

Preliminary Design Consultation Summary Report

Brandywine to Function Junction Section

December 9, 2005

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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, 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 two-lane sections and alternating passing opportunities provided by alternating the third lane.

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 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

A. 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 nearly 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.

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.

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. The detailed design stage involves relatively more financial and technical analysis than community consultation to ensure designs are financially and technically feasible.

B. 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, the following travel planning tools are available on the project website (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 Highway travellers can receive text message alerts about major or unscheduled events that affect highway travel.

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 will be consulted. The design stages include:

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

A. PRELIMINARY DESIGN CONSULTATION GOALS

The purpose of the consultation is to:

- Inform the community and stakeholders about the draft preliminary design options for improvements to the Sea-to-Sky Highway within the Brandywine to Function Junction area as well as the corridor-wide consultation.
- Gather input and feedback regarding the draft preliminary design options for highway improvements from the community and stakeholders.
- Summarize community and stakeholders' input for consideration by the Ministry of Transportation and S2S Transportation Group. Distribute the Consultation Summary Report to consultation participants, the small group meeting attendees and other stakeholders.

B. PRELIMINARY DESIGN CONSULTATION METHODS

a. DISCUSSION GUIDE AND FEEDBACK FORM

A discussion guide (see tab 5) was developed that explained the purpose of the consultation, described design options for residents and included a feedback form to assist in gathering community input. The discussion guide also provided maps that highlighted the location of each option, graphics that illustrated the gateway feature options and the landscape options. Feedback forms were returned at small group meetings and open houses, by e-mail, by fax and by mail. The Discussion Guide was also made available in the Thursday, October 27th, 2005 edition of the *Whistler Question*.

b. WEB-BASED CONSULTATION

All consultation materials were available on the web, including an on-line feedback form that could be e-mailed or faxed back to the project.

c. SMALL GROUP MEETINGS

The Sea-to-Sky Highway Improvement Project team met with seven individual small groups from sectors such as hotel, business, recreational, environmental, tourism, transportation in Whistler on October 31st, November 1st, and November 3rd, 2005. The Discussion Guide and display boards were reviewed with these groups. Completed feedback forms were collected at each small group meeting. Meeting notes from the small group meetings are filed under tab 1 of this report.

d. OPEN HOUSES

A public open house was held on Thursday, November 3rd, 2005, 5:30 pm - 8:30 pm, at the Westin Resort & Spa in Whistler, B.C. to provide residents, community organizations and businesses with an opportunity to provide feedback on the preliminary design options. Presentation boards provided information on specific highway improvements in the Brandywine to Function Junction section, as well as on the additional viewpoint, the gateway feature options and the landscape options. Sea-to-Sky Highway Improvement Project staff 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 was placed in the *Whistler Question* on Thursday, October 27th, 2005 (see tab 4).

3. SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK

The Brandywine to Function Junction Preliminary Design Community consultation included gathering community feedback and input regarding refinements to traffic calming measures such as gateways and landscaping, additional chain-up area and a new northbound viewpoint.

Approximately 65 individuals participated in the Brandywine to Function Junction consultation. Participation was as follows:

- 40 attended the small group meetings
- 12 attended the November 3rd, 2005 open house
- 13 participated via fax, mail, and e-mail

A. Summary of Feedback Form Choices

Participants were asked to indicate their preference for:

1. COMMUNITY GATEWAY FEATURE OPTIONS¹

Participants were asked to **indicate their preference with respect to Gateway Feature options**: 1 (most favourite); 2 (second favourite); 3 (third favourite); and 4 (least favourite).

The following indicates the most favoured gateway features options:

Option 1: Community Rock	62% selected this option as their most favourite
Option 2: Community Links	20% selected this option as their most favourite
Option 3: Community Rings	7% selected this option as their most favourite
Option 4: Community Blades	9% selected this option as their most favourite

The following is a summary of comments regarding Gateway Feature Options:

The majority of participants favoured the 'rock' as the corridor gateway feature, noting that it provided the most space to display the community name, and that it would blend into the natural environment and requires the least maintenance. Many noted that they preferred real rock over faux rock. It was also noted that the Resort Municipality of Whistler will have to be included in any decisions regarding signage in and/or near the municipality.

¹ Please see the Discussion Guide for description of options.

2. LANDSCAPE OPTIONS

Participants were asked to **indicate their preference² with respect to landscape options**: 1 (most favourite); 2 (second favourite); 3 (least favourite).

The following indicates the most favoured landscape options:

Landscape Option A – Banner Poles with native trees and shrubs **62%** selected this option as their most favourite

Landscape Option B – Planting of trees in lines along the roadside **20%** selected this option as their most favourite

Landscape Option C – Clusters of ornamental flowering trees along roadside **25%** selected this option as their most favourite

The following is a summary of comments regarding Landscape Options:

The majority of participants indicated a preference for the use of native plantings in gateway landscaping regardless of which option landscape option is chosen, noting that it is important to maintain a natural feel, and have nothing too contrived or out of the ordinary. Some comments indicate concern that landscape maintenance will be ongoing. It was also noted that the Whistler Parks and Recreation Department will need to be included in any final decisions regarding landscaping in and/or near the municipality.

3. CHAIN-UP AREA

Participants were asked to provide comments regarding the additional chain-up area.

The summary of comments include:

- **General Support** - Participants generally supported the addition of the chain-up area, noting that it was needed in the proposed section.
- **Location** - Participants commented that the location for the chain-up area should be carefully considered. Some suggested that the chain-up area should be located closer to Brandywine Park, prior to Powerline Hill and south of Callaghan access.
- **Signage** - Participants commented that the chain-up area should have sufficient signage to alert drivers that there will be an opportunity to chain-up, and signage to notify drivers that weather conditions are change frequently.

² Totals may exceed 100% as some participants indicated multiple first-choice preferences.

- **Other Purposes** - Some participants commented that the proposed chain-up area could also function as an enforcement area for the RCMP.

4. NORTHBOUND VIEWPOINT

Participants were asked to provide comments regarding the northbound viewpoint.

The summary of comments include:

- **General Support** - Participants generally supported the addition of the northbound viewpoint, noting that it is located in an area that will provide drivers with good views.
- **Signage** - Participants commented that the northbound viewpoint should provide adequate signage in advance to notify drivers about the upcoming viewpoint and access to the viewpoint.
- **Access for Buses** - Many participants commented that the northbound viewpoint should provide access for 'tour buses' and 'motor coaches'. Participants also commented that there should be space to accommodate more than 6 vehicles.
- **Safety** - Some participants commented that safety should be the number-one consideration in designing the viewpoint, especially when considering access into the viewpoint from the highway.

B. Key Theme Summary of Comments from Small Group Meetings

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 - Transportation Group

Project Overview and Brandywine to Function Junction Portion

Signage

- More viewpoints/pullouts, especially northbound.
- Rainline treatment – if it cannot be installed earlier, then highway markings should be repainted twice a year.

Gateway and Landscape Options

- Preference for community rock option.
- Preference for native planting regardless of the option chosen because these plants are more sustainable and involve less maintenance.

Traffic Management

- General support for the traffic management regime.

Meeting #2 - Business Group

Project Overview and Brandywine to Function Junction Portion

- Would like Ministry of Transportation to maintain and/or improve present highway accesses.
- Signage – pointing out “viewpoint ahead” should be considered.
- Improving safety with respect to current illegal driving practices and highway treatments such as median barriers.

Gateway and Landscape Options

- Preference for native planting option.
- Ensuring community distinctiveness and autonomy relative to the gateway option selection.

Traffic Management

- Compliments regarding the traffic management regime.

Meeting # 3 - Hotel Group

Project Overview and Brandywine to Function Junction Portion

- Concern regarding the proposed location of the chain-up area.
- Suggestions that similar signage and gateways should be considered for the communities north of Whistler.
- The signage warning motorists to chain-up just north of Squamish is not in the most appropriate place, given weather conditions at that point.
- Need for advance ‘chain-up area coming’ signage.

Gateway and Landscape Options

- Preference for the natural vegetation landscape options, i.e., Landscape Option A.
- The community links and community blades options were not largely supported; participants suggested they appear to rank communities.

Traffic Management

- Information regarding cancellation of closures was requested.

Meeting #4 - First Responder Group

Project Overview and Brandywine to Function Junction Portion

- Suggestion that a Whistler greeting sign could be incorporated into the northbound viewpoint area.
- Good quality presentation.

Gateway and Landscape Options

- Suggestion that consideration be given to certain plant species relative to their attraction for bears.
- Preference for the community rock option.

Traffic Management

- Issue raised relative to empty northbound ambulances waiting behind traffic closures, leaving Whistler short of the resource.
- Compliments for the traffic management tools and traffic management regime overall.

Meeting #5 - One Whistler Group

Project Overview and Brandywine to Function Junction Portion

- Consideration of a chain-up area south of the entrance to the Callaghan Valley.

Gateway and Landscape Options

- Ensure that the community has flexibility with respect to designing the gateway.
- Interest in the types of materials that could be used in gateway features.
- Importance of consistent signage.

Traffic Management

- Suggestion to move the present 'winter conditions' sign at Alice Lake closer to Squamish.
- Compliments - good job managing traffic flows through the construction.
- Confirmation that the Project Team was working closely with Vancouver Olympic Committee.

Meeting # 6 - Recreation Group

Project Overview and Brandywine to Function Junction Portion

- Discussion regarding current highway signage, and that there are already numerous signs on the highway.
- Safety regarding egress from viewpoints and crossing the highway.

Gateway and Landscape Options

- Strong preference for natural plantings options – more sustainable and low maintenance.
- Community rings and links are not supported, as they appear to rank the communities.
- Ensuring community flexibility and consultation in the selection process for the gateway option.

Traffic Management

- Compliments - traffic management and communication tools.
- Discussion regarding current speed limits and construction zone speed limits.

Meeting # 7 - Forest & Wildlife Group

Project Overview and Brandywine to Function Junction Portion

- Access from the south to the Function Junction Forestry Office should be looked at.

Gateway and Landscape Options

- Preference for natural plantings option (some trees [Mountain Ash]) attract bears and should be avoided).
- Community links options supported.

Traffic Management

- Compliments - good communication and management – not hard to avoid the closures.