



Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

News Release

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DOC grants extension for public comment on proposed Dart Passage and monorail concessions

Due to a high level of public interest, the Department of Conservation has extended the deadline for submitting on the Milford Dart Limited (MDL) Dart Passage tunnel and Riverstone Holdings (Riverstone) monorail concession applications by 15 working days.

“There has been a lot of public interest in the tunnel and monorail concession applications and that has translated into people wanting to become involved in the process” said Southland Conservator Barry Hanson.

The Department originally notified the applications for the minimum 40 working day period set out in the Conservation Act.

“What we heard from the public was that because of the sheer volume and complexity of information accompanying the applications, they need more time to understand the issues and draft their submissions” said Mr Hanson.

The deadline for submissions on each of the applications has been extended by 15 working days from 27 January 2012 to Monday 20 February 2012 for the MDL tunnel application and from 27 February 2012 to Monday 19 March 2012 for the Riverstone monorail application.

Parties who have already submitted will be notified of the extension and given an opportunity to resubmit if the extension would allow them to put more work into their submissions.

Mr Hanson says the Department wants to allow for submissions that will lead to an informed set of hearings and that it does not want to artificially constrain any submitters opportunity to be properly heard.

After submissions close DOC will hold public hearings to consider these submissions before reaching its final decision. Dates for hearings have not yet been set and will not be confirmed until the Department knows how many submissions it has received, the issues raised in submissions and the number of submitters who wish to be heard. The Department is however still currently working to the nominal dates initially notified, with hearings for the tunnel commencing in mid March and for the Monorail in mid April 2012.

Full details of the Department’s intention to grant a concession for both MDL and Riverstone decision are available to the public on the department’s website at www.doc.govt.nz

Contacts

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Background information

- Milford Dart Limited (MDL) has applied to build a single-lane commercial coach tunnel under sections of the two National Parks - Mount Aspiring and Fiordland National Parks. The tunnel will link existing public roads in the Routeburn and Hollyford valleys and is designed to halve the current nine hour return journey for commercial tourist buses travelling between Queenstown and Milford Sound.

The proposal requires the construction of about 150 metres of new road in the Mt Aspiring national park and an 11.3 kilometre tunnel under the Humboldt and Ailsa Ranges.

- Riverstone Holdings Limited (Riverstone) has applied to build a monorail through the Snowdon Forest Conservation Area which would run from the Mararoa River (near the Mavora Lakes Road) for approximately 29.5 km through the Snowdon Forest Stewardship Area to the Milford Road at Te Anau Downs. The monorail is part of Riverstone's proposed visitor transport package from Queenstown to Lake Te Anau.

The proposal also requires the building of a construction track, parallel to the monorail track which Riverstone proposes to open for public use as a Mountain Bike Track and ensure that public access is maintained.

- To date, the Department has received **120** submissions on the MDL tunnel application and **11** submissions on the Riverstone monorail application.
- Before MDL or Riverstone can proceed with their respective plans, they require a concession agreement from DOC along with the appropriate resource consents from local authorities.