

## **Dragway – Frequently Asked Questions – for the public**

### **1. Why isn't the government building a dragway on block 51 Majura?**

The decision to not proceed with a dragway is based on findings from the project's current evaluation stage, which includes extensive technical and financial investigation, undertaken in close consultation with the dragway proponent (Canberra International Dragway Management – CIDM). This stage, which followed on from early feasibility studies, and the Dragway Advisory Committee report earlier this year, included as recommended the completion of the first stage of a statutory environmental assessment under the Land (Planning and Environment) Act 1991, and detailed financial assessments of the likely development costs and operational viability of a possible facility. It also considers the draft Dragway Motor Sports Environmental Protection Policy (draft EPP) released by the Environmental Protection Authority earlier this year for public comment.

The findings, which are discussed in detail in a covering report to Government, included on the TAMS dragway website, indicate that the development of a facility would be unlikely to meet applicable environmental noise criteria and likely to require a substantial additional financial contribution by Government beyond the \$8m it had committed.

In particular, the detailed noise evaluation indicates that the facility would struggle to meet applicable environmental noise criteria required to satisfactorily protect the properties adjacent to the proposed facility. This would be the case even if the draft EPP noise standards were relaxed, as proposed by CIDM, on the basis that levels of noise experienced within the airport corridor justify such changes.

The assessment indicates that a dragway would not be able to practically meet the requirements of the draft EPP.

Detailed technical work undertaken suggests that even with less onerous noise standards CIDM's own minimum 1/8 mile facility will require additional funding, possible up to \$3.2 million extra, beyond the \$8 million already committed by the Government. The investigations suggest that it would not be a practical or sound financial option to effect sufficient noise mitigation measures if the noise standards proposed under the draft dragway EPP were applied.

In addition to these findings, the detailed assessment of the operational viability of a possible facility indicate that while it may be able to meet its running costs it would be unlikely to be able to raise sufficient funds to achieve significant capital expansion and upgrading. As noted above, environmental noise issues would also likely limit its capacity to maximise event programs.

## **2. Can you explain why the dragway is unlikely to comply with the noise standards and is there anything that can be done to help it to comply?**

Section 3.1 of the Report to Government provides a detailed discussion of the facts and considerations applicable to this question. Essentially, the issue comes down to one of how much noise is likely to be produced, and how it can potentially be mitigated and/or managed to provide only a reasonable level of intrusion upon neighbouring residents.

In the case of Block 51, while it is otherwise considered to be a likely good location for a facility such as a dragway, particularly given its closeness to the Canberra while separated from suburban areas by the Mt Majura and Ainslie range, there are a significant number of local neighbouring residences. The noise modelling indicates that these properties could be expected to receive high levels of noise intrusion, often for extended periods.

Noise levels may be reduced by mitigation measures, such as sound mounds and barriers, but the physical nature of dragway facilities makes this challenging and, ultimately, expensive to do. As discussed in the report, while it is not considered practical for sufficient mitigation to be effected if the standards used in the draft EPP were adopted, even where the EPP noise standards were relaxed, as proposed by CIDM, on the basis that levels of noise experienced within the airport corridor justify such changes, substantial mitigation would be required, with significant additional costs to the project. The report, however, also concludes that even with the alternative higher noise standards approach, it is unlikely to be practical to successfully mitigate noise levels where easterly winds occur.

## **3. What public consultation has there been?**

Government consideration of the dragway proposal has been subject to an extensive and systematic process requiring use of both technical and professional expertise, detailed discussions with the proponent, and community engagement both through the work of the Dragway Advisory Committee (DAC) established last year (consisting of representatives of relevant community groups, motor sports groups, specialists and government officials) and broader and statutory consultation mechanisms.

Earlier this year the DAC reported on the findings of initial feasibility studies examining the proposal and agreed that it was appropriate for the detailed current stage investigations to be undertaken. A Community Discussion paper outlining the steps forward, together with copies of the feasibility studies and DAC's report was posted on the Chief Minister's Department website, and in March 2006 the Environment Protection Authority released for public comment a draft Dragway Motor Sport Noise Environmental Protection Policy (draft EPP). Over 200 submissions were received on the draft EPP alone.

Further submissions and inquiries were directed to the dragway website mail box.

The current stage evaluation findings, however, ultimately are based on the findings of extensive independent technical and professional investigation. This investigation was undertaken in consultation with the proponent to ensure that all aspects of the proposal were properly and fully recognised and tested. It is considered that this process has ensured that the findings are based on rigorous analysis of scientific and financial evidence and not other influences or personal preferences.

#### **4. Is there another site available for a dragway on Territory land?**

No. Block 51 Majura was considered to be the most likely possible site following an extensive examination of suitable sites undertaken over a number of years. Specifically, a number of site selection studies have been conducted since 1992.

The principal criteria used in this selection and evaluation process included (no priority order):

- Relatively flat topography (to reduce development costs);
- Reasonable proximity to an urban population base (to boost customer access);
- Access to infrastructure services (to minimise development costs);
- Separation from residential areas (to minimise noise impacts);
- Availability of land;
- Consistency with National Capital Plan and Territory plan; and
- Minimal disruption to known areas of high environmental or heritage value.

From this work the Majura Valley is considered as the only likely locality to offer a suitable site, with Blocks 51 and 52 Majura, together with the former dragway site, providing the best potential sites. In 2001, a draft Preliminary Assessment Report was prepared for Block 52 Majura, however, this work was discontinued as the land is partly National Land and, as with the former dragway site (which is fully National land), the Commonwealth has to date not indicated any interest in making the land available to the Territory.

#### **5. Why did the Government proceed so far – and then say no?**

The initial feasibility work suggested that there were reasonable prospects that a facility could be constructed and operated on Block 51 within the financial, environmental and planning criteria required. Following consideration of feasibility studies undertaken in 2005 and a report from the

Dragway Advisory Committee, the ACT Government agreed to proceed to the next phase of planning and assessment for a dragway at the proposed site.

The first of a number of steps involved in this phase of the project evaluation was the release by the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) of the draft Motor Sport Noise Environment Protection Policy (EPP) for public comment in March 2006.

Investigation has also been undertaken on the first stage of the Preliminary (environmental) Assessment (PA), to examine environmental and engineering issues associated with the project including noise impact assessment. An assessment has also been made of development and operating costs.

This investigation has more closely examined how noise may be propagated, what noise standards are likely to be appropriate, and clarified many of the functional and design issues bearing upon the likely cost. These regrettably for the project indicate that it is not likely to be able to satisfy final appropriate noise requirements and its cost is likely to be significantly higher than the funds available. To further increase funding would not represent value for money, particularly in relation to a 1/8 mile facility.

The Government has proceeded with the dragway project in good faith and with the expectation that impediments may be overcome. Unfortunately, the studies and assessments undertaken to date conclude that there are significant environmental and cost issues that cannot be readily resolved.

## **6. What are the next steps for Government?**

The ACT Government has now exhausted all land options and will be writing to the Australian Government to request that they re-lease the former dragway site.

The former site was taken back by the Commonwealth Government in 1998. At the time they cited a need for the land

Eight years later nothing has been built on the land and it is not being utilised at all. Seeing that we have exhausted all other land options, we will now be asking the Australian Government to again grant a lease on that land for a dragway.

If a lease is granted, the ACT Government will commit funds for the re-establishment of a dragway for the ACT.

## **7. Where can I get more information from?**

You can get more information from the TAMS website [www.tams.act.gov.au](http://www.tams.act.gov.au)

**8. What will happen to the money allocated to the dragway?**

The ACT Government will not make any decisions regarding the \$8 million allocated to the dragway until it has a response from the Australian Government regarding the former dragway site.