



Peak Oil and The Northern Link Environmental Impact Statement

Posted by [Phil Hart](#) on February 7, 2008 - 7:00pm in [The Oil Drum: Australia/New Zealand](#)

Topic: [Policy/Politics](#)

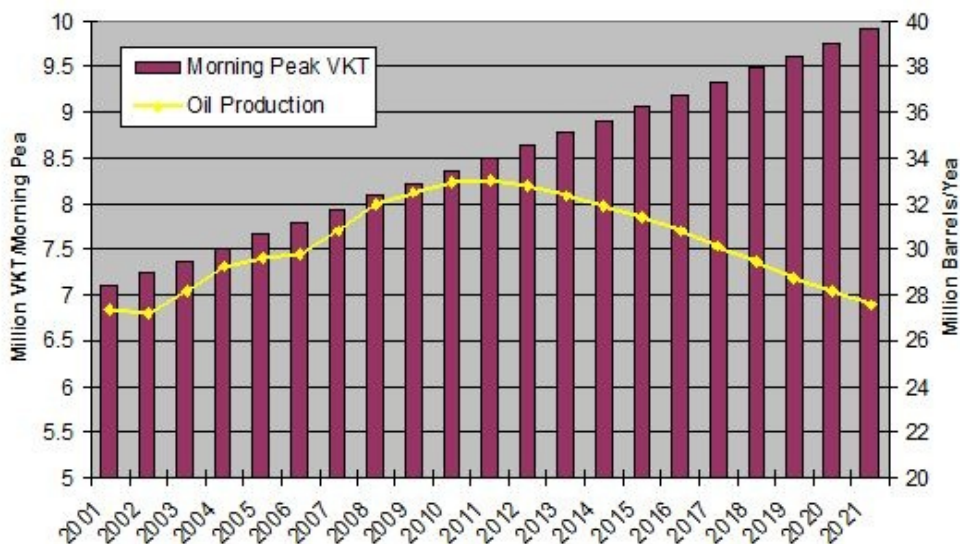
Tags: [traffic congestion](#) [[list all tags](#)]

This is a summary of Stuart McCarthy's submission to the Coordinator-General on a review of the Terms of Reference for the Environmental Impact Assessment of the Brisbane Northern Link project (what a mouthful!).

The Northern Link project is a proposed 5.5km-long road tunnel that would link the Western Freeway and the Inner City Bypass in Brisbane. As the proponent, Brisbane City Council (BCC) has referred the proposal to the Queensland Government and it has been declared to be a project of State significance.

South East Queensland's transport system is extremely vulnerable to the impact of peak oil due to its high dependence on private motor vehicles and road freight. The car fleet that confronts the 2010-2015 setting of high oil import dependence, declining availability of exported oil, steeply rising prices and periodic oil shocks, will not be significantly more fuel efficient than the current one. A longer term transition to alternative fuels and propulsion systems on a scale sufficient to realise present forecasts of growing traffic is extremely unlikely due to enormous constraints imposed by thermodynamics, cost and scale of both the vehicle fleet and supporting alternative energy infrastructure.

Brisbane Morning Peak VKT vs World Oil Production, 2001-2021



Stuart's full submission is available on the [ASPO Australia website](#).

Australia's economy, particularly its transport system, is highly dependent on growing supplies of affordable petroleum fuel, however domestic oil production peaked in 2000 and is now in decline. Based on official production and demand forecasts Australia would need to import approximately 66% of its oil by 2015, in a setting of rapidly declining availability and increasing prices in international markets.

The TransApex feasibility studies on which the Northern Link proposal is based are seriously flawed. Traffic forecasting and modelling excludes any consideration of fuel prices or availability and assumes no changes in mode share or travel behaviour. Cost benefit analyses exclude the economic costs of existing car dependence and increasing vulnerability to oil supply disruptions. Economic assumptions exclude consideration of the impact of declining world oil production.

Peak oil and its impacts have been well known to Brisbane City Council planners and senior officials for several years. Numerous in-house reports, commissioned studies and public submissions regarding the impact of peak oil on Brisbane's transport system and the feasibility of TransApex projects have been disregarded. As the proponent for the Northern Link, Brisbane City Council has a history of compromising the public interest in the pursuit of political interests.

In order to adequately protect the public interest, the Terms of Reference for the Northern Link Environmental Impact Statement needs to eliminate any scope for the proponent to continue to ignore or dismiss the impact of peak oil on the project. The amendments to the Terms of Reference recommended in this submission are intended to achieve this objective.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 United States License](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/).