



The Sea-to-Sky Highway Improvement Project

Detailed Design Consultation Summary Report

Brandywine to Function Junction (Whistler)

April 20, 2007

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1. PROJECT OVERVIEW

1.1 Project Scope

The Sea-to-Sky Highway links communities from West Vancouver to Whistler. With its spectacular mountain landscape, the highway presents complex engineering and construction challenges.

British Columbia's Ministry of Transportation is undertaking improvements to the highway between West Vancouver and Whistler to improve its safety, reliability and capacity. By 2009, extensive improvements will make travel along the corridor safer for residents, commuters and tourists. To be completed before the Olympics, the highway improvements will serve population growth and economic development in the corridor as demand increases for resident and visitor travel, as well as goods movement.

Improvements will include highway widening and straightening, improved sightlines, passing lanes and other design innovations to reduce hazards, shorten travel times and increase capacity of the Sea-to-Sky Highway.

The Sea-to-Sky Highway Improvement Project will result in the following:

- **West Vancouver to Lions Bay** - 4-lane sections with continuous median barrier including straightening, widening and improved sightlines (eliminating several sharp curves).
- **North of Lions Bay to Murrin Park** - 2, 3 and 4-lane sections; about half of this section includes improved 2 lanes, and the remaining sections include additional passing opportunities with 3 and 4 lanes. Those sections that are 4 lanes will include a median barrier to prevent crossover accidents. Sections adjacent to Murrin Park and within the community of Britannia Beach will include improved 2-lane sections, which is consistent with community input from pre-design consultations. In Furry Creek, there will be 3 lanes moving to 4 lanes with a median barrier.
- **North of Murrin Park through Squamish** - 4-lane divided highway. This section will include median barriers throughout, including the addition of urban design features to the median within Squamish.
- **Squamish to Whistler** - 3 lanes throughout this section, including improved 2-lane sections and alternating passing opportunities provided by alternating the third lane.

1.2 Project Goals

The **primary goals** for the Sea-to-Sky Highway Improvement Project include:

- Safety improvements
- Reliability improvements
- Capacity improvements
- Project completion by late 2009
- Management of traffic flows during construction in order to minimize disruption and maximize predictability
- Completion of the project on time and on budget

1.3 Community Consultation

The Ministry of Transportation (MoT) has consulted about the scope and nature of highway improvements since 2002 with communities, businesses and residents along the corridor. Residents and community stakeholders have participated in hundreds of meetings. The design stages include:

1. Project Definition Consultation
(completed 2002-2003)
2. Pre-Design Consultation
(completed 2003-2005)
3. Preliminary Design Consultation
(completed 2005-2006)
4. **Detailed Design Consultation
(February – June 2007)**

The Sea-to-Sky Highway Improvement Project maintains a community relations program to provide on-going communications about construction activities, as well as current construction delays and highway closures updates.

The S2S Transportation Group is the contractor responsible for designing, building, operating and maintaining the Sea-to-Sky Highway. A key outcome of detailed design consultation is practical feedback on detailed design features for consideration by the Ministry of Transportation and the S2S Transportation Group, prior to completion of improvements in each section.

Detailed design consultation generally involves the discussion of fewer but very specific treatments related to the final design improvements, including such things as specific traffic calming and noise reduction features, shape and texture of gateway signage, detailed landscaping, lighting and other aesthetic treatments.

1.4 Traffic Management

A key goal of the **Sea-to-Sky Highway Improvement Project** is to manage traffic flows during construction in order to minimize disruption and maximize predictability for travellers. Highway closures will be implemented at set times and publicized well in advance.

To plan ahead for a safe trip, call **1- 877- 4SAFE99 (1- 877- 472-3399)** for up-to-date traffic information or go to the website (www.seatoskyimprovements.ca) to access the following travel planning tools:

- **Weekly Schedule** – Weekly update on confirmed highway closures and delays
- **Travel Planner** – A list of the available closure/delay windows for current season
- **Closure & Delay Windows** – The maximum closure/delay windows to 2009
- **Road Alerts Service** – Frequent Sea-to-Sky travellers can receive text message alerts about major or unscheduled events that affect highway travel

2. OVERVIEW OF DETAILED DESIGN CONSULTATION ON HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENTS

2.1 Stages of Consultation

The stages of consultation include:

1. Project Definition Consultation (completed)
2. Pre-Design Consultation (completed)
3. Preliminary Design Consultation (completed)
4. Detailed Design Consultation (**CURRENT STAGE**)

2.2 Detailed Design Consultation

The purpose of the consultation is to:

- **Inform** the community and stakeholders about the draft detailed design features to the Sea-to-Sky Highway within the Brandywine to Function Junction (Whistler) area as well as the corridor-wide features.
- **Gather** input and feedback regarding detailed design features for highway improvements from the community and stakeholders.
- **Summarize** community and stakeholder input for consideration by the Ministry of Transportation and the S2S Transportation Group.
- **Distribute** the Consultation Summary Report to consultation participants, the Community Advisory Group and other stakeholders.

2.3 Detailed Design Consultation Topics

The following consultation topics are discussed in the Brandywine to Function Junction (Whistler) Detailed Design community consultation:

- Community Gateway Signage
- Gateway Landscape Features
- Landscape Plans

2.4 Detailed Design Consultation Methods

a. Discussion Guide and Feedback Form

A consultation discussion guide (see tab 4) was developed to explain the purpose of the detailed design consultation and included a feedback form to assist in gathering community input.

The discussion guide also included:

- Maps showing the location of highway improvements and features,
- A summary of the results from preliminary design consultation with the Whistler community in October and November 2005,
- Graphics illustrating the gateway feature options, and
- Descriptions and graphics of the landscape options and treatments.

Feedback was gathered at stakeholder meetings, at the open house, by e-mail, fax and mail.

b. Web-based Consultation

All consultation materials were posted on the web on March 12th, 2007, including the feedback form that could be e-mailed or faxed back to the project office.

c. Small Group Meetings

The Sea-to-Sky Highway Improvement Project team met with three stakeholder groups in Whistler on March 13th, 2007:

1. Transportation, 1st Responders
2. Business, One Whistler
3. Hotels, Tourism, Recreation Groups

The consultation discussion guide and display boards were reviewed at the small group meetings and attendees provided comments on detailed design features for the Whistler area and had the opportunity to ask questions (See tab 7 for meeting notes). Completed feedback forms were collected at each small group meeting.

A facilitator, recorder, Sea-to-Sky Highway Improvement Project staff and members of the S2S Transportation Group attended the small group meetings.

d. Open House

An open house held at the Delta Whistler Village Suites on March 13th, 2007, 6:00pm - 8:00pm, gave residents, community organizations and businesses an opportunity to provide feedback on the detailed design features. Display boards provided information on specific highway improvements in the Brandywine to Function Junction section. Sea-to-Sky Highway Improvement Project staff and S2S Transportation Group team members were available to answer questions. Discussion guides and feedback forms were available at the public open house.

e. Advertisements

An advertisement notifying the public about the open house and on-line consultation materials and feedback form was placed in the *Whistler Question* and *Whistler Pique* on March 1st and 8th (see tab 3 for a sample advertisement). As well, the notice was posted on the community notice board and local coffee shops.

3. KEY THEME SUMMARY

The Brandywine to Function Junction (Whistler) Detailed Design consultation included gathering community feedback and input regarding the community gateways and landscape features.

51 people participated in the Brandywine to Function Junction (Whistler) Detailed Design consultation. 32 people attended the small group meetings on March 13th and 19 people attended the open house on March 13th. A total of 41 feedback forms were returned: 29 feedback forms were submitted at the small group meetings, 11 feedback forms were submitted at the open house, and one on-line feedback form was completed.

Key Themes

The following are the key themes identified in the participant feedback from the small group meetings.

Meeting 1 – Transportation/First Responders

- Participants were interested in the divided highway and breaks in the median barriers. Whistler Fire Rescue Services expressed interest in receiving a list of the breaks in the median barriers.
- Safety on the highway was noted as a concern, particularly in regard to effectiveness and permanency of highway markings.
- Whistler Fire Rescue Services noted interest in use of FireSmart plantings.

Meeting 2 – Business/One Whistler

- Participants were interested in providing parking for Train Wreck Trail, to link to Flank Trail or to the Athletes' Village.
- An overall plan for how the Athletes' Village parking connects to trails was desired.
- Any signage or other elements that contribute to the arrival/welcome to the Village were encouraged.
- Consideration should be given to snow pack levels when determining the height of the gateway feature.
- Consideration could be given to relocating the G6 (guide sign referencing the distance to the community centres) to south of Function Junction.
- Suggestion to locate a Visitors' Information Centre at Function Junction.
- Participants supported continuing the landscaping to shield the sight of the entrance of the sewage treatment plant.

Meeting 3 – Hotels/Tourism/Community

- Participants expressed concern regarding highway safety during construction.
- Advance signage for Brandywine Forest Service Access Road was suggested.
- There was interest in convening a meeting of stakeholders, such as Vancouver Olympic Committee (VANOC), Resort Municipality of Whistler (RMOW), Ministry of Transportation (MoT), to discuss the waste transfer site and access to the Brandywine Forest Access Road.
- Participants commented on the need for appropriate signage and enforcement at the highway turnaround between Callaghan and Powerline Hill to ensure the u-turn does not become a parking lot for snow mobiles.
- There was interest in having affected parking replaced to support access to Train Wreck Trail.
- Participants generally supported use of both banners and trees in landscape plan 3 as trees could serve as a backdrop.
- There was interest in incorporating a “Thank you for coming” sign.
- There needs to be further education for the community in regard to the rationale for speed reductions all day – during and after work hours.
- Participants suggested that in order for each week’s communication to be meaningful, they must be clear what is different from the prior week’s communication.

4. SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK FORM QUESTIONS¹

The following provides a summary of input received through the consultation feedback form. The quantitative results (see tab 1) are presented below and these are followed by a qualitative summary of feedback form comments (see tab 6).

4.1 Community Rocks Gateway Features

The community rocks gateway feature emphasizes the natural surroundings of the area. Each option will have the name of the community displayed in a contemporary, consistent typeface. A Salish name for each area will also appear on the sign.

Participants were asked: Please indicate your preference for option 1 or 2.

¹ Some totals may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Quantitative Summary

Option 1: Faux rock boulder base with integrated faux rock sign.	86%
Option 2: Faux rock boulder base with the sign made of painted metal.	14%

Summary of Comments

Please provide additional comments.

- Some respondents commented that the sign should be higher than 8ft to allow for accumulation of snow.
- Some respondents noted that they would like to see the sign illuminated, while other respondents wanted reflective lettering instead of lighting.

4.2 Landscape Plans

A. Landscape Plan 1 – South of Rail Crossing

In areas where the highway alignment is shifted, portions of the old highway will be reclaimed. These areas will be planted with trees and shrubs at either end of the reclaimed area and the remaining area will be seeded with rough grass.

Participants were asked: Please indicate your level of agreement with the proposed plantings.

Quantitative Summary

Strongly agree	42%
Somewhat agree	34%
Neither agree nor disagree	18%
Somewhat disagree	3%
Strongly disagree	3%

76% of respondents agreed (either strongly or somewhat) with the proposed plantings south of the rail crossing.

Summary of Comments

- Some respondents commented that natural materials and indigenous plantings are preferred.
- Several respondents requested cost-effective, low maintenance plantings.
- One respondent noted that landscaping should reflect FireSmart principles.

B. Landscape Plan 2 – At Rail Crossing

In areas where the highway alignment is shifted, portions of the old highway will be reclaimed. These areas will be planted with trees and shrubs at either end of the reclaimed area and the remaining area will be seeded with rough grass.

The roadside and slopes of the new highway just south of the grade separated rail overpass will be planted with clusters of native trees and shrubs.

Participants were asked: Please indicate your level of agreement with the proposed plantings.

Strongly agree	50%
Somewhat agree	32%
Neither agree nor disagree	11%
Somewhat disagree	0%
Strongly disagree	8%

82% of respondents agreed (either strongly or somewhat) with the proposed plantings at the rail crossing.

Summary of Comments

- There were very few additional comments provided.

C. Landscape Plan 3 – Just North of Rail Crossing

In areas where the highway alignment is shifted, portions of the old highway will be reclaimed. These areas will be planted with trees and shrubs at either end of the reclaimed area and the remaining area will be seeded with rough grass.

The roadside and embankments of the railroad track overpass provide opportunities for planting of clusters of native trees and shrubs.

Participants were asked: Please indicate your level of agreement with the proposed plantings².

Strongly agree	51%
Somewhat agree	29%
Neither agree nor disagree	9%
Somewhat disagree	6%
Strongly disagree	6%

80% of respondents agreed (either strongly or somewhat) with the proposed plantings just north of the rail crossing.

Summary of Comments

- There were very few additional comments provided.

D. Gateway Landscape Options A and B

Two landscape options (A and B) are proposed at the community gateway south of Function Junction to alert drivers that they are entering a community.

Option A – Banner Poles It is proposed that closely spaced banner poles be installed immediately north of the community gateway sign on either side of the road to enhance the community gateway signage feature.

Participants were asked: Please indicate your level of agreement with the installation of proposed banner poles.

Strongly agree	42%
Somewhat agree	21%
Neither agree nor disagree	21%
Somewhat disagree	9%
Strongly disagree	6%

63% of respondents agreed (either strongly or somewhat) with the installation of proposed banner poles.

Summary of Comments

- Several respondents suggested a combination of trees and banner poles be used.
- Some respondents noted the marketing and seasonal/event value of banner poles while others were concerned that the banners would get dirty and require much upkeep.
- Some respondents were concerned about maintenance costs of the banners.

Option B – Trees To alert drivers that they are entering a community and to promote traffic calming on the Sea-to-Sky Highway, it is proposed that a single row of trees will be planted on either side of the road just north of the Whistler community gateway sign.

Participants were asked: Please indicate your level of agreement with the proposed plantings.

Strongly agree	33%
Somewhat agree	30%
Neither agree nor disagree	15%
Somewhat disagree	9%
Strongly disagree	12%

63% of respondents agreed (either strongly or somewhat) with the proposed plantings.

Summary of Comments

- Several respondents suggested a combination of trees and banner poles be used.
- Some respondents questioned whether a single row of trees will be sufficient to accompany the gateway signage.

4.3 Additional Comments

- Several respondents expressed their satisfaction with the work that has been done to date, as well as the level of communication between the project and stakeholders.
- Several respondents expressed concern with the amount of parking available, as well as the safety of the viewpoints. Suggestions include having a dedicated entrance and exit so that traffic can flow through the viewpoint rather than having to reverse to exit.
- Some respondents commented on the need for attention to cycling trails.