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SEA-TO-SKY HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

Overview of Community Consultation Activities 2002 through 2004

1.0 Background

In 1997 and 1998 the Ministry of Transportation (MoT) conducted a multi-modal Corridor Transportation Study at the request of the Sea-to-Sky corridor municipalities. Using population forecasts and known development plans of the day as primary indicators; MoT projected transportation demand and analyzed the potential for various non-auto modes of transportation to meet that demand.

Through a series of public open houses, local government meetings and consultation with the tourism and transportation industries, study findings indicated severe challenges in not only developing rail, marine or air travel service in the corridor, but also in making these alternative modes attractive enough to meet future mass transportation needs.

In 2002, MoT began a more comprehensive stakeholder consultation program to help define the conceptual nature and scope of transportation improvements to be undertaken on the Sea-to-Sky corridor. This phase of consultation was called **Project Definition Consultation** and included consultation on issues such as traffic management.

In September of 2003, MOT attended a series of open houses along the Sea-to-Sky Highway designed to provide the public with the opportunity to review the **Environmental Assessment (EA) Application** and engage in dialogue with the technical experts, application authors, and the Environmental Assessment Office (EAO) representatives.

The Sea-to-Sky Project team is currently undertaking a **Pre-Design Community Consultation** to ensure that community objectives are considered as appropriate highway improvements are designed to meet the primary safety, reliability and capacity goals.

2.0 Project Definition Consultation

The primary objective of the Project Definition public and stakeholder consultation program was to support the preparation of a practical and feasible highway improvement concept that addressed transportation needs and local concerns by:

- Ensuring stakeholders, including the public and corridor communities, understand provincial transportation needs and objectives for the Sea-to-Sky, and the technical requirements to achieve them;
- Ensuring the MoT hears, understands and considers public, stakeholder and community issues; and
- Reporting on decisions and providing ongoing information exchange on transportation projects with stakeholders.

The Project Definition Consultation process began in March 2002 and continued throughout 2002. Consultation activities were aimed at moving the overall highway improvement concept forward toward a decision on project scope and subsequently, soliciting input on planning and preliminary design issues.

2.1 Purpose

In order to share information with, and gain local expertise and guidance from corridor sources MoT utilized, among others, the following elements:

- Public open houses and town hall meetings;
- Ongoing discussion with regional district executive;
- Open council presentations and discussion with all affected municipalities; and
- Briefings with key stakeholder agencies (e.g., chambers of commerce, tourism offices, health authorities, various industries)

The progressive role of stakeholder and public consultation in refining an overall improvement concept toward a decision on project scope is summarized in Appendix A.

2.2 Consultation Activities – 2002/2003

During the initial Project Definition Consultation (March-July 2002) the results of various transportation studies were presented to local governments and key stakeholders, and posted on the MoT website. These studies established the nature of the corridor's transportation needs and the case for highway improvements.

In addition, a detailed design and traffic management consultation took place throughout 2002 and communities along the corridor were consulted about seasons, days of the week and hours of the day when highway construction would cause the least disruption.

Impacts during highway construction (e.g., user convenience and impact on economic activity) emerged as a dominant issue during conceptual consultation. However, this issue was not raised in consultation later that same year. This is attributed to MoT's responsiveness in applying earlier input to the refinement of the project concept, scope, and construction-impact mitigation plans

Feedback, much of it reflecting concerns over project scale and construction impacts, was considered in the development of improvement concepts shared during the next phase of consultation in August-December, 2002.

The August-to-December activities involved discussions with municipal councils from West Vancouver to Lillooet, open houses and town hall meetings to identify local issues and concerns.

The Ministry of Transportation's website provided an alternative feedback mechanism during that same period.

2.3 Technical Liaison Committee and Community Advisory Group Meetings

In addition to the consultation elements listed above, MoT's Owner's Engineer (SNC-Lavalin) created a Technical Liaison Committee (TLC) as a dialogue vehicle with Sea-to-Sky corridor communities. Chaired by the Owner's Engineer, the committee includes decision-makers from key agencies and stakeholder groups.

To supplement the activities of the TLC, citizen input mechanisms were developed in consultation with local governments. In many communities, such as Lions Bay, Britannia Beach and unincorporated areas within the regional districts, these mechanisms took the form of Community Advisory Groups (CAGs).

TLC and CAG meeting minutes are available on the EAO website www.eao.gov.bc.ca.

TLC and CAG participation and meeting dates are outline in Appendix B.

3.0 Environmental Assessment Consultation - 2003

Pursuant to the Public Consultation Policy Regulation (B.C. Reg. 373/2002) and as per the Order under Section 11 of the *BC Environmental Assessment Act*, the Ministry of Transportation, as the Proponent, carried out an extensive Public and Stakeholder Consultation program. *(For information regarding program specifics, please refer to the EAO Submission, Volume 4, Section B of the Sea-to-Sky Highway Improvement Project Application)*

Solicitation of public and stakeholder comments during the Public Comment Period was an extension of the Ministry's ongoing consultation approach. For up to two years prior to submission of the Application, the Ministry engaged local, regional and First Nations' governments in dialogue regarding the Project. Furthermore, the Ministry has committed to ongoing stakeholder consultation beyond Project certification.

The Application's biophysical and socio-community/economic study findings were presented to the public, along with a description of Project scope and conceptual design drawings in a series of well-advertised open houses in the Project's critical-path communities.

The results of the Public Comment Period of the Environmental Assessment Review, including a Table of Commitments, are documented on the EAO website (www.eao.gov.bc.ca). The project was certified by the EAO in June 2004.

3.1 Purpose

The purpose of the open houses was to provide the opportunity for the public to review the Application and engage in dialogue with the technical experts, application authors, and EAO representatives. The Public was also invited to submit written questions or comments about the Application as part of the environmental review. In addition, a third-party facilitator, hired by the Ministry, read aloud the questions/comments to the expert panel of Ministry and EAO representatives for response during the latter half of each open house. As time permitted, questions were then taken from the floor. EAO representatives limited their discussion to Environmental Assessment process issues. The Ministry and EAO with input from the corridor's mayors agreed upon the open house format.

In addition to the open houses, the Ministry and its representatives continued to meet with the Technical Liaison Committee, sub-committees and Community Advisory Groups along the corridor.

3.2 Open Houses

Five open houses were held throughout the month of September 2003 in each of the municipalities:

- West Vancouver
- Lions Bay
- Squamish
- Furry Creek
- Whistler

The Environmental Assessment Consultation open houses were advertised in both radio and print media. Comprehensive advertisements appeared in the *Whistler Pique*, *Whistler Question*, *Squamish Chief*, *North Shore News*, *Vancouver Sun*, and the *Vancouver Province* from September 11th to 15th, 2003. The advertisements invited the public to review and comment on the project application on the Environmental Assessment Office website and to review application highlights with environmental (biophysical and socio-economic/community) report authors, plus MoT and EAO representatives, at the advertised public open houses.

4.0 Pre-Design Consultation

In the overall context of the project scope, schedule and budget, communities along the Sea-to-Sky corridor have been involved in pre-design consultations to ensure that community objectives are considered as appropriate highway improvements are designed to meet the primary safety, reliability and capacity goals.

The STS Project Team has consulted about the scope of highway improvements over the last two years with communities, businesses and residents along the corridor. In total, the STS project team has attended more than 350 meetings. Much of the consultation has complemented various technical studies undertaken by the MoT on tolling, other route options, and transportation alternatives.

During Pre-Design Consultation the following communities are being consulted:

- West Vancouver (complete)
- Lions Bay (complete)
- Squamish (Fall 2004)
- Pinecrest/Black Tusk (Fall 2004)
- Whistler (Winter 2005)

4.1 Purpose

The purpose of the Pre-Design consultation is to consider and respond to community objectives identified in the Project Definition phase of consultation, obtain comments on design objectives for proposed improvements to specific segments of the highway, and gather input into the consultation plan for the Preliminary Design Phase of consultation.

A key outcome of Pre-Design consultation will be draft design objectives for consideration by the Sea-to-Sky Project Team and its highway designers as they proceed to preliminary design and ultimately detailed design.

4.2 West Vancouver Consultation

Small Group Meetings

West Vancouver Consultation was conducted February 2nd through March 2nd, 2004.

Ministry of Transportation staff attended twelve small group meetings between February 10th and February 25th 2004, to gather community input. Groups included:

- Police
- Fire
- Pasco Road Property Owners
- BC Trucking Association
- School District, and others.

Meetings ranged in size from two people to more than 50 people. More than 80 people attended the small group meetings.

Open Houses

The Ministry of Transportation consulted with the broader public through open houses in two locations, at Gleneagles School on February 16th, 2004 and at the Park Royal Shopping Centre on February 22nd, 2004, to gather local area feedback. Highway improvement options were presented through display boards, and input was gathered through a feedback form. More than 225 people came to view large display boards of the draft highway improvement options and discussed them with MoT representatives.

Consultation materials were posted on the project web site www.seatoskyimprovements.ca during the month of February. The public was encouraged to review the West Vancouver draft options and provide their feedback by fax, using the provided feedback form. Overall, approximately 155 feedback forms with comments were returned.

Community and Stakeholder input was recorded and summarized into a *Consultation Summary Report*.

4.3 Lions Bay Consultation

Since 2002, the Sea-to-Sky Highway Improvement project team has met with members of the Lions Bay community on more than 25 occasions. Regular, and at times monthly meetings with a committee of citizens appointed by Council – the Community Advisory Group (CAG), open houses, and meetings with Council and staff have provided opportunities to review and discuss the scope of highway improvements in the Lions Bay area, as well as specific concerns outlined by the community.

Members of the project team have conducted additional consultations with individual residents and through numerous phone calls with CAG members, the CAG Chair, the Mayor of Lions Bay senior staff and others.

CAG Information Meeting

Ministry of Transportation staff presented highway improvement options including key characteristics such as access, costs, benefits and how each option addresses project goals and community concerns to the Lions Bay CAG on January 31, 2004.

Open House/Public Meeting

Ministry of Transportation staff consulted with the broader public through an open house/public meeting on February 28, 2004 to gather local area feedback. Highway improvement options and key characteristics were presented and input was gathered through discussion, a question and answer session and a feedback form.

Approximately 225 people registered for this event and approximately 125 feedback forms were completed.

4.4 Upcoming Pre-Design Community Consultations

The Sea-to-Sky Project Team will be undertaking consultations with the following communities in September 2004:

- Squamish (Fall 2004)
- Pinecrest/Black Tusk (Fall 2004)
- Whistler (Winter 2005)