

Change community behaviour first and fifth lane

The revelation in government documents obtained under Right to Information that the proposed fifth lane on the Southern Outlet has the potential to cause serious citywide traffic disruption, delay emergency vehicles and close the southbound lane on the outlet for up to eight months, should come as no surprise (Mercury, January 16).

In a letter to the then premier Peter Gutwein in 2021 the signatories* noted that since the decision to implement a fifth lane on the

The process behind the Southern Outlet fifth lane is fraught, writes John Livermore

Southern Outlet was made, significant developments entirely challenged its necessity. It was claimed independent advice put the economic cost of construction at likely to exceed \$70m.

Given the change in working life patterns (this was the Covid period) a review of the project was essential. Bus interchanges, ferry services and targeted growth in Kingborough and the Huon dramatically swung the

scales against the fifth lane construction.

The project was based on the assumption that the transit lane would necessarily induce people to use public transport, but bus travel would still be 2-3 minutes longer than a car and less convenient. Instead the money should be spent on an integrated transport plan with park and rides, car pooling and community-based transport to

facilitate a shift to high occupancy vehicles, including public transport, significantly reducing vehicle movements in and out of Hobart.

It was claimed the project was listed in the Hobart City Deal in 2016, but Hobart City Council did not request its inclusion and the city deal partners did not receive key documents and there was a lack of consultation with them.

No business case or traffic modelling or costing required under the city deal was undertaken for the project. Nor did it make sense to reduce traffic congestion in

Macquarie St by widening the Southern Outlet. It was held that unless commuters could be persuaded to travel by bus, instead of by car, the plan would be an expensive white elephant. If they could be persuaded of the benefits of bus travel, traffic would flow freely and no transit lane would be needed. Why not change community behaviour first? It was asked.

The fifth lane proposal as it stands has the following results:

1. It reinforces the choke point at the entry to Davey and Macquarie streets. The government documents

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on the outlet won't be needed

obtained note that insufficient funds had been allocated for the fifth lane project for the transit lane and total works to alleviate congestion on the Southern Outlet Macquarie-Davey street corridor.

2. The City Deal had \$51m allocated for Southern Outlet roadworks including earthworks involving unstable dolerite rock and clay on a steep slope. The cost for roadworks alone was \$35m according to the RTI government documents.

3. The Department of State Growth estimates the fifth lane would reduce travelling time on the Southern

Outlet by less than 20 seconds for cars and buses for most of the day and in peak times 10 minutes on average for cars and 1.5 minutes for buses.

4. The target under the city deal to increase the percentage of commuters using public transport from 6.4 per cent to 10 per cent would be knocked out in 12.5 months by the 3.6 per cent increase in Southern Outlet traffic.

5. It ignores the City of Hobart Transport Strategy, the RACT Congestion Report and the state government's Hobart Transport Vision.

*The signatories to a letter to Peter Gutwein in 2021 – which outlined that since the decision to implement a fifth lane on the Southern Outlet was made, significant developments challenged its necessity – included Simon Wright and Amanda Massy (Southern Outlet Noise Affected Residents), Andrew Wilkie, Dean Winter, Cassy O'Connor, Cr Anna Reynolds, Cr Paula Wriedt, Cr Bec Enders and John Livermore.

John Livermore is chair of Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport (this organisation does not necessarily endorse this submission).

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