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House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600  
Telephone: (02) 6277 7920  
By email: [Minister.Plibersek@dcceew.gov.au](mailto:Minister.Plibersek@dcceew.gov.au)

Dear Minister Plibersek,

Re: Route refinement on Western Highway Duplication, Buangor to Ararat section.

Given the dozen or so years since the Victorian Government undertook studies to determine the best route for the Western Highway Duplication, Buangor to Ararat section, new information has come to light that indicates there is an alternative route that would be considerably cheaper and safer and would have significantly reduced impact. It would have lower emissions in construction and use.

The new information, not available to the assessment panel at the time of the original studies in 2011-2012 or to those issuing the environmental approvals, has identified considerable extra impact to high-value native vegetation and to Aboriginal cultural heritage on the chosen route. Consequently, considerable benefits can now be realised from an alternative alignment which achieves a substantial reduction in the overall footprint of the project, partly by designing the additional carriageway, at 16 metres wide, to fit largely within a 14m wide reservation adjacent to the existing road.

The KORS Inc. group has done a considerable amount of background work putting together a case for an alternative alignment that avoids the construction of a bridge and makes use of the existing highway alignment for half of Section 2B, in contrast to the current plans. The flatter and straighter alternative route for this half of the stage is described in their February application under the EPBC Act. I consider that the alternative route is worth examining. This route is likely to be a better outcome for the community, the environment, and road safety.

Given that the project is unlikely to be funded in the immediate future there is adequate time to revisit the planning phase, the alignment and design, and the environmental process with a view to adopting a lower impact alignment which is simpler and safer to construct and more cost-effective.

I have over 40 years' experience planning and designing freeways in Victoria and nationally, working at VicRoads, Austroads, ARRB (now National Transport Research Organisation) and the Department of Transport and Planning Victoria. I believe given the planning work already undertaken and the options developed so far, the extra investment in considering an alternative alignment will be minimal compared to the potential gains from this alternative route, and this would not impact the project delivery date.

Yours sincerely



John Gaffney  
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