignment between the northbound and southbound motorway lanes, similar to the existing rail line from Perth CBD to Joondalup. This new rail line could provide a valuable

alternative north-south corridor between Bald Hills and the Ferny Grove rail line with several new train stations to intercept inbound car traffic at 'Park and Ride' nodes, adding capacity, resilience and catchment to the rail network.

The rail line proposed above would add value to a potential inner city rail upgrade option that links the Beenleigh, Gold Coast and Cleveland lines near Park Road Station through a tunnel under the river and CBD to the Ferny Grove rail line between Newmarket and Enoggera and on to Bald Hills.

This proposal represents a major rail upgrade that delivers a strong central hub to ensure the future role of the rail network for Brisbane and surrounds, given the Queensland government focus on patronage increases and rail extensions to the north and south coasts. This option should be considered against other more narrowly focussed upgrades of inner city rail capacity and distribution.

Brisbane's transport system should be designed and built to provide the highest level of service feasible for all modes (walking, cycling, public transport and cars) so that people have real choices. The North West Motorway should include high quality bicycle and shared paths along and across all surface links and tunnel entries to ensure that it also improves the pedestrian and cycle networks of Brisbane. Transport corridors are important public spaces, so the North West Motorway should also incorporate local amenity improvements (shade tree plantings, noise amelioration, quality urban design and public spaces).

Why the North West Motorway is a priority over Northern Link

The Northern Link is a potential solution that could act as an inner west orbital and provide radial capacity to relieve congestion on Milton Road and Coronation Drive. It should be assessed for priority against the North West Motorway. The RACQ believes the North West Motorway with Stafford Road upgrade would emerge as the preferred immediate solution.

The North West Motorway has a similar south-west entry to that proposed for Northern Link but it follows more of a north-south alignment, utilising Stafford Road instead to provide the east-west connection. The North West Motorway would have fewer construction and negative amenity impacts on surrounding communities compared with Northern Link due to the location of proposed entry points. The Northern Link acts primarily as a duplication of Milton Road with improved connections to the Inner City Bypass rather than a western bypass of the urban area. As such, it will not relieve congestion on any roads to its north and will funnel additional traffic onto the Inner City Bypass and Lutwyche Road – both already struggling with their major roles in the road hierarchy.

These shortcomings of Northern Link are demonstrated in the *Northern Link Preliminary Assessment Report* of August 2007, which reports a range of most likely net project costs of \$672 million to \$861 million. These large costs demonstrate that more than 40 years of toll revenue is insufficient to fund the project, even with their assumption of traffic funnelling by declaring existing general use lanes as T3 lanes (three or more people/car only) on both Milton Road and Coronation Drive.

The important measure of a road's viability is the Net Present Value or Benefit Cost Ratio that compare all the benefits of the road – primarily through travel time, vehicle operating cost and crash cost reductions – against total construction and maintenance costs. Unfortunately these measures have not yet been reported for Northern Link.

The existing Federal government election commitment of \$500 million for Northern Link could be diverted to the North West Motorway as the preferred strategic solution deserving of Federal funding support and AusLink national corridor status.

Comments on WBTNI Transport Network Improvement Options

This section provides brief commentary on all WBTNI options, including how they fit within the context of the North West Motorway and the South East Queensland Infrastructure Plan and Program (SEQIPP).

1. Brisbane Valley Bypass

The RACQ agrees that this proposal is unviable due to low traffic levels.

2. West of Mount Coot-tha Bypass

The RACQ agrees that this proposal is not required if the North West Motorway is progressed.

3. Toowong to Everton Park tunnel

This forms part of the North West Motorway.

4. Toowong to Kelvin Grove (TransApex Northern Link)

The RACQ supports the broad TransApex strategy and commends Brisbane City Council on progress to establish several major new road links in the inner city.

The RACQ believes the North West Motorway with Stafford Road upgrade would emerge as the preferred solution over Northern Link (SEQIPP Project 4.8) as discussed previously.

Northern Link should remain a future tunnel option specifically to relieve congestion on Milton Rd and Coronation Drive if preferred over the East-West Link (Option 5).

5. Toowong to Buranda (TransApex East-West Link)

The East-West Link is considered, along with Northern Link, as a future tunnel option compatible with the North West Motorway.

6. Everton Park to Kedron (Stafford Road)

This is the east-west link that connects the North West Motorway with the other major north-south corridors of Gympie Road and Gateway Motorway using the Airport Link.

7. Darra to Toowong (Centenary Highway – Western Freeway)

The upgrade to six lanes of this corridor (SEQIPP Project 3.20) is warranted by existing congestion levels and is compatible with the North West Motorway.

8. Kelvin Grove to Everton Park

The North West Motorway would reduce congestion along Kelvin Grove and Enoggera Roads, allowing for improved public transport services without the need for a major upgrade.

9. Everton Park to Albany Creek

The North West Motorway would reduce congestion dramatically along South Pine and Old Northern Roads, allowing for improved public transport services without the need for a major upgrade.

10. Kelvin Grove to Ashgrove

This project is warranted by existing congestion levels along Musgrave Road. The North West Motorway, with entries and exits from Waterworks Road, would reduce congestion slightly along this corridor.

11. Kenmore to CBD

The North West Motorway, along with provision of the Kenmore Bypass (SEQIPP Project 4.12) and widening of the Western Freeway to six lanes, will allow increased public transport priority along the Moggill Road and Coronation Drive corridor.

The *Inner City Bus Access Capacity Study* (SEQIPP Project 4.61) is developing a high volume bus link between West End, the CBD and Newstead. An extension to include a link from West End to the Mount Coot-tha Botanic Gardens would further reduce congestion. This could be achieved with a two-lane bridge from Victoria Street/Montague Road at West End to Land Street at Toowong, linking to Sylvan Road and a fly-over of the Mount Coot-tha roundabouts to a Park and Ride site between the Western Freeway and Botanic Gardens. This could intercept cars bound for the CBD and increase the resilience of east-west bus and vehicle movements. This bridge would also provide a valuable pedestrian and cycle network link between West End and Toowong.

12. Kedron to Bracken Ridge (Gympie Rd – Northern Busway)

The North West Motorway would reduce traffic levels substantially along Gympie Road north of Stafford Road, as much of the through traffic would prefer the new faster corridor. This would allow space in the existing corridor for bus priority to achieve much of the potential benefits of the extended busway proposal at a small fraction of the price. Substantial savings from the *Northern Busway* (SEQIPP Project 4.35) and *Gympie Arterial investigation and preservation* (SEQIPP Project 4.62) are thus available.

13. Bowen Hills to Ferny Grove (rail)

A new inner city rail corridor proposed as part of the rail option discussed previously would relieve existing capacity constraints along the Ferny Grove rail line and particularly at the intersection with the main line north of Bowen Hills station. The new interchange proposed at Enoggera, Alderley or Newmarket stations would improve service frequency, reliability and travel opportunities as trains can be diverted if necessary and a direct link to the north is available.

14. Ipswich to Bowen Hills (rail)

The second CBD rail river crossing proposed as part of the rail option discussed previously would relieve existing capacity constraints at the northern end of the Merivale Rail Bridge where the Ipswich rail line intersects with the Beenleigh, Gold Coast and Cleveland rail lines. The additional rail tunnel under the CBD would also relieve capacity constraints in the existing network between Roma St and Bowen Hills stations. This enables the Ipswich rail line to increase service frequency and reliability.

15. North West Transport Corridor

This forms part of North West Motorway.

The RACQ also believes this preserved corridor is suitable for provision of a rail line in the motorway median, linking Bald Hills with Enoggera to add a new rail service to suburbs along the corridor with limited existing public transport options.

16. Samford Valley Sub-Arterial Corridor

This preserved corridor should be retained for possible future consideration.

17. Moggill Pocket Sub-Arterial Corridor

This preserved corridor should be retained for possible future consideration.

Conclusion

The RACQ congratulates the Queensland Government on the renewed focus on strategic transport corridors to reduce congestion and address other key priorities. This RACQ submission supports the key North West Motorway identified by WBTNI (Options 3, 6 and 15) to be progressed as a priority solution.

With the high cost of infrastructure, congestion, safety and environmental impacts, it is important that sound policy and project decisions are made. These need to move beyond the current debate between roads and public transport, toward a long term vision of a sustainable, integrated and resilient transport system that meets all future needs.

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