

**Pre-Design Consultation
Summary Report**

**Urban Squamish and,
Murrin, Shannon Falls and Stawamus
Chief Provincial Parks**

November 5, 2004

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1. PROJECT OVERVIEW

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 and reliability. By 2009 extensive improvements will make travel along the corridor safer for residents, commuters and tourists. To be completed before the Olympics, over the long term, the highway improvements will serve population growth and economic development in the corridor as demand increases for resident and visitor travel and 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:

- 4 lanes Horseshoe Bay to Lions Bay
- 2 lanes Lions Bay to Porteau Cove
- 3 lanes from Porteau Cove to Squamish
- 4 lanes within urban Squamish
- 3 lanes from Squamish to Whistler

The estimated capital project cost for the improvement project is \$600 million and will be completed by 2009. 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.

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

- Safety improvements
- Reliability improvements
- Capacity improvements
- Project completion by 2009
- Manage traffic flows during construction to minimize disruption and maximize predictability
- Complete the project on time and on budget

A. COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

The Ministry of Transportation (MoT) has consulted about the scope of highway improvements since 2002 with communities, businesses and residents along the corridor. The MoT project team has attended close to 400 meetings. Much of the consultation has complemented various technical studies undertaken by the MoT on tolling, other route options, and transportation alternatives.

Consultations will continue with municipalities (elected officials and staff), and organizations such as Technical Liaison Committees (locally nominated advisory groups), the Lions Bay Community Advisory Group, Howe Sound Community Forum, Squamish advisory groups, Tourism Whistler, One-Whistler, Chambers of Commerce, environmental organizations, including the Recreation Focus Group and the public.

B. TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT

A key priority of the Ministry of Transportation is to minimize disruption and maximize the predictability of traffic delays and road closures during construction. Communities along the corridor have been consulted about seasons, days of the week and hours of the day when highway construction would cause the least disruption.

As a result of this consultation, road closures and delays will be limited to non-peak periods. For additional information, go to:

<http://www.seatoskyimprovements.ca/>.

2. OVERVIEW OF CONSULTATION ON HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT DESIGN

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

- Pre-Design
- Preliminary Design
- Detailed Design

A. PRE-DESIGN CONSULTATION GOALS

The purpose of the Squamish Pre-Design consultation is to:

- Inform the community and stakeholders about the draft pre-design options for improvements to the Sea-to-Sky Highway within Squamish and about corridor-wide consultation;
- Gather input and feedback regarding the draft pre-design options for highway improvements from the community and stakeholders;
- Summarize community and stakeholders input for consideration by the Ministry of Transportation. Distribute the Consultation Summary Report to consultation participants, the regional district and other stakeholders.

B. PRE-DESIGN CONSULTATION METHODS

a. DISCUSSION GUIDE AND FEEDBACK FORM

A discussion guide (Appendix 4) was developed that explained the purpose of the consultation, described the pre-design options for

residents and provided a feedback form to assist in the gathering of community input. The discussion guide also provided a series of maps that highlighted the location of each option.

b. WEB-BASED CONSULTATION

All consultation materials were available on the web including feedback form that could be emailed or faxed back to the project.

c. SMALL GROUP MEETINGS

The Ministry of Transportation consulted with residents, community stakeholders and the business community through a series of 10 small group meetings. These meetings were:

Sept. 13	Utilities: e.g. BC Hydro, Terasen Gas
Sept. 14	First Responders: e.g. RCMP, Search & Rescue
Sept. 15	Business – Tourism: e.g. Waterfront Association, District of Squamish Tourism Committee
Sept. 15	Planning Groups: e.g. District of Squamish Planning & Transportation Committee, Rotary Club
Sept. 16	Social/cultural Groups: e.g. Public Library, Squamish Senior Citizens Home Society
Sept. 16	Environmental Groups: e.g. Streamkeepers, District of Squamish Environmental Committee
Sept. 21	Schools: e.g. Ecole Mamquam, Trustee Area D
Sept. 21	Resident Groups: e.g. Brackendale Farmers Institute, Valleycliffe Resident
Sept. 22	Planning Groups: e.g. Chamber of Commerce, Elaho Logging Ltd.
Sept. 23	Recreation Groups: e.g. Squamish Off Road Cycling, Climbers Access Society of BC

A meeting summary and completed feedback forms for each meeting are attached in the Appendix 6.

d. OPEN HOUSES

Four Open Houses were held on the following dates:

October 7	Sea to Sky Motel (evening)
October 12	Sea to Sky Motel (evening)
October 16	Howe Sound Secondary (Saturday morning)
October 20	Furry Creek Golf Club (evening)

e. ADVERTISEMENTS

Advertisements ran in the Squamish Chief (October 1st, October 8th and October 15th) and in the Whistler Question (September 30, October 7th and October 14th). A sample ad is provided in the Appendix 3.

3. KEY THEME SUMMARY

There were approximately 250 registrants at the small group meetings, open houses or submitted feedback forms through the web. During September and October 2004, 633 people visited the consultation pages on the website.

Approximately 90 individuals attended the small group meetings. At each small group meeting, large table maps were used to show the route and options for improvement. A presentation on the Urban Squamish and Parks improvements was provided, followed by a question and answer and discussion period. Participants were given time to complete their feedback forms.

Approximately 160 people registered at the four Open Houses. Large display boards were used to show the options for highway improvements in Urban Squamish and the provincial parks and MoT staff were available to answer questions. In Furry Creek, information materials and display boards were also available regarding improvements in this area of the highway.

Approximately 130 feedback forms returned. The following Key Theme Summary provides the question asked in the feedback form with the percentage of all participants responding to each option. The statistical analysis is followed by a key theme summary of the comments provided at the end of each question.

SEA-TO-SKY HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENTS - OPTIONS FOR URBAN SQUAMISH

A. Key Theme Summary Overview - Urban Squamish

- a.** There is broad, general support for the highway improvements. No participant suggested the highway improvements should not go ahead.
- b.** Public safety is the primary concern of participants. This includes the safety of vehicle passengers, bicyclists, pedestrians and, especially in urban Squamish, young people who use the highway to get to school and recreation events. Participant comments regarding safety focused in particular on the challenges of pedestrians crossing the highway and suggestions such as overpasses and underpasses were offered as a way to address this challenge.
- c.** Participants saw the highway improvements as an opportunity to promote the unique recreational opportunities of Squamish while encouraging sustainable development of the region.
- d.** When building pathways, medians or other features participants want the project to use surface cover that allows water to drain through the soil and that enhances the natural look of the region.
- e.** Participants are concerned about the number of signs currently along the highway. They saw any possible additions as visually intrusive on the natural

environment and a possible distraction to drivers. They want any new signage carefully thought out.

- f. Participants said they thought the Culliton to Cheakamus section under construction was being done well and looked forward to additional highway improvements.
- g. Participants expressed appreciation for the opportunity to provide their input to the highway design and encouraged the Ministry of Transportation to continue to engage with the community.

B. Key Theme Summary by Consultation Question - Urban Squamish

1. Primary Gateways – South

As part of the upgrade to the highway, the Sea-to-Sky Highway Improvement Project proposes to rebuild the primary gateways to the District of Squamish. Gateways contribute to public safety by calming traffic and creating a sense of arrival. There are several options for the location of these gateways.

Where would you like the South Gateway to be located?

- a) At municipal boundary south of Murrin Park? 26%
- b) Near the Stawamus Chief? 42%
- c) Just prior to Stawamus Forest Road? 21%
- d) At existing location just prior to Mill Road? 9%
- e) Some other location? 3%

Key Theme Summary of Comments

Participants expressed concern about calming traffic too early so that drivers accelerated again before reaching urban Squamish or placing the Southern Gateway in an area that was visually “busy” already. The compromise for most was placement just south of the Stawamus Chief. Others wanted to remind travelers that Squamish started at Murrin Park and included much more than the built up areas. For others, the compromise location for the South Gateway would be Shannon Falls.

2. Curb and Gutter - Mamquam Blind Channel to Cleveland Avenue

To increase the sense of community atmosphere and for traffic calming, it is proposed that the normal asphalt curb and shoulder be replaced with curbs and gutters in two sections of the highway. In addition to other benefits, a drainage system would be constructed under the sidewalks to manage the flow of storm-water. See page 6 in the Discussion Guide for a description of curbs and gutters.

Do you support the proposal for curbs and gutters from Mamquam Blind Channel to Cleveland Avenue?

- YES 86% NO 14%

Key Theme Summary of Comments

Participants supporting the curbs and gutters expressed the need for sustainable drainage of storm water off of the highway to protect the waterways adjacent to the highway. Additional comments focused on the need for permeable surfaces such as grassed areas adjacent to the highway to reduce the amount of runoff. Participants wanted any pathway separated from the highway so that people did not have to walk next to the highway, especially children.

3. Business Gateways

In addition to the Primary Gateways, the Sea-to-Sky Highway Improvement Project may add highly visible roadside banners on lamp standards that identify business areas, such as Squamish Town Centre and the Garibaldi Business Centre. Gateways contribute to public safety by calming traffic and creating a sense of arrival. Business gateways also let drivers know about business opportunities in Squamish.

Do you support the placement of these special banners along the highway?

YES **NO**

Key Theme Summary of Comments

Participants supported the use of special signage as a way of letting travelers know of what was available in Squamish and felt this might be especially important with the improvements to the highway. Participants want the banners to enhance rather than detract from the built environment and suggested that the banners needed to change regularly and might reflect events occurring in Squamish. Those opposing the banners felt they would become an eyesore and would add to the “visual” congestion already existing in the area.

4. Centennial Way Intersection - Pedestrian Movement

Currently there is a pedestrian overpass that creates access across the highway just north of Centennial Way. It has been observed that this overpass is underutilized and that residents may have a preference to use an improved intersection at Centennial Way. If a traffic signal is installed at the Centennial Way intersection, then two options exist for controlling pedestrian crossing of the highway:

Option I: Extend the existing overpass to meet the widened highway.

Option II: Remove the overpass and put in a pedestrian controlled light at the Centennial Way intersection to allow for ease of pedestrian use of this intersection.

Which option do you prefer?

Option I **Option II**

Key Theme Summary of Comments

Participants offered a variety of explanations as to why the current overpass is not used such as “it is too far from the current intersection”. Some participants suggested educating young people to use the overpass, while others suggested alternatives to the

THE SEA-TO-SKY HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT PROJECT AND THE DISTRICT OF SQUAMISH - JOINT PROJECTS

7. Bicycle Lanes, Pathways, Trails

Currently the Sea-to-Sky Highway Improvement Project is planning to construct a 1.5 metre wide bicycle lane on either side of the highway. In cooperation with the District of Squamish it is possible to construct a pathway parallel to the highway for use as a bicycle and walking path and to connect existing trails. The Sea-to-Sky Highway Improvement Project would build the pathway with the District providing funding.

Option I: Do you want the Sea-to-Sky Highway Improvement Project and the District of Squamish to develop a multi-use pathway parallel to the highway?

Option II: Do you want the District of Squamish to develop a multi-use pathway off the highway, elsewhere within Squamish, with signage and inter connection supported by the Sea-to-Sky Highway Improvement Project?

Which option do you prefer?

Option I

37%

Option II

63%

Key Theme Summary of Comments

Those supporting a complete separation (Option II) suggested that safety and aesthetics were the main reasons. Those supporting Option I were most concerned that this should be done with safety as the primary objective. For some, safety meant the need to have others around in order to feel safe, while for others it meant protecting pathway users from moving vehicles. Other participants suggested separation of a bike path and pathways from the highway whether this was done by locating the pathway off the highway or by creating distance between the traffic and users with a visual barrier such as shrubbery or other landscaping or by a ditch separating the pathway and traffic.

8. Sidewalks

In areas where there are curbs and gutters it is possible to add sidewalks along the highway to enhance the village atmosphere of the community. These require additional land and financial support from the District of Squamish.

Do you want the Sea-to-Sky Highway Improvement Project and the District of Squamish to construct sidewalks along the highway where curbs and gutters have been installed?

YES

55%

NO

45%

Key Theme Summary of Comments

Participants suggested that if a pathway was built parallel to or near the highway sidewalks would be unnecessary. Participants also indicated a preference for a permeable and green surface, which they said, would be more environmentally helpful. Those supporting the use of sidewalks felt that they would help create a village

atmosphere, might add to the safety of those walking along the highway, and might add to the aesthetics by, for example, “tie the two sides of the highway together”. Those opposing sidewalks were concerned about the safety of people walking near the highway. They said that people should be discouraged from doing this.

9. Additional Comments (Urban Squamish)

Participants expressed concern about the movement of people across the highway and at the same time were concerned about the number of traffic lights on the highway. They suggested traffic lights should be minimized. Alternative options for assisting pedestrians to cross the highway included the use of overpasses and pedestrian underpasses.

Participants expressed concern about the configuration of the highway from two lanes to three lanes, then to four lanes inside urban Squamish and back to three lanes. Some wondered what the impact of this configuration would be inside Squamish.

Several participants expressed appreciation for the consultation process and said they looked forward to more consultation as the project proceeds on sidewalks, trails and storm-water treatment.

Participants expressed a desire for the highway to be used to promote Squamish and its recreation and business opportunities. Highway speed, the use of special signage and intersection access were some examples of what might be done to encourage travelers to leave the highway and visit the area.

SEA-TO-SKY HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENTS OPTIONS FOR MURRIN, SHANNON FALLS AND STAWAMUS CHIEF PROVINCIAL PARKS

C. Key Theme Summary Overview - Provincial Parks

- a.** East-west access across the highway was a major theme. Participants saw this as the most critical safety issue when considering highway improvements near parks. Frequent suggestions included overpasses, underpasses and vehicle tunnels.
- b.** Participants support signage that informs the public about the cultural and recreational opportunities provided by the parks and, at the same time they are concerned about the number of signs along the highway. They also want the signs to be visually attractive or tasteful.
- c.** Participants want to ensure public awareness of the parks and at the same time are concerned about possible overuse of the parks.
- d.** Participants would like to have further involvement in the design decisions resulting from the highway improvements.

D. Key Theme Summary by Consultation Question - Provincial Parks

MURRIN PROVINCIAL PARK

A. Third Traffic Lane

The extra third lane of traffic being added to meet the requirements for the Olympics will be removed after the Olympics. It has been suggested that this could be redesigned to a two-lane highway with an enhanced 1.5 metre bicycle lane through this section of the highway.

Option 1: Remove the third lane and return to current state.

Option II: Redesign the third lane to a bicycle lane after the Olympics.

Which option do you prefer?

Option I

Option II

Key Theme Summary of Comments

The most frequent comment questioned the removal of the third lane. These participants believe traffic volumes will be heavy by 2010 and they suggest the lane should be left in for safety reasons. Other comments focused on the need to enhance bicycle safety in this area and these participants preferred the conversion of the third lane to a bicycle lane. Those supporting Option 1 suggested a park by-pass as the best solution.

B. Signage Opportunities

It has been proposed that the Sea-to-Sky Highway Improvement project develop unique 'branding' for the highway. 'Branding' is the creation of a unique identity that promotes the highway, the communities along the highway and, among others, recreation and cultural opportunities. One of the possibilities is to work with BC Parks to create signage at the parks that identifies the connection to the Sea-to-Sky Highway Improvement Project and the recreation and cultural opportunities within the parks.

Do you support the addition of signage at Murrin Provincial Park?

YES

NO

Where would you like the signage to be located?

- | | |
|---|----------------------------------|
| a) South end of Murrin Provincial Park? | <input type="text" value="20%"/> |
| b) North end of Murrin Provincial Park? | <input type="text" value="6%"/> |
| c) North and South? | <input type="text" value="72%"/> |
| d) Some other location? | <input type="text" value="2%"/> |

Key Theme Summary of Comments

Participants generally supported the signage but had two major concerns. First, they are concerned about the number of signs along the highway, generally. Second, they want to make sure that any signage is done well and enhances the park. Participants are concerned that the park is currently well used and are not sure that any steps should be taken to encourage additional use.

C. Pathway Along Lake

There is an existing pathway along Browning Lake that runs parallel to the proposed temporary retaining wall. The pathway can be left in its current state or it could be upgraded using different surface materials such as gravel or asphalt.

Which option do you prefer?

Leave in current state

38%

Upgrade

62%

Key Theme Summary of Comments

Participants supporting the upgrade of the pathway saw this as an opportunity to create a smooth walking and bicycle path. Many of these preferred an asphalt covering. Those who supported leaving it in the current state wanted to ensure the pathway reflected the natural state of the lake and wanted to ensure a permeable surface. Gravel was an acceptable cover to these participants. Other participants saw this as an opportunity to add boardwalks and to widen the trail.

SHANNON FALLS PROVINCIAL PARK

D. Signage Opportunities

It has been proposed that the Sea-to-Sky Highway Improvement project develop unique 'branding' for the highway. 'Branding' is the creation of a unique identity that promotes the highway, the communities along the highway and, among others, recreation and cultural opportunities. One of the possibilities is to work with BC Parks to create signage at the parks that identifies the connection to the Sea-to-Sky Highway Improvement Project and the recreation and cultural opportunities within the parks.

Do you support the addition of signage at Shannon Falls Provincial Park?

YES

78%

NO

22%

Where would you like the signage to be located?

a) South end of Shannon Falls Provincial Park?

25%

b) North end of Shannon Falls Provincial Park?

2%

c) North and South?

69%

d) Some other location?

3%

It should be noted that correspondence was received from Mayor Sutherland informing the Sea-to-Sky Highway Improvement Project that the District of Squamish Council had adopted a resolution on October 5 2004 recommending an East/West connection between the Stawamus Chief and the Malamute and in particular a pedestrian overpass or underpass.

G. West Side Viewpoint

Currently there is a pull out on the west side of the highway with no acceleration or deceleration lanes and people use it as a parking area. The construction of a southbound viewpoint is proposed for the Stawamus Chief for southbound travelers with parking for vehicles and with acceleration and deceleration lanes on the west side of the highway.

Do you support the addition of a viewpoint on the west side of the highway across from the Stawamus Chief?

YES 87%

NO 13%

Key Theme Summary of Comments

Participants supported the west side viewpoint because they saw this as a safety improvement. South-bound drivers distracted by looking back toward the Chief, inappropriate highway parking and illegal left-hand turns create safety issues that might be addressed by a west side viewpoint. Concern was expressed that west side parking would create a problem of people crossing the highway and that this needed to be resolved before parking was installed. Others opposed the west side viewpoint because of possible environmental impacts resulting from increasing parking space.

H. Additional Comments (provincial parks)

Please add any additional comments you may have about the proposed improvements to the Squamish portion of the Sea-to-Sky Highway Improvement Project.

Participants appreciated the quality of the presentation and materials and the ability to provide input.

Participants suggested a variety of additions to the proposed improvements such as underpasses at bridges, reducing noise levels wherever possible, and creating bypasses at the parks.