

# Preliminary Design Consultation Summary Report

**Squamish**

**June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2006**

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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 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.

Improvements will meet population growth and travel demands until 2020, with additional improvements phased in as required over approximately 20 years. The project will create 6,000 new jobs throughout the province as a result of economic activity generated along the corridor, and will increase provincial GDP by \$300 million over the period of 2010 to 2025.

## 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 of highway improvements over the last three years with communities, businesses and residents along the corridor. The MoT project team has attended approximately 400 meetings. Much of the consultation has complemented various technical studies undertaken by the MoT on tolling, other route options, and transportation alternatives.

**Once consultation on preliminary design is complete, construction of the highway improvements will start. Community consultation on detailed design will be conducted prior to completion of the improvements. Construction is underway in some areas of Squamish at the request of the District of Squamish.**

The S2S Transportation Group is the contractor responsible for designing, building, operating and maintaining the Sea-to-Sky Highway. A key outcome of the preliminary design consultation is practical feedback on preliminary designs for consideration by the Ministry of Transportation and the S2S Transportation Group as they develop detailed and final designs.

The next stage of consultation, detailed design consultation, generally involves the discussion of fewer but very specific treatments related to the final design, including such things as specific traffic calming and noise reduction features, shape and colour of light fixtures, and detailed landscaping 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 travelers. Highway closures will be implemented at set times and publicized well in advance.

To plan ahead for a safe trip, the following travel planning tools are available on the project website ([www.seatoskyimprovements.ca](http://www.seatoskyimprovements.ca)):

- **Weekly Schedule** – Weekly update on confirmed highway closures and delays
- **Travel Planner** – A list of the available closure/delay windows to November 30
- **Closure & Delay Windows** – The maximum closure/delay windows to 2009
- **Trip Calculator** – Use our interactive trip calculator for suggested departure times to reach your destination
- **Road Alerts Service** – Frequent Sea to Sky travelers can receive text message alerts about major or unscheduled events that affect highway travel.

## **2. OVERVIEW OF PRELIMINARY DESIGN CONSULTATION ON HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENTS**

### **2.1 STAGES OF CONSULTATION**

As the Sea-to-Sky Highway Improvement Project proceeds through various design stages and ultimately into construction, communities and key stakeholders are being consulted. The design stages include:

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

### **2.2 PRELIMINARY DESIGN CONSULTATION GOALS**

The purpose of the consultation is to:

- Inform the community and stakeholders about the draft preliminary design improvements to the Sea-to-Sky Highway within the Squamish area as well as the corridor-wide features.
- Gather input and feedback regarding preliminary 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 District of Squamish and other stakeholders.

### **2.3 PRELIMINARY DESIGN CONSULTATION TOPICS**

The following consultation topics were discussed in the Squamish preliminary design community consultation:

- Stawamus Chief Pedestrian Bridge
- Centennial Way Crossing
- Trail/Walking path
- Gateway Feature Options
- Business Gateways
- Landscape Feature Options

## **2.4 PRELIMINARY DESIGN CONSULTATION METHODS**

### **a. DISCUSSION GUIDE AND FEEDBACK FORM**

A consultation discussion guide was developed to explain the purpose of the preliminary 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
- Background on the Sea-to-Sky Highway Improvement Project's response to community input from the pre-design consultation
- Graphics illustrating the Stawamus Chief Pedestrian Bridge
- Graphics illustrating the Centennial Way Crossing options
- Graphics illustrating the Gateway Feature options
- Graphics illustrating the Business Gateway options
- Descriptions of the Landscape options and treatments

Feedback was gathered at small group meetings, at the open houses, by on-line feedback form, fax and mail.

### **b. WEB-BASED CONSULTATION**

All consultation materials were available on the project website, including an on-line feedback form.

### **c. SMALL GROUP MEETINGS**

The Sea-to-Sky Highway Improvement Project team met with seven stakeholder groups over two days:

- Business & Tourism (April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2006)
- Sustainability (April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2006)
- Utilities & Services (April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2006)
- Recreation (April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2006)
- First Responders (May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2006)
- Transportation & Development (May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2006)
- Community Organizations (May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2006)

The discussion guide and display boards were reviewed at the small group meetings and attendees provided comments on preliminary design features for the Squamish community, and had the opportunity to ask questions.

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

**d. OPEN HOUSES**

Two open houses were held in Squamish to provide residents, community organizations, businesses, and stakeholders with the opportunity to provide feedback on the preliminary design options.

**Wednesday, May 3, 2006**

6:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

Sea-to-Sky Hotel, 40330 Tantalus Way

**Saturday, May 6, 2006**

10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Squamish Adventure Centre, 38551 Loggers Lane

Display boards provided background on the project and illustrated the proposed improvements through the Provincial Park areas and through urban Squamish. Sea-to-Sky Highway Improvement Project staff and S2S Transportation Group team members were available to answer questions.

**e. ADVERTISEMENTS**

An advertisement for the Open House was placed in the Squamish Chief on Friday, April 21<sup>st</sup>, 2006 and Friday, April 28<sup>th</sup>, 2006.

**f. POSTCARD INVITATION, POSTER FOR BUSINESSES AND BULLETIN BOARDS**

A postcard invitation was distributed on April 28<sup>th</sup>, 2006 to each household (5,500) in Squamish and distributed at presentations and key information centres in Squamish. The text briefly explained the consultation and gave dates, times and locations of the two Open Houses on May 3<sup>rd</sup> and May 6<sup>th</sup>.

An 11 x 17 poster was posted in businesses and on community bulletin boards on April 26, 2006.

**g. PRESENTATIONS TO COMMUNITY GROUPS**

Beginning in early April, the Community Relations Officer made 10 presentations to community groups, including a powerpoint presentation. Information about the upcoming open houses was also announced at large community group meetings (Chamber and Rotary Club), and the project had a table with the postcards and powerpoint at a Chamber trade show.

**h. SQUAMISH MEDIA INTERVIEWS**

Peter Milburn, Executive Project Director for the Sea-to-Sky Highway Improvement Project, attended two interviews with the Squamish Chief newspaper to raise awareness about the consultation. The first was a brief mention on March 17, 2006 and the second was exclusively about the consultation. The regularly scheduled Mountain Monitor radio interview on April 26 highlighted the consultation and invited the community to come to the Open Houses.

### 3. SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK

The Squamish Preliminary Design community consultation included gathering community feedback and input regarding the Stawamus Chief Pedestrian Bridge, the Centennial Way Intersection, community and business gateways and landscaping.

293 people participated in the Squamish Preliminary Design consultation. Participation was as follows:

- 60 people attended the small group meetings
- 160 attended the open houses
- 73 participated via online feedback form or by fax

The following provides a summary of input provided through the consultation feedback form. The quantitative results are presented below and these are followed by a qualitative summary of feedback form comments.

#### 3.1 SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK FORM RESPONSES

##### 1. Stawamus Chief Pedestrian Bridge

Participants were asked to indicate their preference for the design of the Stawamus Chief Pedestrian Bridge. Two options were presented to the community:

**Option 1** – An arched bridge with a steel framed concrete deck supported by hangers from the steel arch beam. A screen will be installed for pedestrian safety and to ensure no debris falls onto the highway.

**Option 2** – A pre-cast concrete bridge with handrails and screening mounted on top of the deck to contain pedestrians and ensure no debris falls on the highway. The main beam supports for this option are below the pathway level, whereas Option 1 has structural supports overhead.

The following indicates the community's preference for options:

Option 1: Arched Bridge	<b>76% preferred</b> Option 1
Option 2: Pre-cast concrete bridge	<b>24% preferred</b> Option 2

**2. Centennial Way Crossing**

Participants were asked to indicate their preference for the two options proposed for the Centennial Way crossing. Two options were presented to the community:

**Option 1** – The Sea-to-Sky Highway Improvement Project can provide an at-grade signalized full movement intersection. This will include a vehicle and pedestrian activated signal. This option would also include relocating the existing overhead walkway.

**Option 2** – The Sea-to-Sky Highway Improvement Project can provide an underpass below the highway that accommodates both vehicle and pedestrian traffic. This option would include the removal of the existing overhead walkway.

The following indicates the community’s preference for options:

Option 1: At-grade signalized full movement intersection	<b>10% preferred</b> Option 1
Option 2: Underpass under way highway will accommodate vehicle an pedestrian traffic	<b>90% preferred</b> Option 2

**3. Trail/Walking Path**

**Participants were asked to provide their feedback regarding how they would like to be involved in the planning and development of the trail. The following is a key theme summary of the comments:**

- Many participants commented that they would definitely like to be involved in the development of the trail.
- Participants commented that they would like to receive updates on the process and the progress of the trail.
- Many participants put forth suggestions for groups/organizations that could be involved: Squamish Downtown Neighbourhood Association, youth groups, Squamish Environmental Conservation Society, Squamish Trails Society, etc.
- It was suggested that the District of Squamish develop a few options and consult with the community at large.

**Participants were also asked to provide any additional comments regarding the proposed trail. The following is a key theme summary of the comments:**

- Many respondents noted the importance of designing the trail to be multi-modal, and be able to accommodate walkers, commuters, joggers, cyclists, strollers, rollerbladers.
- Participants also noted that the trail should be able to easily accommodate users from all age categories, i.e. children and seniors.
- Some respondents noted the importance of having a trail that connects the different neighbourhoods in Squamish as well as business districts.
- Some respondents noted the importance of having a trail with a permeable surface, whereas other respondents suggested the trail be paved in order to facilitate the easy movement of bicycles, strollers and rollerblades. Some suggested that it be two-lane, with one paved, the other non-paved.
- Some respondents expressed a desire to have a landscaped 'buffer' to separate the highway from the trail.
- Respondents made suggestions that the trail should include amenities, such as lighting, garbage receptacles, rest areas and signage.

#### 4. GATEWAY FEATURE OPTIONS

Participants were asked to indicate how appealing each of the four gateway feature options proposed for the District of Squamish were on a scale of 1 to 5 (Not at all appealing) to 5 (Very appealing). The following is a statistical summary of how respondents rated the Gateway Feature options on an appeal scale:

Option 1: Community Rock	<b>67%</b> <sup>1</sup> rated the Community Rock option as very appealing
Option 2: Community Links	<b>11%</b> rated the Community Links option as very appealing
Option 3: Community Rings	<b>2%</b> rated the Community Rings option as very appealing
Option 4: Community Blades	<b>5%</b> rated the Community Blades option as very appealing

#### Summary of Comments

- Many respondents commented that the gateway feature option selected should be highly visible and easy to read. Some commented that it should be lit.
- Some respondents commented that the rock proposed for Option 1 should be real rock, as compared to faux rock.
- Some respondents liked the idea of consistency along the corridor, whereas, others favoured the idea of having community distinctiveness.

<sup>1</sup> Some totals may not add up to 100% as some participants did not indicate a preference

**5. BUSINESS GATEWAYS**

In addition to Community Gateways, “business gateway” signs announcing the main commercial areas of Squamish Town Centre and Garibaldi Business Centre would be incorporated into the highway design. Participants were asked to indicate which option they preferred.

The following indicates the community’s preference:

<b>Option 1a:</b> Steel sign on steel posts cut in a shape unique to Squamish	<b>8% preferred</b> Option 1a
<b>Option 1b:</b> Variation of the steel sign design on steel posts cut in a shape unique to Squamish	<b>11% preferred</b> Option 1b
<b>Option 2:</b> Design would reflect the design of the chosen Community Gateway feature.	<b>81% preferred</b> Option 2

**Summary of Comments**

- Many respondents commented that the business gateways should be similar in design to the chosen community gateway feature option.
- Some respondents commented they liked the idea of uniqueness, variety in the design for business gateways.
- Some respondents commented that the business gateway feature option selected should be visible and easy to read, and if possible, that it should be lit.
- Some respondents commented that the business gateways were not needed as the District of Squamish had implemented business gateways within Squamish.

**6. LANDSCAPE FEATURES**

The Sea-to-Sky Highway Improvement Project developed three landscape options for the District of Squamish area. Participants were asked to indicate how appealing each of the three landscape gateway feature options were on a scale of 1 to 5 (Not at all appealing) to 5 (Very appealing).

The following is a statistical summary of how respondents rated the Gateway Feature options on an appeal scale:

Option 1: Formalized Tree Plantings	<b>30%</b> rated the Formalized Tree Plantings option as very appealing
Option 2: Clusters of Native Vegetation	<b>37%</b> rated the Clusters of Native Vegetation option as very appealing
Option 3: Trail Clusters	<b>23%</b> rated the Trail Clusters option as very appealing

**Summary of Comments:**

- Many respondents noted a strong preference for the use of native species in whichever landscape option is selected.
- Many respondents noted that they would like to see a combination of the three landscape options, rather than just one.
- Some respondents commented that whichever option is selected, it should be low-maintenance.
- Some respondents commented that the landscaping should act as a buffer between the highway and the communities and trails along-side the highway.

## 7. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Participants were given an opportunity to provide any additional comments. The following is a key theme summary of additional comments:

- Many participants commented that there should be safer pedestrian crossings of the highway, especially providing more time for pedestrians, including seniors and children to cross the highway.
- Many participants commented that consideration be given to safe pedestrian/vehicle movement at Clarke Drive as well as at the Adventure Centre.
- Participants commented that the overpasses should be designed to ensure safety, i.e. they should be caged and people must be encouraged to maintain courteous speeds.
- Some participants commented that there were too many signalized intersections in the highway design.
- Some participants commented that natural plantings and products should be pursued in designing landscape options and signage.
- Some participants commented that when designing the trail, safe and convenient crossings of the intersections should be considered, most notably for cyclists.
- There was general support for the highway improvement project.

### 3.2 KEY THEME SUMMARY OF COMMENTS FROM SMALL GROUP MEETINGS

The Sea-to-Sky Highway Improvement Project team met with seven stakeholder groups over two days:

- Business & Tourism (April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2006)
- Sustainability (April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2006)
- Utilities & Services (April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2006)
- Recreation (April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2006)
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- Transportation & Development (May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2006)
- Community Organizations (May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2006)

At each of the small group meetings, notes were recorded, including participant comments. The following provides a summary of these comments for each of the small group meetings.

#### **Meeting #1 – Business & Tourism**

##### **Highway Median Barriers:**

- Meeting participants had comments regarding median barriers, commenting that raised median barriers between the Squamish urban segments are preferred over centre-line barriers.

##### **Landscaping:**

- Meeting participants commented that natural/native landscaping should be pursued.
- Participants commented that the landscaping must be easily maintained.

##### **Compatible Intersections:**

- Participants commented that intersections and improvements to intersections must work well with the local road networks and not create unintended back ups into the community (particularly at the Cleveland Avenue intersection).

## **Meeting #2 – Sustainability**

### **Trail Development:**

- Meeting participants expressed concerns regarding the scope and nature of the proposed trail.
- Participants commented that the community must be involved in the trail development discussions 'sooner rather than later'.

### **Wildlife Impacts:**

- Meeting participants raised concerns regarding wildlife corridors, and the impact of roadside vegetation clearing on birds and other species.

### **Groundwater:**

- Meeting participants posed questions regarding the impacts of drainage on existing groundwater (particularly on Mamquam Channel and the wetland areas).

## **Meeting # 3 – Utilities and Services**

### **Balanced Improvements:**

- Meeting participants noted the importance of finding a balance between improved pedestrian and vehicle crossings over the highway, and the improved flow of traffic along the Squamish segment of the highway.

## **Meeting # 4 – Recreation**

### **Pedestrian Overpasses:**

- Participants commented that not enough pedestrian overpasses have been included in the project.

### **Trail Integration:**

- Meeting participants commented that integration of all the trails in the area requires consideration.

### **Signage Integration:**

- Meeting participants commented that the gateway features should be integrated with local signage.

### **Meeting # 5 – First Responders**

#### **Landscaping:**

- Participants noted that the formalized tree planting option should not obstruct sight lines to businesses.

#### **Intersections:**

- Participants felt that three signalized intersections in a row were too many, specifically mentioning eliminating the signals at Depot Road.

### **Meeting # 6 – Transportation**

#### **Construction Schedule:**

- Participants asked questions regarding construction time lines for work in the Squamish area.

#### **Safety:**

- Participants identified the need for safe access into the Squamish Adventure Center.
- Sufficient acceleration and deceleration lanes for buses and general purpose traffic were noted as concerns by several participants.
- Participants expressed support for the Centennial Way Intersection Option 2 believing it addressed safety concerns presented with the current configuration.

#### **Landscaping:**

- Several participants asked whether there was an opportunity to mix the landscaping options.
- Participants wondered if some of the landscaping options would help to reduce highway noise.

#### **Intersections:**

- Several participants commented on the frequency of the signalized intersections suggesting that three signalized intersections were too many.

## **Meeting # 7 – Community Organizations**

### **Construction:**

- Several participants enquired as to how much additional land would be needed for the four-lanes.

### **Safety:**

- Safe access, east/west, was mentioned by several participants in several locations, particularly with respect to the amount of time allowed for crossing at pedestrian activated signals for seniors and children.
- Participants asked what was being done to discourage people from 'dashing' across the highway in areas where there are no pedestrian signalized crossings.

### **Gateway Features and Landscaping:**

- Several participants sought greater clarification regarding the selection process for the Gateway feature options.