

THE HIGHWAY NEWS

PROPOSED DUPLICATION OF THE GREAT WESTERN HIGHWAY BETWEEN KATOOMBA & LITHGOW

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Tunnel Vision for Blackheath

Two Tunnel Options chosen in countdown to final decision for Blackheath

Paul Toole MP announced this week that the final two options under consideration for Blackheath in the Katoomba to Lithgow highway duplication are:

A short tunnel with portals located at Sutton Park and to the north of Mount Boyce Heavy Vehicle Safety Station

A long tunnel with portals south of Evans Lookout Road to the north of Mount Boyce Heavy Vehicle Safety Station

The Blackheath Area Community Alliance and the Blackheath Highway Action Group welcome the Minister's announcement today that the Strategic Corridor has been lifted and the proposed Station Street and Centennial Glen options have been taken off the table.

We thank the Minister for acting on the community's concerns. We also thank the Blackheath community, Trish Doyle MP, the Mayor and all Councillors for their support. A big win for western Blackheath.



Say NO to the Short Tunnel - Save Homes and Sutton Park

The Short Tunnel option will:

- Damage, if not destroy, at least 12 homes and significantly impact on others
- Remove large parts Sutton Park & destroy its role as a tourist comfort stop
- Impede access to and from the highway at Evans Lookout Road
- Create air and noise pollution during construction for many surrounding residents
- Not preserve the town's amenity and fabric, as it will not deliver a proper bypass

What Comes Next

The NSW Government will preserve a highway corridor through Blackheath. We are therefore asking the community to support us and push for the long tunnel portals and corridor so all homes and businesses are protected.

This is because once that corridor is set it is very hard to get it removed. **A short tunnel corridor will significantly impact properties and we do not want that for those affected households, nor for our broader community.**

BAG will continue to challenge the proposed duplication, defend Medlow Bath, and strongly advocate for the following:

- continuation of the ban on the 25/26/30m b-double trucks through the Blue Mountains
- immediate implementation of urgent safety and congestion measures
- smarter, alternative transport links between the Central West, the Blue Mountains and Sydney, including more freight on rail and a safer Bells Line of Road.

Published by the Blackheath Highway Action Group
Want more information?

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Transport for NSW Consultations on the Two Tunnel Options

Transport for NSW has opened community consultation on the tunnel options for Blackheath, closing at midnight Saturday 14 November.

- An online consultation portal is available at www.rms.nsw.gov.au/projects/Katoomba-to-Lithgow
- Clicking on the portal section will allow you to access a range of documents about tunnels, environmental assessment.
- It will also allow you to register for one of 3 online information webinars being held on 20 October (12.30 pm to 1.30 pm), 21 October (7.00 pm to 8.00 pm) or 28 October (5.00 pm to 6.00pm)
- You can also click on the have your say icon and fill out an online feedback form about the proposed tunnel options.
- You can call 1800 953 777 for further information
- You will be able to mail a written submission to Great Western Highway Program PO Box 2332 Orange NSW 2800.
- Arrangements are being made for local submission collection boxes as well (further information as received)

Please remember, all comments on the tunnel options must reach TfNSW by 14 November 2020

***This is not the last opportunity we will have to comment on this project.** This is a step in the process for TfNSW to choose the final option to gazette for the preservation of a corridor. (ie: this is just the end of the beginning). The Government/TfNSW still have a lot of work to do before the project is finally approved and can go ahead, including further community consultation, environmental studies and securing funding. This will possibly take years. The choice we are facing today is about which tunnel option the residents of Blackheath want further consultation on. Right now we need to come together to ensure that no homes are lost and members of our community do not have to go through years of uncertainty. There are many important questions and concerns about how this project and any tunnel will affect our town, our residents and the environment, as well as impacts it may have on the broader Blue Mountains. These issues need to be raised, debated and addressed during the next phase of the project's development.*

Danger at Medlow Bath

The most important issue at Medlow Bath is the construction of safe right-hand turning lanes for Bellevue Crescent and Foy Avenue. These were promised in 2014 and again in 2016 as a matter of urgency and as part of the recent safety upgrade between Katoomba and Mount Victoria. Instead, TfNSW have taken these critical safety upgrades off the table and turned the project into an excuse to widen to FIVE lanes a 950 metre strip of the Great Western Highway through the centre of Medlow Bath.

TfNSW have dubbed their new Medlow Bath project as *first cab off the rank*. By putting this project at the top of their GWH Highway Upgrade Program list, TfNSW will open the door to ten years of very expensive road works (up to \$10 billion) which will do little or nothing to ease congestion on the road. The Medlow Bath design itself is flawed, and if the project is carried out, it will create more problems than it will solve, with dire consequences for the whole of the Blue Mountains and beyond.

There has been little productive consultation with the local community. Unlike Blackheath, which had a Co-Design Committee, Medlow Bath was presented with the design as a *fait accompli* without input from residents and stakeholders. The issues are as follows:

- Widening the highway from one lane to two, plus fish-tale turning bays for a mere 950 metres will force traffic at either end to merge into one lane. This will cause congestion.
- East-bound traffic turning from the petrol station and the Hydro Majestic Hotel will not be able to turn directly on to the highway. Drivers will be forced to travel west for up to one kilometre, and make a right-hand turn at the traffic lights on the bridge. Again, this will cause congestion.
- As a consequence of this, the traffic lights will be changing constantly, stopping traffic and causing congestion in all directions.
- The 60 km/h speed zone through the town will remain.
- An additional two sets of traffic lights are proposed in this design.
- The 950 metre widening will be likely to create a drag strip for impatient drivers, a major hazard to pedestrians, cyclists and turning traffic.

THIS DESIGN WILL CREATE A NIGHTMARE. If this proposal goes ahead, the Sunday afternoon traffic jam will extend from Mount Victoria to Katoomba!

Medlow Bath and the wider Blue Mountains community deserve better than this. We deserve safer, more efficient and reliable journeys for all road users travelling to and through our village.

The Medlow Bath Highway Action Group (MAG) supports improved transport to the Central West, but does not agree that widening the Great Western Highway is the solution. MAG rejects the proposed duplication of the highway between Katoomba and Lithgow in its entirety and will continue to campaign against it.