

sea-TO-SKY

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

COMMUNITY UPDATE

UPDATE 3 > MARCH 2005 > WWW.SEATOSKYIMPROVEMENTS.CA

Environmentally Responsible Approach to Highway Improvements

The Sea-to-Sky Highway Improvement Project is designing and building the improvements to the corridor in ways which minimize potential environmental impacts and is developing measures to mitigate impacts where they are unavoidable.

To help accomplish this, outside experts in different fields were hired by the project team to study fisheries and aquatic habitat, wildlife and vegetation, archaeology, recreational resources, water and air quality, noise levels and other socio-community features along the corridor. The experts also assessed the potential impacts of the project. This information was then used to develop a proposed alignment for the highway which would have the least impact on the environment.

The project team also worked closely with a number of stakeholders, including federal and provincial agencies, while developing the proposed alignment. Those agencies will continue to be involved through detailed design and construction of the improvements.

Those agencies include the BC Ministry of Land, Water and Air Protection, Land and Water British Columbia, the Canadian Wildlife Service and other areas of Environment Canada, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, the BC Environmental Assessment Office (EAO) and the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency (CEAA).

As a further step to ensure that environmental impacts are minimal, the project opted into the provincial environmental review administered by the EAO. As part of that review process, the environmental certificate application was formally reviewed by federal, provincial and local government agencies and by First Nations representatives. Interested members of the public were also invited to submit their comments.

After completing an extensive review of project design issues, geotechnical issues, potential impacts to wildlife, vegetation, fisheries and water quality, and noise, community and cultural impacts, the EAO assessment review concluded that "all potential significant adverse effects of the project are...manageable to an acceptable level."

As a condition of the environmental certification, the Ministry of Transportation made more than 200 commitments designed to avoid, minimize or mitigate potential environmental impacts of the project. These covered such areas as providing construction monitoring, sediment and drainage control plans, wildlife management, fisheries mitigation and compensation, water quality monitoring, recreation, archaeology and aesthetics.

For example, the project has committed to:

- Avoiding encroachment on the Upper Larson Creek wetlands at the south end of the project.
- Developing aesthetic treatments which will minimize the visual impact of the project.
- Hiring an archaeological monitor during route preparation at various locations along the corridor.
- Working closely with BC Parks to minimize operational impacts on provincial parks in the corridor.

A complete listing of the Owner's Commitments and Responsibilities can be found in Appendix 3 of the Sea-to-Sky Highway Improvement Project Assessment Report on the EAO website at www.eao.gov.bc.ca.

In some cases, the highway upgrading may result in unavoidable impacts and compensation will be required – near the Cheakamus Canyon north of Squamish where some culverts must be extended, for example. To compensate for loss of habitat, the project is creating side-channels and a pond where juvenile fish can take shelter over the winter. This compensation work is now underway.

Community Consultation Update

The Sea-to-Sky Highway Improvement Project is involved in ongoing consultations with communities along the corridor to ensure that the objectives and concerns of residents, businesses and other stakeholders are considered as the designs for the improvements are developed.

At present, the project is involved in the pre-design consultation phase to obtain feedback on draft options for proposed improvements to segments of the highway and to gather input for development of the next phase of design, which is preliminary design. There will also be community consultation at the preliminary and detailed design stages.

The pre-design consultation phase got underway in February 2004 in West Vancouver. There was similar consultation in Lions Bay, Squamish and Pinecrest/Black Tusk in 2004 and in Furry Creek and Britannia Beach early in 2005. The final pre-design consultation will occur in Whistler in March and April 2005.

At an open house in Furry Creek in January, about 40 residents provided feedback to the project team on gateway treatments for the community, as well as on measures to calm traffic and reduce traffic noise. At the open house in Britannia Beach in late February, residents were asked for input regarding north and south gateway treatments, a pedestrian crossing of the highway and measures for calming traffic and reducing highway noise.

Input from these consultations will be considered, along with financial and technical input, as the project proceeds to preliminary design. Preliminary design consultation in some sections is expected to get underway later this year.



Crews building a bridge structure to accommodate another two lanes, as part of the Sea-to-Sky Highway Improvement Project work now going on between Ansell Place and Kelvin Grove.

Community Input Key in Developing Traffic Schedules

One of the primary goals of the Sea-to-Sky Highway Improvement Project is to manage traffic flows during construction to minimize disruption and maximize predictability for residents, businesses, commuters, tourists and companies moving goods or people through the corridor.

To achieve that objective, the project team has been involved in extensive consultation with communities from Horseshoe Bay to Whistler and with the transportation, tourism and goods movement sectors to develop a traffic management schedule that will allow the highway improvements to be completed on time, with as little inconvenience to the traveling public as possible.

Commenting on the traffic management plan, Tourism Whistler's Community and Media Relations Manager Breton Murphy says, "We have appreciated the commitment made by the Ministry of Transportation to consult with Tourism Whistler and maintain ongoing dialogue with the tourism industry throughout the project.

"The tools they have put in place to communicate ongoing highway improvements have helped us to provide timely information to our 7000 members and the millions of visitors who travel to Whistler year-round."

David Brownlie, Executive Vice-President and Chief Financial Officer for Whistler Blackcomb, adds that "we're satisfied with the management of the project in relation to our business and the community needs... We understand the need for delays and closures to complete the improvements in an efficient manner and in our opinion your team has done a great job in minimizing the impact of those delays and closures on our community."

Even though the highway improvement work ends at Function Junction in Whistler, the traffic management schedule must facilitate the efficient movement of goods through the entire Sea-to-Sky corridor.

According to Mark Blundell, owner of the Pemberton Valley Supermarket, the project's traffic management plan has been successful in that regard. He says that his store in Pemberton usually receives eight delivery trucks each day and "we've experienced no difficulties with the movement of goods."

At the start of March, the Sea-to-Sky Highway Improvement Project introduced its spring traffic management schedule which will accommodate improvements being made between Ansell Place, near the Sunset Marina, and the south end of Kelvin Grove in Lions Bay, as well as rock slope stabilization work near Porteau Cove.

Between Ansell Place and Kelvin Grove, drivers may encounter the following delays Mondays through Thursdays:

- **Up to 30 minutes between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m., and overnight from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m.**
- **Up to 15 minutes between 9 and 10 a.m., 2 and 4 p.m. and 8 and 10 p.m.**
- **Up to five minutes at all other times.**

In addition, there will be no stoppages longer than five minutes from March 19 to 28 to accommodate Spring Break.

Near Porteau Cove, delays of **up to 15 minutes may be encountered between Mondays and noon Fridays after April 4**. In addition, the highway will be **closed on five occasions from 12:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. in late April and early May** to allow for rock removal. The dates for those two-hour closures will be confirmed and publicized in the near future.

Further details on the daily closure schedule can be found on our website at seatoskyimprovements.ca or can be obtained by calling our Canada-wide toll-free traffic information line at 1-877-4SAFE99 (1-877-472-3399).



An excavator places rock for fill, as part of the work between Ansell Place and the south end of Lions Bay which will expand the highway in this section from two to four lanes.

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If you have any questions or comments about the Sea-to-Sky Highway Improvement Project, we want to hear from you. You can:

- email your comments to info@seatoskyimprovements.ca,
- fax us at (604) 605-5936 or
- write to us at Suite 1300, 1075 West Georgia Street, Vancouver, BC V6E 3C9

Be sure to include your name and address so that we can answer your questions.

You can also contact a member of the project's community relations team:

Manager - Rick Hyde
(604) 605-5955 rick.hyde@gov.bc.ca

Community Relations Officer, Squamish – Pam Tattersfield
(604) 898-2117 pam.tattersfield@gov.bc.ca

Community Relations Officer, Whistler – Scott Roberts
(604) 605-6748 scott.roberts@gov.bc.ca