

Westgate Tunnel Project EES Expert Witness Statement – Dr John Stone

I, **JOHN ANDREW STONE** c/o University of Melbourne, Grattan St, Parkville, 3010 in the State of Victoria have been asked by Dr Patrick Love and others to provide expert advice on strategic transport planning issues that relate to ‘critical transport challenges’ which, as indicated in the Summary EES, the Westgate Tunnel Project is designed to address.

My expertise in relation to these matters is based on the following:

1. I am a Senior Lecturer in Transport Planning in the Urban Planning Program at the University of Melbourne’s Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning.
2. I have held positions in the Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning at the University of Melbourne continuously since 2007, and was granted tenure in May 2016. I have more than 25 years’ professional experience in Melbourne’s transport planning policy networks.
3. The political and institutional history of transport planning in Melbourne and its comparative international context is one of my central research interests, and was the subject of my PhD (completed in 2008). I have held relevant research fellowships funded by the Australian Research Council and other Commonwealth bodies; and I have published widely on this topic, including work as lead author on a review of prospects for sustainable mobility in Australian cities for the Australian Council of Learned Academies and the Commonwealth Chief Scientist (Stone, Taylor, Cole, & Kirk, 2014).
4. I teach *Strategic Plan Making* in the MSD Masters of Urban Planning course. This core subject examines the context for and the practice of strategic planning in Victoria in the light of current international theory and examples of best practice.
5. Before my academic career, I worked as Strategic Transport Planner for local government and as an advocate for better social and environmental outcomes from capital and operating expenditure on Melbourne’s transport systems.

The specific brief given to me by the submitters was to give my expert opinion on the following questions:

- A. Can the project realistically succeed in achieving any meaningful reduction of congestion on the M1 given the population growth forecast?
- B. Can the project achieve any significant reduction of traffic on the Westgate given the lack of options to car dependence that communities in the west suffer from?
- C. Can the project as designed significantly improve the inadequate freight access to the Port?
- D. Can the amenity of the west be improved by this project from a transport perspective?

- E. Will the project as designed actually address the mismatch between transport and land use or will it exacerbate the problems?
- F. In your opinion, what options might be considered to improve the project? What other projects might be required to achieve these aims?

A summary of my opinions on these matters is provided below. More detail, if required, can be provided to the Panel in person during the hearings.

Transport demand and the location of services and employment

Current demand for peak-period passenger travel in the Western M1 Corridor, and more generally in western suburbs, is driven in large part by the spatial mismatch in the distribution of employment, and higher-level education, health and other service destinations in favour of locations to the east of the Maribyrnong River.

Construction of large-scale traffic infrastructure, such as the Westgate Tunnel and associated elevated roads, has been widely shown to entrench patterns of dispersal of residential settlement in cities in the developed world (Flyvbjerg, 1998; Hall, 2002; Kenworthy & Laube, 2001). This puts the Project at odds with the aspirations of the current State Government's *Plan Melbourne Refresh* metropolitan strategy to reduce demand for passenger travel and encourage creation of the so-called '20-Minute City'.

The cursory dismissal in the Western Distributor Business Case (p, 54) of the potential to reduce demand for east-west travel as too expensive for the public or private sector (in effect, a call to ignore the key strategic thrust of *Plan Melbourne*) shows the extent to which outdated thinking of traffic engineers is continuing to dominate strategic planning in metropolitan Melbourne.

Prospects for congestion relief

Because the Project will entrench residential dispersal on the western fringe and continued reliance on travel to destinations east of the Maribyrnong, simple arithmetic guarantees that congestion relief on the Westgate Bridge or the western sections of the M1 cannot be achieved in the medium or long-term in the face of projected population growth in the west.

Prospects for reduced impacts of Port freight traffic

The Project will entrench road transport as the dominant mode for freight movement in and out of the Port, and so, if freight volumes grow in line with predicted trends, there will be more trucks in the inner and middle-western suburbs. The evidence in the EES suggests that a significant proportion of this increased volume will find its way into residential neighbourhoods currently not blighted by the problem that is now so serious in parts of Footscray and Yarraville.

Investment required to meet Project aims

Instead of committing at least \$1.5 billion dollars of State funding to a project that entrenches current transport and land-use problems (and requires Melbourne motorists to continue to pay for existing toll road access well beyond the period required to pay off the cost of construction of these roads), resources should be committed to:

- large and small-scale investment to support public and active travel (this would include Melbourne Metro Rail 2 and Airport Rail, electrification and capacity enhancement of existing rail services, light-rail in the middle and outer west to foster desirable re-distribution of employment and services;
- precinct structure planning for new development locations that is designed to achieve significant mode shift;
- planning policies to encourage shift of high-level employment and services to the western suburbs;
- transfer of freight to rail.

International transport planning theory and practice demonstrates the economic, social and environmental costs of offering incentives to cars over public and active travel. It has also shown that it is unwise to simultaneously offer incentives to both private cars and public transport (Vuchic, 1999), as the State Government is doing by supporting both this Project and Melbourne Metro Rail.

Statement of completeness

I have made all the inquiries that I believe are desirable and appropriate and no matters of significance which I regard as relevant have to my knowledge been withheld from the Panel.

References

- Flyvbjerg, B. (1998). *Rationality and Power: Democracy in Practice* (S. Sampson, Trans.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Hall, P. (2002). *Cities of Tomorrow: An Intellectual History of Urban Planning and Design in the Twentieth Century* (3rd ed.). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Kenworthy, J., & Laube, F. (2001). *The Millennium Cities Database for Sustainable Transport*. Brussels: UITP.
- Stone, J., Taylor, E., Cole, A., & Kirk, Y. (2014). *Sustainable Urban Mobility: Barriers and Pathways to Sustainable Urban Mobility in Australian Cities*. Retrieved from Melbourne: www.acola.org.au
- Vuchic, V. R. (1999). *Transportation for Livable Cities*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.