1. The F6 was proposed in 1948. Sydney needs modern sustainable transport solutions, not discredited motorway options.

The F6 Motorway was originally proposed under the County of Cumberland Scheme in 1948. At that time traffic engineers did not understand that urban motorways encourage more traffic and pull passengers off nearby public transport services. They didn’t realise that motorways increase congestion during peak hour and reduce access generally. We can do better than transport proposals from 1948. Sydney needs sustainable public transport improvements that reduce traffic congestion and petrol dependence, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

2. There would be nowhere for F6 traffic to go once it reaches Alexandria.

When Carl Scully decided to abandon the F6 motorway corridor, the primary reason he gave for dumping it, was that there would be nowhere for the traffic to go once it reached Alexandria. There is no connection to a motorway network in the inner city. King Street, Newtown, Euston and McEvoy Streets, Alexandria and Gardeners Road, Mascot are already filled with traffic. The F6 would be a disaster for the inner city if thousands more cars were funneled onto streets that should be used for light rail and public transport.

3. An F6 Motorway would be built as a private tollway, ruling out chances of private sector funding for a FastRail link between Sydney and Wollongong.

The F6 Motorway is the first major transport proposal that the private sector has recently developed a viable financial model for building a FastRail link to connect Penrith, Parramatta and Sydney along the Western Sydney rail line using private sector capital. If built, the Western FastRail proposal would run at travel times between Parramatta and the CBD of 11 minutes. A similar FastRail service could be built in the St George-Ilawarra region connecting Wollongong and Sydney cutting around 30 minutes off current journey times. If an F6 motorway were to be built, it would compete with a FastRail link undermining its commercial viability. This would discourage development of an environmentally friendly rail option.

4. An F6 Motorway would destroy local heritage areas and divide communities.

The path of the F6 corridor moves through several significant natural heritage and recreational areas in Tempe, Rockdale and the Shire. Rockdale Council has spent just under $7m on restoring Tempe reserve after assurances from the previous Minister for Roads, Carl Scully, and senior RTA officials, that the investment would not be undermined by a motorway. Playing fields, open space and wetland areas in Rockdale that are home to migratory wading birds would go under the bulldozer, if the corridor were used for a motorway. In Sutherland Shire heritage landscape sites in Sylvania Waters and a part of the Royal National Park would be adversely affected. In Rockdale and the Shire a motorway would divide the community in two.

5. An F6 Motorway would drive people off ILLAWARRA Rail Services, adding to road congestion.

In all the other sectors of Sydney where motorways have been built (the M4 in Western Sydney, the M2 in the north-west and the M5 in the south-west) there was a corresponding drop in rail and public transport. The shifting of rail passengers to the road network occurred because travel speeds for journeys by car had temporarily improved. But as congestion levels rose and journey times became slower this stopped. This is a counter-productive result. If resources are invested in public transport, traffic and passengers shift in the other direction. Cars are taken off the road as people choose quicker public transport. This has the effect of reducing traffic congestion and lifting what transport planners call the equilibrium speed of the entire transport network.

6. A Motorway would add to noise and air pollution.

With increases in traffic volumes come increases in noise and air pollution. It is untrue to say that motorways reduce pollution by relaxing stop-start traffic. This is because the total volume of traffic increases when more motorway capacity is introduced. Congestion hot-spots are simply moved from one point in the transport network to another. If the motorway were built in a tunnel, pollution generated by traffic inside the tunnel would have to be pumped out through large exhaust stacks. This would dump concentrated pockets of exhaust emissions and sooty-particles on some households. This would be unfair on many families and households who bought homes, only to find that traffic on existing networks will shift to the new motorway. This has the effect of increasing traffic congestion and pollution. It is untrue to say that motorways reduce pollution.

7. An F6 Motorway would take at least 8 to 10 years to build. By that time, petrol prices will have increased dramatically and the need for public transport improvements be even more urgent.

Petrol prices are increasing rapidly at the moment, causing families and individuals to look at interest rates. Development of a comprehensive public transport network is vital in combating the adverse economic impacts of this emerging problem. By focusing on a motorway option now, precious time is being wasted. From the early stages of investigations to design and a major transport proposal, most projects take between eight to ten years to complete.

8. If built in a tunnel, a motorway would cost around $300/metre per kilometre, bringing the total cost to well over $6billion. This would be better spent on public transport.

The F6 corridor is through highly unstable, sandy and acid sulfate soils. Tunneling in the F6 corridor would require special technology unlike tunnels built through Sydney sandstone. This would push the cost of construction up dramatically. Public transport investment provides more ‘bang for your buck’. For example, the single rail line at Como carries the same number of passengers in the morning peak period as eight road lanes on the M5. This line that crosses Georges River (Cook Bridge, Tom Ugly’s Bridge and Alford’s Point Bridge).

9. Many local roads throughout Rockdale and the Shire along the path of an F6 Motorway would experience increases in traffic, not reductions.

A common argument used to support motorways is the idea that traffic on existing networks will shift to the new motorway and local streets will be there for use by local traffic only. The problem with this argument is that in order to use the motorway, traffic has to come through local streets. Streets used as feeders to a motorway would see an increase in traffic. Construction of an F6 Motorway would be built as a tollway, traffic avoiding the toll would use existing main roads and local streets. The final outcome would be high traffic levels on existing roads and additional traffic generated by the new motorway. This has certainly been the experience in other parts of Sydney where tollways have been built. The only way to reduce congestion on existing main roads and take it off local streets is to increase the speed, frequency and reliability of rail and other public transport services.

10. An F6 Motorway would drive down local house prices while public transport will enhance access and real estate values.

Any real estate agent will tell you that when a house is surrounded by noisy traffic and air pollution its value declines. Homes with good access to public transport and facilities have higher values. An F6 Motorway would have a catastrophic impact on house prices along its route. Recent investments made by home owners, who thought the road reservation had been lifted, would be greatly undermined. While impacts on individual house prices often get lost in debates over motorways, these impacts are important to the families who have bought them and can have dramatic impacts on the lives of individuals.

Rising oil prices set to change how we think about urban transport over next two years

Global oil prices have hit record highs in the last week and most experts are anticipating prices to keep heading upwards. Sydney’s average petrol price last week was 106.7 cents a litre, although Shell’s average price across the city on 30 March was 112.2 cents a litre. Experts are predicting that Sydney will soon see petrol prices hit 120 cents a litre.

Meanwhile Commsec economist, Craig James, estimated the average household would spend almost $150 this month on petrol — $16 more than in January. This is equivalent to an interest rate rise of a quarter of a per cent on a $100,000 home loan.

Why is it happening? It’s happening because the rate at which oil can be supplied can no longer keep up with the rate at which the global economy wants to use it. Strong growth in both the Chinese and Indian economies has seen global demand for oil increase rapidly in the last couple of years.

Adding to problems is the peaking of oil production. About half of the world’s total oil reserves have now been consumed. The first half was easy and cheap to extract, the second half is less easy and far more expensive to access. As oil wells age, extraction is more difficult and becomes more costly. This combination of factors is why prices are now going up.

Given that transport is such a fundamental part of our economy, where petrol prices rise the price of everything else rises with it. Rail and public transport systems that use electricity and less fuel, are less susceptible to these inflationary pressures. Development of a comprehensive public transport system would help to immunise the Australian economy against the threat of rising oil prices and keep interest rates lower.
The F6 is part of a radial and orbital freeway scheme that was developed back in 1948 under the County of Cumberland Scheme. The F6 is the southern section of the radial and orbital system. It was initially designed to provide access to the Royal National Park, with a connection to the Sutherland Shire and the centre of Sydney. The corridor is approximately 7.5 km in length and runs from Captain Cook Bridge to Port Hacking Road.

Section One (north west perimeter of the Royal National Park): This section is very narrow and comprises grassed fields with temporary structures—a nursery and caravan park on the northern end. Alternate uses and re-zoning possibilities are varied. Light rail through this section is a possibility.

Section Two (Royal National Park to Forest Road): This section has no permanent structures on it, having only temporary structures like Tennis Courts. Sites between Mundakal and Johnston Avenues are currently small nature reserves with a creekline that drains into the Royal National Park.

Section Three (Forest Road to The Kingsway): This corridor section is very wide and comprises grassed fields with temporary structures—a nursery and caravan park on the northern end. Alternate uses and re-zoning possibilities are varied. Light rail through this section is a possibility.

Section Four (The Kingsway to Port Hacking Road): This section contains a variety of wetland areas, a landscape heritage site and two endangered plant species. Building on the nature conservation and heritage significance of this section is not as great as it is for section one.

Section Five (Port Hacking Road to Captain Cook Bridge): This section is a narrow strip of land that runs through the centre of Rockdale before reaching the Sutherland Shire and ending in the Royal National Park. The centre-line distance of the corridor within the Shire is just over seven kilometres. It is a long strip of land that snake through the centre of the Shire, providing access to the Royal National Park. It has a centre-line distance of 2.2 km, passing through the centre of Rockdale before reaching the Sutherland Shire and ending in the Royal National Park.

Residents from the Sutherland Shire who live within the vicinity of the F6 Motorway corridor met in November 2000 to discuss the severe impacts the corridor has on their homes, alternate transport developments for the region, as well as alternative uses for the corridor. Returning it to an 8(a) zoning, or 'National Parks, Nature Reserves and State Recreational Area', is appropriate.