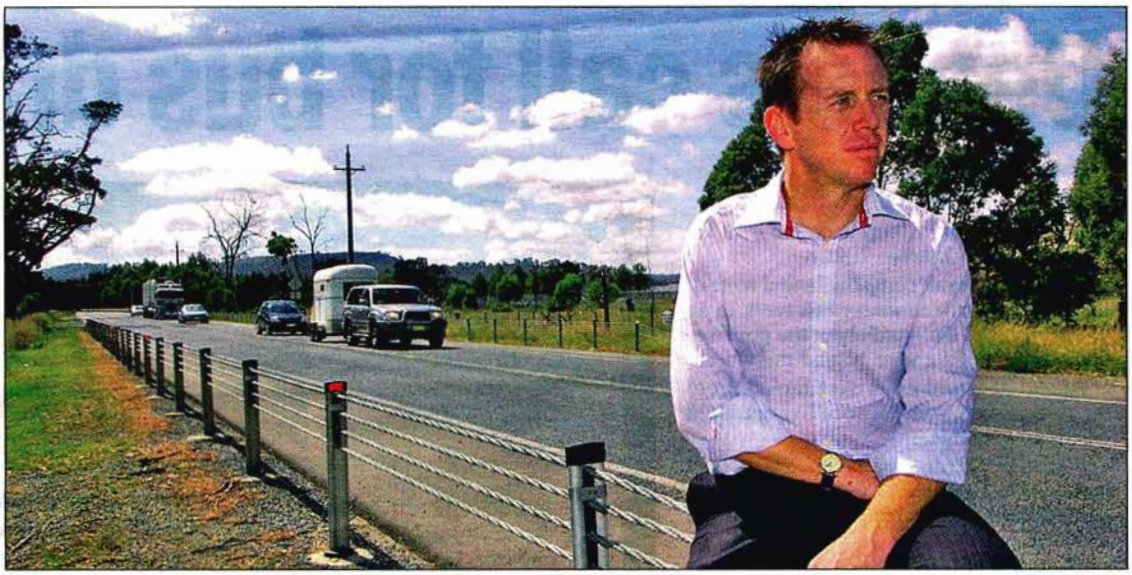

Greens member for Molonglo and spokesman for sport and tourism, Shane Rattenbury at Majura Road, which would be realigned for the proposed parkway.

Majura consultation call

MORE public information about the proposed Majura Parkway has been called for by the ACT Greens and North Canberra Community Council.

ACT Greens used question time last week to ask the Chief Minister to extend the consultation period and hold public information sessions.

In the Legislative Assembly last week, the Chief Minister and minister for roads, Jon Stanhope, accepted there were significant heritage and environmental issues with the road that needed consideration as part of the assessment.

''In the context of that, there have been discussions in the development of the plan with ACT Heritage, with Parks, Conservation and Lands and with the commissioner for the environment and sustainability. We have also had some consultations with Canberra Airport,'' he said.

NCCC chair Jochen Zeil has asked that a public information meeting on the new road after the project's environmental impact statement (EIS) shows the road would allow for a future Very High Speed Train (VHST) to connect to Canberra Airport.

Mr Zeil said this would support Canberra Airport's plan to become Sydney's second airport and a night freight hub.

''The community, including NCCC, has consistently argued that these airport business plans will destroy the unique assets of Canberra as a liveable city,'' Mr Zeil said.

''It would be better and cheaper to keep to the ACT Government's original plan and upgrade the existing Majura Road route to parkway standard.''

Mr Zeil called for a detailed and transparent triple bottom line analysis of a VHST corridor in the Majura Valley, including any proposed linkages with a freight hub for Canberra Airport.

''The EIS states that upgrading the current route instead of realigning it would have the least impact on existing developments, does not have significant ecological, cultural heritage or land management impacts and would [reduce] the need for large amounts of capital outlay over a short period of time.''

Mr Zeil expressed his frustration that ACT Roads had not held a single public information meeting on the project.

ACT Greens echoed this sentiment, and have called for the government to extend the submission period for the Majura Parkway EIS.

ACT Greens spokesperson for roads, Caroline Le Couteur said as this was the only time for the public to comment on EIS issues, it was essential to increase communication on the large-scale project and get it right.

''The EIS consultation period could easily be extended by a few weeks without affecting the overall timing of the project, given it does not yet have guaranteed funding to be completed,'' she said,

''We shouldn't shut the door on community engagement and scrutiny so quickly. We are also calling on the government, as the proponent of the project, to hold some community information sessions on the EIS.''

When Ms Le Couteur called for extended consultation in the Assembly last week, Mr Stanhope questioned why this particular project needed an extension of the normal statutory time frames for consultation or approval arrangements.

''I have received no representation as the Minister for Territory and Municipal Services except your question, which is not necessarily a representation,'' Mr Stanhope said.

''I have received no representations from interested or affected citizens, parties or organisations that they will not have the time or the capacity to meet the time line in relation to their desire to respond.

Mr Stanhope said if there was a genuine concern expressed he would be interested to hear it.

''If there are genuine issues or concerns, if there are organisations or individuals who think that they will need an extension of time, I would like to see that represented to me and a position put and argued cogently.''

The Chronicle reported community concerns of business owners and users of the land surrounding the proposed road realignment earlier this year.

Greens spokesman for sport and tourism, Shane Rattenbury, said he was concerned the alignment of the road would destroy parts of the world-class Majura Pines mountain biking zone.

''Majura Pines has been around for 20 years. It is enormously popular with local riders, it hosts national and international events, and it's also a major site for walkers, runners and horse riders,'' Mr Rattenbury said.

During question time last week, Mr Stanhope said it was not possible to provide an upgrade of a freeway joining the Federal Highway with the Monaro Highway without environmental impacts.

''Of course we are determined to seek to minimise those to the greatest extent possible. But at the end of the day there will be environmental impacts,'' he said.

At a media conference yesterday, Mr Stanhope said Roads ACT presented information on the Majura Parkway at a meeting of the Gungahlin Community Council in May and had been invited to discuss the project with the Pialligo Residents Association and North Canberra Community Council in August.

''I am more than happy to extend the period for comment for an additional two weeks as a result of this request the first request I have received for such an extension.''

Pet of the week