



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY
STANDING COMMITTEE ON PLANNING AND URBAN SERVICES

Report No.79 August 2001

PROPOSALS TO DUPLICATE FAIRBAIRN AVENUE

Recommendations:

The committee recommends:

- that duplication of Fairbairn Avenue not proceed until all options are thoroughly explored and outlined in documents which are widely circulated and which should be the subject of close consultation with residents of Limestone and Fairbairn Avenues
- that planning of roadworks at the southern end of Majura Road (including associated road intersections) reflect this committee's recommendations in its Report No.67 *Proposals for the Gungahlin Drive extension* especially recommendation 20 which reads: 'that the ACT government, in conjunction with the federal government, commence design work for a permanent grade-separated interchange of Majura Road, Morshead Drive, Pialligo Road and Dairy Road (the Monaro Highway)'
- the whole matter of Fairbairn Avenue duplication and road connections at the southern end of Majura Road should be carefully monitored by this committee's successor in the new parliament (to be elected on 20 October 2001).

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I. Issue

1. On 22/6/01 the committee decided to seek a public briefing by officials and by representatives of the Fairbairn Avenue Community Action Group on proposals to duplicate Fairbairn Avenue.
2. This decision reflected members' awareness of concern by local residents about the duplication proposal.

II. What the committee did

3. The committee wrote to the Minister for Urban Services to request his agreement to officials briefing the committee in open session. The committee thanks the Minister for agreeing to our request.
4. A public hearing on Fairbairn Avenue duplication took place on 18/7/01 when the following person addressed the committee:
 - *DUS*: Mr Gill (Manager, Asset Creation) and Mr McNulty (General Manager, Roads ACT); and
 - *Fairbairn Avenue Community Action Group*: Mr Chalker and Mr Burraston.
5. The committee thanks these people for making time available to publicly brief members on the progress of the Master Plan.

III. What the committee heard: DUS

6. In relation to the background to the proposal to duplicate Fairbairn Avenue, DUS stated:

The Fairbairn Avenue project was announced as part of the 2000-01 Budget in the Traffic Congestion Road Safety Program. There was funding of \$1m in the last financial year and construction funding over the next two financial years. In October [2000] we completed a pre-design study on the project which was essentially looking at some of the options... [That study] was an internal document...

We've run a fairly extensive community consultation program... [from] 22/3/01... [with] the first round of public meetings [occurring] on 9-10/4/01... [and] a second round of public consultation meetings on 21-22/5/01... And then on 18/6/01 the Minister for Urban Services convened a public meeting... [Also, the] War Memorial..., National Capital Authority..., Fairbairn Avenue Community Action Group and the ACT Equestrian Association have all been consulted...

7. The nature of the proposal is as follows:

There's a current design solution at the moment which consists of four lanes, two lanes in each direction. It has a mixture of medians and New Jersey

barriers, as space allows. So, wherever possible, there's a median. Where it's not possible, we've got those concrete barriers... [And] there's roundabouts at Treloar Street, Robert Campbell Road and Northcott Drive [along with] at-grade intersections at Mt Ainslie Drive, Truscott Street, Keir's access and Morshead Drive.¹

8. The key issues to be addressed, according to DUS, are:

traffic volumes, road safety, local accessibility – particularly for residents of Campbell trying to cross Fairbairn Avenue – and noise...

In terms of traffic volumes, there has been and is predicted to be significant growth in traffic volumes on Fairbairn Avenue. In 1995 daily traffic volume was around 12,000. In 2000 that had risen to 17,000. It's predicted that in 2011 [it] will be 30,000 and by 2031 it will be 35,000...²

In the 2011 assessment, basically there is an assumption that there will be a Majura Road upgrade in place. There [is also] an assumption that Horse Park Drive will have been connected [to Majura Road. And] there's an assumption that Gungahlin Drive extension will be in place [along with] a number of other associated road network improvements...³

[In terms of safety] we believe that the proposal for Fairbairn Avenue improves safety at all the intersections on Fairbairn Avenue... [including] the Treloar Street [intersection to the back of the War Memorial]...⁴

[In terms of accessibility,] the proposal also includes two new pedestrian underpasses to improve local accessibility for residents...

Extensive noise attenuation measures [are required], including at the moment walls up to about six metres high... to be higher than the roofs of the houses [in order] to be effective... At the moment the noise attenuation measures are very close to the road...⁵

9. DUS provided the following supplementary information about verge widths and distance to residences in the current proposal:

The average verge width where there are no paths is five metres, which comprises of three metre verge to the base of the rock wall and two metre allowance for the construction of the rock wall. The average width of the verge where there is a cycle path parallel to the road is five metres (4.8m to 5.0m).

It is not possible to determine the accurate distance between the new road and the nearest house(s) since this depends on the position of the house on the block. Instead, the minimum distance between the road edge and the nearest residential block boundary is 17m at 1 Rosenthal Street, followed by 3 Rosenthal Street with 19m. Other residential block boundaries are between 21m and 24m (mostly 22m) away from the road edge.⁶

¹ Mr McNulty (DUS) *Transcript*

² Mr McNulty (DUS) *Transcript*

³ Mr Gill (DUS) *Transcript*

⁴ Mr McNulty (DUS) *Transcript*

⁵ Mr McNulty (DUS) *Transcript*

⁶ Supplementary material provided by DUS, dated 23/7/01

10. Other important issues are:

Fairbairn Avenue is an approach route to the national capital which has certain requirements in urban design and what the project has to look like.

Fairbairn Avenue has a lot of trees and many of those trees have been declared as significant trees and we need to save as many of them as we can...

[The proposal] requires land resumption east of Northcott Drive...

The Majura Valley Transport [Study is examining] options for linking the Monaro Highway, Morshead Drive, Pialligo Avenue, Fairbairn Avenue and Majura Road... [that is,] effectively tidying up what's happening near the airport with all the intersections of the roads.⁷

11. The Majura Valley Transport Study has identified:

Five options for those intersections. It's also come up with the possibility of developing the Northcott Drive/Constitution Avenue route as an alternative to Fairbairn Avenue... And the National Capital Authority has indicated an interest in that option...⁸

[However,] the advice to date... would suggest that upgrading Northcott Drive/Constitution Avenue will have an impact on reducing the traffic on Fairbairn Avenue, but not necessarily removing the need to upgrade it...

[The other four options involve] an upgrade of Fairbairn Avenue.⁹

12. DUS is trying to encourage heavy vehicle use of Majura Road:

We are [currently] implementing a project to review the signage for heavy vehicles on the Barton Highway and near the airport to try and encourage as many heavy vehicles as we can to use the Majura Road route rather than Fairbairn Avenue. That's a significant project in terms of signs... [and will probably] cost around \$80,000 and we hope to have that in place by about the middle of September...

[In addition,] Horse Park Drive link to the Federal Highway is due to commence construction this year and we believe that will remove some heavy vehicles from Fairbairn Avenue coming out of Mitchell...[and heading for Fyshwick via Fairbairn Avenue]...

[However,] the heavy vehicles are about 10-15% of traffic on Fairbairn Avenue, so while [improved signage] may have an impact on some of the heavy vehicles, in general the traffic volumes won't change significantly.¹⁰

13. The next stage involves the preparation of a:

Preliminary Assessment [PA] which will be a comprehensive document examining the input we've had from the community, the current design solution and other alternatives to Fairbairn Avenue, including this Northcott Drive/Constitution Avenue route... The PA will also examine the scope and

⁷ Mr McNulty (DUS) *Transcript*

⁸ Mr McNulty (DUS) *Transcript*

⁹ Mr Gill (DUS) *Transcript*

¹⁰ Mr McNulty (DUS) *Transcript*

location of the noise attenuation register... [There's] probably three months work on [the PA] to do.¹¹

IV. What the committee heard: local residents

14. The Fairbairn Avenue Community Action Group represents 'over 80 households in the immediate vicinity of Fairbairn Avenue'.¹² The aim of the Group is 'to express to the ACT and Commonwealth governments concern about the proposal to turn Fairbairn Avenue into a four-lane dual carriageway':

The Group advocates a full public assessment of the proposed role of Fairbairn Avenue in the road system of north Canberra and the examination of alternatives, in particular Majura Road and Horse Park Road. This consultation process must be completed prior to any final decisions.

[The Group] advocate improvements to Fairbairn Avenue such as:

- measures to reduce noise and pollution
- reduction of gradients
- safer intersections
- safe pedestrian and bicycle crossings – for access to schools and shops
- measures to improve access to Mt Ainslie Nature Park, traffic calming and speed restrictions, and
- heavy vehicle diversion.

[The Group] oppose measures such as:

- the current sign-posting which directs traffic approaching traffic from both the north and south towards Limestone/Fairbairn Avenues
- unnecessary expenditure on widening of Fairbairn Avenue
- any increase in the speed limit (and the associated introduction of New Jersey barriers)
- restrictions on turning right for nay road joining Fairbairn Avenue.

[The Group] request an independent and exhaustive Environmental Impact Assessment of any proposed roadworks that affect the road reserve and its environs.¹³

15. The Group considers that:

[Upgrading] Majura Road and the upgrading of the various intersections around there seem a much more sensible option, or at least examining those before moving on to the duplication...

¹¹ Mr McNulty (DUS) *Transcript*

¹² Fairbairn Avenue Community Action Group, submission dated July 2001, p.2

¹³ Ibid, Attachment 1

We're certainly not saying don't do anything with Fairbairn Avenue, we think that that it's been recognised by a number of studies that there are problems there... [including] significant noise problems. But we think that before the \$9m is spent on upgrading and on duplicating the road, a full public assessment should be made of how Fairbairn Avenue fits in with the whole north Canberra traffic flows.¹⁴

For us as custodians of this city, in this day and age, to create increased traffic through residential areas when we haven't even explored options that give us the opportunity not to make such silly planning mistakes, is complete folly. And our Group simply asks that those alternative routes be fully and thoroughly and most importantly, objectively, explored before decisions such as this are made.¹⁵

V. The committee's conclusion

16. The committee appreciates the information provided by both departmental officials and local residents.

17. The committee notes the unanimous view that action is needed to improve Fairbairn Avenue to address traffic volumes, road safety, local accessibility and noise problems.

18. The committee is extremely pleased with the current program to signpost the entry to Canberra in an effort to encourage vehicles (especially heavy vehicles) to use Majura Road rather than Northbourne Avenue/Limestone and Fairbairn Avenues.

19. Further, the committee looks forward to the results of the Majura Valley Transport Study and especially its suggestions for improving the various intersections at the southern end of Majura Road (near the airport). In this respect, the committee draws attention to Recommendation 20 of the committee's report on *Proposals for the Gungahlin Drive Extension*: 'that the ACT government, in conjunction with the federal government, commence design work for a permanent grade-separated interchange of Majura Road, Morshead Drive, Pialligo Road and Dairy Road (the Monaro Highway)'.¹⁶

20. The committee continues to believe that a permanent grade-separated interchange provides the optimal solution to traffic problems in this area. Once the current difficulties of this area are eased, there will be greater incentive for vehicles entering Canberra from the north to use Majura Road to access south and east Canberra rather than to use Northbourne/Limestone/Fairbairn Avenues.

21. The committee welcomes the current examination of a Northcott Drive/Constitution Avenue route.

22. The committee expects that all of these factors will be thoroughly outlined and examined in the Preliminary Assessment of the Fairbairn Avenue proposals that is underway.

¹⁴ Mr Chalker *Transcript*

¹⁵ Mr Burraston *Transcript*

¹⁶ Standing Committee on Planning and Urban Services, Report No.67 p.130

23. The committee wishes to emphasise the importance of thoroughly exploring all options before a final decision is made to duplicate Fairbairn Avenue. It seems to members that it would be appropriate for this committee's successor in the new parliament (to be elected on 20 October 2001) to carefully monitor this issue and, in particular, to ensure that residents of Limestone and Fairbairn Avenues are closely consulted at all stages.

24. The committee's three recommendations are listed at the front of this report.

Harold Hird MLA
Chair
August 2001