



O-Bahn Extension Nomination for RISK



Image: AdelaideNow

The \$160m O-Bahn Extension, claimed to save a few minutes of travel time for its commuters, appears set to proceed despite widespread community objections but it's not clear that alternative ways of saving this travel time have been fully investigated and explained. For example the cost of road improvements along the route, e.g. adding overtaking lanes, has been claimed as only a fraction of this project's costs and improvements at the other end of the corridor may well be more beneficial than where it enters the city. Criticism of its overall priority includes Business SA and other prominent public figures calling for the whole project to be scrapped and the money perhaps better spent elsewhere such as on the Northern Connector section of the north-south corridor.

The project is causing concern to residents at Hackney and it cuts directly through Rymill Park, a much-loved and well-used section of Adelaide's Park Lands – a precinct decreed as belonging to the people of Adelaide in 1837, a central element in Adelaide's recognised international leadership in city planning that received Australia's highest heritage honour: inclusion in the National Heritage List on 7 November 2008.

With apparently limited benefits and significant drawbacks, this may not be the most cost-effective solution. Its overall priority in the transport network also appears problematic and the current outcry shows the community consultation phase as less than effective.

It is imperative that community concerns about major high-profile projects such as the O-Bahn Extension are recognised by Government and its agencies so that the projects are exposed to community scrutiny at a much earlier stage and that their priority and impacts are fully tested before any commitment to construction is made. The risk, as shown here, is that the best projects and solutions may not be being pursued. The community, as well as Adelaide's reputation in international city planning, may not be as well served as it could have been.