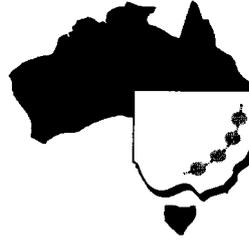


SOUTH EAST AUSTRALIAN TRANSPORT STRATEGY INC.

SEATS

'The South East Australia region between Wollongong and Melbourne will have high quality transport links that form a National corridor enhancing and underpinning the economic development and prosperity of its constituents'.



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Project Manager
Proposed MR92 Upgrade
RTA NSW
90 Crown Street
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Dear Sir

RESPONSE TO MR 92 E.I.S

The South East Australian Transport Strategy (SEATS) has considered the EIS report on the proposed upgrade to Main Road 92 (Nowra-Nerriga).

SEATS regards this road as essential to the development of an efficient inter-modal transport system serving south eastern Australia. The road will link this important region both with the main north-south Hume transport corridor and south western NSW and with the increasingly significant Monaro Highway linking the ACT region and Gippsland.

We expect the investment in this road will bring significant benefit to the people, communities and industries on south coast of NSW, the ACT Region, south western NSW and Gippsland in Victoria. We believe the benefits are sufficiently well established and understood for it to be unnecessary to argue this in detail at this point. However, if you have any doubts about the importance of MR 92 and require further information, please let me know.

SEATS is an organisation comprising 20 Local Governments in south eastern NSW and eastern Victoria, plus regional development organisations, the Gippsland campus of Monash University, and NSW, Victorian and ACT Government agencies. The common interest of these organisations is the need to improve transport infrastructure and transport efficiency in south eastern Australia. Attached is a background note about SEATS.

MR92 is important to the region for a number of reasons. In terms of transport management the road will divert freight and some holiday and commuting traffic from the existing road between Nowra and Moss Vale, which traverses the Cambewarra and Barrengary Mountains, passing through Kangaroo Valley. The Kangaroo Valley road simply is not appropriate for heavy vehicle traffic.

In considering its response SEATS has looked closely at the CD version of the EIS report (Volumes 1-4) and at the species impact statement.

We understand the environmental issues and acknowledge the task of the National Parks and Wildlife Service in managing Morton National Park to protect bio-diversity and habitat for rare and endangered fauna and flora. We also acknowledge that the impact of the bushfires over the past two years has made their task especially difficult.

We have concluded, however, that the upgrading of Main Road 92 need not be inconsistent with the objective of protecting bio-diversity in Morton National Park.

From the regional transport perspective, the upgrading of MR92 is essential. The need for inter-modal connectivity as a means of meeting Australia's transport needs is being increasingly recognised by all spheres of Government, with the Federal Government's *AusLink* Green Paper being recent evidence of this trend.

MR92 will provide important road links with rail, airport and major highway corridors and major regional centres. It will improve the links between the greater ACT region and the Shoalhaven and Illawarra, including the provision of a viable link between the Hume Highway corridor and Port Kembla. It will streamline the connections through to the Monaro Highway, which is developing as a major freight route between eastern Victoria and NSW destinations. It will also improve the links of the greater region to Canberra International Airport. This will offer benefits to the tourist industry, to commuters and for the development local horticulture and perishable foods industries.

The existing road system between these destinations are so inadequate that industries and communities are unable to benefit from modern road transport developments, such as B-doubles. The use of B-doubles is essential to efficient transport development in regional Australia. The Nowra-Nerriga link is a vital module in the development of the region's freight network.

SEATS and its members have already identified the need for further network improvements to compliment the upgrade of MR92 (N>N).

Apart from pressing the point that the need for this road is beyond question, the only issue in the EIS that SEATS needs to comment on is the alternative routes for managing the escarpment – the revised BM4 upgrade of the existing road and BM5 which would involve a new alignment to the west of Bulee Gap.

Clearly from a transport efficiency viewpoint the BM5 option is preferred. It is shorter, safer and quicker.

SEATS notes that the two Local Governments directly involved in this project – Shoalhaven City and Tallaganda Shire – advocate BM5. Both maintain that this route more adequately delivers project objectives. SEATS supports the assessment of these two Councils.

We also note that the National Parks and Wildlife Service, which has management responsibility for Morton National Park, prefers the Revised BM4 upgrade on the grounds that it will cause less disturbance in the park (the existing road is already a disturbance) and because of the need to protect endangered species including an important koala habitat.

We also note, of course, that the EIS report concludes that BM4 is the preferred option.

Conclusion:

After a detailed analysis of the transport problems of South Eastern Australia, SEATS has identified the development of MR92 as a top priority.

We acknowledge that the upgraded road will have some impact on the important Morton National Park but conclude that this impact will be relatively minor.

We support the Shoalhaven City Council and Tallaganda Shire Council view that BM5 is a better option than BM4 for traffic navigating the escarpment around Bulee Gap. We base this view on the need to get the greatest benefit from each dollar spent on transport infrastructure. Transport efficiency will be better served by BM5.

If we had to choose between BM4 and the upgrading not proceeding, we would support BM4.

Please contact me if you need further information.

Yours sincerely

Geoff Robin
Chief Executive Officer