

Save Fiordland Press Release
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One down, but one to go.

Top three reasons why the Minister must also say no to the monorail, and why we all must tell him

After celebrating the Government's decision last week to reject a proposal for a bus tunnel in Fiordland National Park, the campaign group Save Fiordland is urging New Zealanders to voice their objections to another destructive transport proposal in this World Heritage protected area.

Conservation Minister Nick Smith, who turned down the tunnel, is due to make a decision on a multimodal "experience" involving a monorail towards the end of this year.

To help people spread the word about the damage the monorail would cause, Save Fiordland is publishing today its "top three reasons why the minister should say no to the monorail" and calling on people to write to Nick Smith pleading with him to turn down the proposal.

What's it all about?

The monorail project (called the Fiordland Link Experience) is a private multi-modal transport proposal ripping through public Conservation Land with passengers enduring hopping on and off different modes. If given the go ahead, it would transport people from Queenstown using a catamaran across Lake Wakatipu to Mt Nicholas Station. Passengers would then board buses for a 45km gravel road journey up the remote Von Valley to the Kiwi Burn, a popular wilderness destination for trampers, anglers, hunters and kayakers. A visitor terminal would be built at the Kiwi Burn, where passengers would board a 41km monorail to the developer's exclusive hotel/restaurant at Te Anau Downs (Approx 30 km of which is through the Snowdon Forest Conservation Area). The monorail would travel through this pristine area averaging 78km/h. Once at Te Anau Downs, passengers would transfer onto another bus for an additional hour and a half journey to Milford Sound by the existing road.

The holding company applying for this concession is principally owned by the Infinity Investment Group, a previous owner of the Pegasus Town which was forced into receivership a year ago.

Top three reasons the Minister should say no!

1. A swathe cut through paradise

The false imagery created by the company proposing the monorail shows it sliding between trees with minimal impact. According to engineering reports commissioned by the Department of Conservation [1], this is an unrealistic portrayal of an inevitably high impact engineering scheme. While the monorail is narrow, a much wider swathe of forest destruction would take place over 30km of forest to protect it from the risk of falling trees and to excavate the permanent construction/maintenance road. This clearance, more akin to a motorway, would also make the trees at the edge of the strip more vulnerable to being blown down. Across 6.6km of backcountry valleys (grassland, shrubland, wetland and river

beds), the monorail would be built on high concrete pylons, to protect it from flooding. This is in addition to the construction of a terminal next to the Mararoa River at the Kiwi Burn with tourist facilities and parking.

2. Destruction of the World Heritage environment fauna and flora

The monorail will slash into two an area of unique biodiversity and landscapes that are internationally important resulting in this region being World Heritage listed. Most of the monorail journey is in pristine ancient red beech, and mixed mountain and silver beech forest. This forest is of very limited extent in Fiordland and a keystone ecosystem [1]. Other plants affected include red copper tussock, mature matagouri, bog pine, yellow mistletoe and tufted hair grass. As well as dwindling populations of native birds that need protecting, there is concern for the presence of highly threatened lizards and critically endangered bats. [3].

3. The monorail is not a public eco-transport scheme

On all levels, the monorail is not an environmental public transport alternative to the current road journey. It involves significant carbon usage as more than half of the journey is not by monorail; it is by bus and catamaran. It does not shorten the journey to Milford Sound because of the multiple modes and the time taken to change between them, which is unhelpful for the elderly, infants, and the disabled. It offers no greater an “experience” than the current beautiful road journey via existing tourist towns, along wide, safe valleys. Instead the monorail travels through an earthquake zone carrying significant risks to life. It is also an exclusively private scheme for private gain. [4]

Call to action

To support Save Fiordland, go to www.savefiordland.org.nz or visit us at SaveFiordland on Facebook, then write to Nick Smith objecting to the monorail.

Notes for editors

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Save Fiordland is a not for profit incorporated organisation working to preserve Fiordland's wilderness and World Heritage status.