

# Chapter 4. Consultation

## 4.1 Consultation prior to the environmental assessment

The early planning stages of the project were outlined in the North West Rail Link Overview Report – Connecting Communities (Transport NSW, 2002). The release of this report in 2002 provided the first opportunity for public comment on the then preferred alignment. The aim of the preliminary consultation was to provide information about the proposed rail link and encourage community input into the early planning process.

Some of the positive comments received were:

- » The project would be a vital transport link for a growing area of Sydney;
- » It would reduce traffic congestion in Sydney's north west;
- » It would also reduce emissions and smog, improving Sydney's air quality;
- » The new rail line would be used by the majority of respondents; and
- » Property values would rise as a consequence of improved access to public transport.

Key environmental concerns raised by the community at that time included:

- » Construction management with respect to noise and vibration, spoil disposal, air quality (dust) and water quality impacts;
- » Impacts on threatened species and endangered ecological communities;
- » Impacts on indigenous and non-indigenous heritage;
- » Visual impacts and landscaping treatments;
- » Flooding impacts;
- » Property impacts;
- » Impacts on groundwater; and
- » Other concerns related to detailed design elements, such as at stations, and traffic management.

Submissions received during the exhibition of the Overview Report provided an input into the various subsequent project planning studies, including the Assessment of Environmental Issues Report (SKM, 2003) and the North West Rail Link Alternatives Study (Booz Allen Hamilton and GHD, 2005), and were considered as part of the development of the current proposed alignment (the project).

## **4.2 Consultation activities during the environmental assessment**

### **4.2.1 Objectives**

The objectives of the consultation activities during the preparation of the environmental assessment were:

- » To provide information about the project and the planning process to key stakeholder groups and the community;
- » To provide community members with the opportunity to express their views about the project;
- » To identify issues and suggestions; and
- » To provide input to the future planning of the project.

### **4.2.2 Consultation activities**

TIDC commenced consultation activities as part of the environmental assessment process in November 2005. Consultation has involved providing the stakeholders, as listed below, with information as well as providing opportunities for input with respect to their issues and concerns. Key stakeholders targeted included:

- » Residents and businesses located within 250m of the proposed alignment;
- » Statutory agencies; and
- » Other key stakeholder groups (such as environmental, business and community groups).

The following activities were implemented to provide the community with a range of ways to contact the project team, gain access to information and provide comment.

#### **Contact and feedback mechanisms**

Information line:	1800 684 490
Email:	<a href="mailto:mail@tidc.nsw.gov.au">mail@tidc.nsw.gov.au</a>
Postal address:	Public Affairs Officer TIDC Locked Bag 6501 St Leonards NSW 2065
Website:	<a href="http://www.tidc.nsw.gov.au">www.tidc.nsw.gov.au</a>
Further information	<a href="http://www.planning.nsw.gov.au">www.planning.nsw.gov.au</a>

### **Contact and issues database**

A contact and issues database was set up to manage the contact details, contacts made and the issues raised by stakeholders and community members. All contacts made with the project team were recorded in the database.

### **Advertisement/media release**

An advertisement notifying that the Project Application had been lodged with the Department of Planning was placed in the following newspapers on 4 July 2006:

- » Hills News;
- » Hills Shire Times; and
- » The Northern District Times.

### **Newsletter – planning update**

A newsletter entitled 'North West Rail Link Planning Update Number 1 (June 2006)' was prepared by TIDC to inform residents, stakeholders and other community members about the progress of planning for the project.

The newsletter contained information about the proposed alignment, key features and the next steps to be undertaken. Opportunities to comment on the project and the issues to be addressed in the environmental assessment were detailed in the update.

The newsletter was distributed to approximately 27,000 residents and businesses within 250 metres of the proposed alignment, individuals registered on the project mailing list, and key stakeholders from representative organisations such as local councils.

Copies of the update were also made available at the following locations:

- » Baulkham Hills Library;
- » Baulkham Hills Shire Council;
- » Beecroft Station;
- » Blacktown City Council;
- » Castle Hill Library;
- » Cheltenham Station;
- » Epping Library;
- » Epping Station;
- » Hornsby Shire Council;
- » Pennant Hills Library; and
- » Pennant Hills Station.

### **Summary of community enquiries/submissions received**

A total of 61 contacts were made to TIDC either by the project hotline, email or written submission. The majority of these were general project information enquiries. Table 4.1 provides a summary of contacts received.

**Table 4.1 Summary of community contacts**

Method of contact	Number of contacts
Project hotline	45
Email	14
Letter (written submission)	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>61</b>

**Meetings with key stakeholder groups**

A community scan was conducted to identify key stakeholder groups likely to be interested in the project at the environmental assessment stage. Stakeholders were also identified based on having shown interest in the project during previous stages.

The stakeholder groups were sent a letter to make them aware of the project, and offer them an opportunity to meet with the project team to discuss the project and identify their issues and concerns. This was followed up with a telephone call. A list of the stakeholders contacted is provided in Table 4.2. Those that took up the option of a meeting are noted with an asterisk (\*) beside their name. Twenty four individual meetings were conducted by the TIDC and GHD project team with key stakeholder groups as identified in Table 4.2. These meetings provided an opportunity to explore some issues further and to capture at this stage of the project the concerns of a cross section of the community. These stakeholder meetings occurred during September and October 2006.

**Table 4.2 Stakeholder listing**

Category	Organisation
Business	Hills Chamber of Commerce *
	Hornsby and District Chamber of Commerce and Industry *
	Epping Chamber of Commerce *
	Castle Towers Centre Management *
	Norwest Business Park
Community advocacy	Action for Public Transport NSW *
	North West HEAT *
	Hills Transport Action Group (This group has since indicated that it is no longer in existence)
	Blacktown and District Environment Group
Schools	Beecroft Primary School *
	Tangara Girls High School (PARED Schools) *
	Cheltenham Girls High School
	West Pennant Hills Public School
Recreation	Beecroft Lawn Tennis Club *
Transport	Westbus *

Category	Organisation
	CAMWEST (Cyclist Action Movement)
	NSW Taxi Council
Emergency Services	NSW Police Service
	NSW Fire Brigade *
	NSW Ambulance Service
	NSW Rural Fire Service
Government	Parramatta City Council
	Baulkham Hills Shire Council *
	Hornsby Shire Council *
	Blacktown City Council *
	Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (WSROC) *
	Roads and Traffic Authority *
	Department of Primary Industries (Forests) *
	Department of Primary Industries (Agriculture)
	Department of Primary Industries (Fisheries)
	Department of Natural Resources
Other	Hillsong Church *
	Beecroft-Cheltenham Civic Trust Inc. *
	Koala Park Sanctuary *
	Anglican Retirement Village *
	Innovation Vocational Care (Castlebrook Lawn Cemetery and Crematorium) *
	Hills District Historical Society *
	OK Caravan Park, Rouse Hill
	ENRTAG
	Inala School

#### Meetings with government agencies

Consultation for the environmental assessment also included other consultation with government agencies.

## 4.3 Community issues

### 4.3.1 Key community issues raised

Key issues raised by these community contacts are summarised in Table 4.3. These issues are cross-referenced to where they are addressed in the environmental assessment. It is to be noted that the table below is only a summary of the main issues. All issues arising from discussions will be considered by the project team in the next phase of design development. Further information on issues raised is provided in Appendix M.

**Table 4.3 Key community issues raised**

Main issue	Key issues	Document reference
Project development and design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Timing of project</li> <li>» Details of the project, design of individual features and stations</li> <li>» Reasons for selection of and location of the infrastructure proposed</li> </ul>	Chapter 7
Network operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Links with the operation of the existing rail network</li> </ul>	Section 7.7
Consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Need for more consultation with the community about the details of the project</li> </ul>	Chapter 4
Land use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Information about land acquisition and property impacts</li> <li>» Impacts on land uses and businesses</li> <li>» Need to focus on areas that are considered to be 'significantly' impacted</li> <li>» Integration of the project with surroundings</li> <li>» Project provides a public transport connection to a growing area of Sydney that is currently disconnected from rail infrastructure</li> </ul>	Section 9.1
Traffic and access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Traffic generation (heavy vehicles) Need for adequate parking</li> <li>» Access to stations, pedestrian links and bus interchanges</li> <li>» Capacity and connectivity of surrounding road infrastructure</li> </ul>	Section 9.2
Noise and vibration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Impact of construction and operational noise and vibration on residents and businesses</li> <li>» Noise mitigation measures proposed</li> </ul>	Section 9.3
Socio-economic impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Impacts on social values of existing areas</li> <li>» Potential disruption of businesses</li> </ul>	Sections 9.11, 9.12
Visual and urban design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Appearance of sound attenuation structures</li> <li>» Visual impacts on areas surrounding the stations</li> </ul>	Section 9.10
Ecology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Impacts on habitats and the extent of vegetation clearance</li> </ul>	Section 9.4
Heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Impacts on heritage sites/precincts</li> </ul>	Sections 9.6, 9.7

## 4.4 Statutory consultation

### 4.4.1 Planning focus meeting

A planning focus meeting is often held as part of the approval and assessment process for larger projects. The meeting provides a forum for participants to obtain information on a project, and discuss key issues and potential environmental impacts.

A planning focus meeting for the project was convened by TIDC on 19 December 2005 at SKM's offices. Representatives from the following organisations attended:

- » Department of Planning;

- » RailCorp;
- » Department of Environment and Conservation;
- » RTA;
- » Ministry of Transport;
- » Hornsby Shire Council;
- » Blacktown City Council;
- » Hawkesbury City Council; and
- » Integral Energy.

Baulkham Hills Shire Council was unable to attend, and a separate briefing was provided to Council officers in January 2006.

#### **4.4.2 Additional agency briefing**

An additional agency briefing was held on 9 June 2006 at the Department of Planning, 23-33 Bridge Street, Sydney. The objectives of the briefing were to:

- » Discuss any changes to the project since the planning focus meeting;
- » Outline the key issues for the project;
- » Outline the approval path;
- » Discuss key issues identified with agencies; and
- » Discuss potential assessment requirements.

Representatives of the following organisations attended:

- » Department of Planning;
- » RailCorp;
- » Department of Environment and Conservation;
- » Ministry of Transport;
- » Department of Primary Industries;
- » Roads and Traffic Authority;
- » Growth Centres Commission;
- » Baulkham Hills Council;
- » Camden City Council; and
- » Liverpool City Council.

#### **4.4.3 Issues raised**

The key issues raised at these meetings are summarised in Table 4.4, together with a reference to where they are considered in the environmental assessment.

**Table 4.4 Key issues raised**

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Document reference</b>
Traffic impacts, interaction with other road infrastructure (eg M2, F3)	Section 9.2 and 9.5
Urban design treatments	Section 9.10
Potential impacts on heritage items	Section 9.7
Potential impacts on threatened species and endangered ecological communities	Section 9.4
Potential impacts on the community during construction and operation	Chapter 9
Consistency of the project with new environmental planning instruments, other planning policies and protocols	Chapter 2
Consequences of not proceeding	Chapter 5
Impacts on existing infrastructure	Section 9.1
Project to take into account network planning for roads	Section 9.2
Potential impacts of aboveground alignment at Rouse Hill on precinct planning	Section 9.1
Facilities such as parking, kiss and ride and bicycle facilities	Chapter 7
Potential impacts on regional bus networks and other traffic impacts	Section 9.2
Assumptions being made in relation to future extensions of the project and its implications on development planning	Section 9.1
Potential for cycle lanes along rail routes	Section 9.2

## 4.5 Next steps for consultation

### Public exhibition

The Department of Planning will place the environmental assessment on public exhibition for at least 30 days. During the exhibition period, submissions will be invited from relevant agencies and members of the public.

The Department of Planning will provide TIDC with a copy of the submissions or a summary of the issues raised in the submissions. TIDC will be asked to respond to these issues and may modify the project and the draft statement of commitments to minimise impacts on the environment if required.

If the project or statement of commitments are modified in response to issues raised, a Preferred Project Report may be required to be prepared to describe the scope of the revised project. The Director-General of the Department of Planning may require that this report be made publicly available.

### Assessment and determination

Following the exhibition period, the Department of Planning will, on behalf of the Minister for Planning, review the environmental assessment, submissions received and any preferred project report. Once the Department of Planning has completed its assessment, a draft



assessment report will be prepared for the Director-General of the Department of Planning, which may include recommended conditions of approval.

The recommended conditions will refer to the statement of commitments and may modify them and/or add additional provisions.

The assessment report will then be submitted to the Minister for Planning for determination. The Minister may refuse the project, or approve it with any conditions considered appropriate.

The Minister's determination and the Director-General's report will be published on the Department of Planning's web site immediately following determination (see [www.planning.nsw.gov.au](http://www.planning.nsw.gov.au)).

Consultation with the community and other stakeholders will be ongoing during future stages of the project.