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## BACKGROUND

2004TRAN0042-000556  
July 16, 2004

Ministry of Transportation

### **OVERLAND ROUTE CHOSEN FOR SAFETY, RELIABILITY AND VALUE**

The provincial government is carrying out improvements to the 100-km Sea-to-Sky Highway between West Vancouver and Whistler. The improvements will include highway widening and straightening, improved sightlines, additional passing lanes and other design innovations to reduce hazards, shorten travel times and increase capacity of the highway. The goals of the project are to increase safety, increase reliability and capacity. Approximately 13,700 vehicles use the highway each day.

The project will provide:

- Four lanes from Horseshoe Bay to Lions Bay.
- Two lanes from Lions Bay to Porteau Cove (using a temporary third lane during the 2010 Olympic Winter Games).
- Three lanes from Porteau Cove to Squamish.
- Three lanes from Squamish to Whistler.

A test section of construction north of Horseshoe Bay is currently 60 per cent complete and is expected to be ready by July 2004. The test section has been used to study traffic management procedures as well as confirming geo-technical information and testing retaining wall systems.

The benefits of the four-lane overland route through West Vancouver include:

#### **Safety**

- Safety is the government's top priority and studies show that the overland route will have fewer and less severe crashes than the one-km tunnel. The two-lane tunnel was projected to have double the frequency of fatal crashes.

#### **Lasts Longer (Capacity)**

- The four-lane overland route will accommodate future traffic growth for 50 years, compared to only 25 years for the tunnel.

#### **Cost**

- The overland route is estimated to cost \$40 million less than the tunnel option. It is also the route least likely to incur cost over-runs.

### **Network Connectivity and Operating Characteristics**

- The overland route is the only option that meets the four-lane, 80-km per hour speed objective because it is not constrained by the existing highway geometry between Marine Drive and Pasco Road. Furthermore, it leaves the existing highway available for local traffic, a characteristic seen as desirable by the local community.

### **Socio-economic and Environmental Requirements**

- Ministry of Transportation analysis indicates that the four-lane overland route can be designed and built to minimize environmental impacts, while at the same time creating socio-economic benefits through increased jobs and economic activity.
- The overland route has an impact on 1.57 hectares of “blue listed” species, while the tunnel has a larger impact at 1.64 hectares. Within the Larson Creek headwaters area, the overland route affects 0.68 hectares of swamp habitat and the tunnel impacts 0.11 hectares. Comprehensive hydrology plans will be developed so that Larson Creek is not affected. The overland route will not have any impact on Nelson Creek, a fish-bearing stream for five species of fish, whereas the tunnel would require two additional bridges to be constructed.
- The overland route will impact some Arbutus trees, but further design refinements will minimize this impact. The four-lane overland route will require the relocation of approximately 400 metres of the Baden Powell Trail compared to the tunnel option that would require relocation of approximately 150 metres of the Trans Canada Trail and 200 metres of the Baden Powell Trail.

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