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# Highway 97 - Peachland Transportation Study

## Phase I - Preferred Route Options What We Heard Report



**Contents**

Executive summary ..... 3

Introduction ..... 4

    Background ..... 4

        Stakeholder and public input to date ..... 6

Input on recommended route options ..... 6

    Preliminary recommended alternate route ..... 8

    Recommended alternate route feedback ..... 8

        Customer service ..... 8

        Social and community ..... 9

        Environmental..... 10

        Economic development..... 10

        Other recommended routes..... 10

    Recommended existing route ..... 13

    Recommended existing route feedback ..... 16

        Customer service ..... 16

        Social and community ..... 16

        Environmental..... 17

Conclusion ..... 20

## Executive summary

The Central Okanagan area has experienced strong economic and population growth that has resulted in increased traffic volumes on Highway 97. As the only north-south link connecting Okanagan communities, Highway 97 is vital to the region's economy.

Since 2015, the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MoTI) has been undertaking a comprehensive look at the transportation needs of the Central Okanagan area. As part of the Central Okanagan Planning Study, the Highway 97 - Peachland Transportation Study is exploring options for improving future safety and mobility along the corridor. As part of Phase I, community members and stakeholders were asked to share their concerns and priorities for both an alternate route and existing highway route option in 2016. To close out the first phase of the study, two recommended options – one that uses the existing corridor and one that uses an alternate corridor – have been identified.

Between May and June 2019, the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure engaged with Indigenous Communities, stakeholders, and the District of Peachland to better understand how the two recommended route options might be refined to better reflect the community's unique needs.

Engagement activities to refine the options included a series of meetings with the Community Liaison Committee (CLC), Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), Peachland District Council and Penticton Indian Band. The meetings focused on providing a refresher on project background information, soliciting input on the recommended alternate and existing route options, and reporting back to the stakeholder groups on how their input helped refine the recommended options. Through presentations and hands-on workshops, participants provided the project team with feedback on potential impacts and considerations for the recommended alternate and existing route options.

This report summarizes considerations from the CLC, TAC, Peachland District Council and Penticton Indian Band. Key themes that arose for the recommended alternate route option include considerations and impacts to the Penticton Indian Band lands, wildlife, the environment, community access, future development and community plans, noise and aesthetic considerations of a bypass. With respect to the recommended existing route, stakeholders spoke to concerns about wildlife and the need for improved pedestrian crossings on the corridor. In-depth discussions were also had about potential flooding along the existing route. Additionally, stakeholders raised concerns about how the existing route option could impact future developments in the district. As a result of the stakeholder feedback, an additional alternate route was re-introduced for further analysis and evaluation.

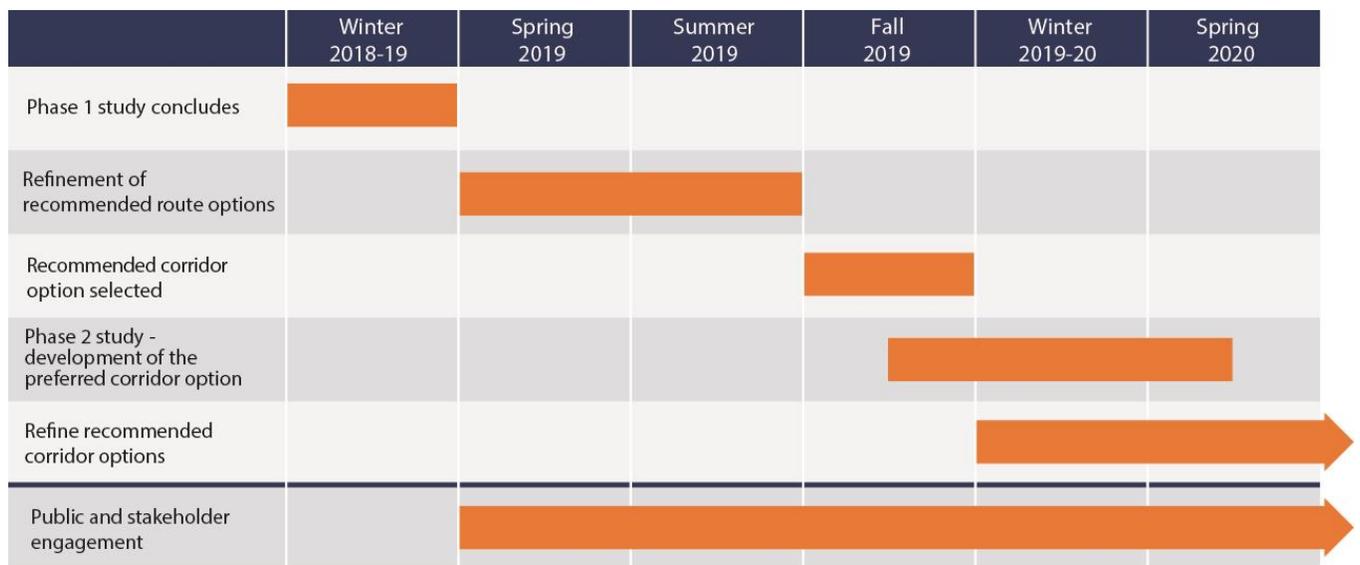
# Introduction

## Background

The Central Okanagan area has experienced strong economic and population growth. This growth is being accompanied by increasing highway traffic volumes. As the only north-south link connecting Okanagan communities, Highway 97 is vital to the region’s economy. The segment through Peachland is the last remaining two-lane highway between Penticton and Vernon. Without improvements to the corridor, travel times are expected to increase gradually – though noticeably – in the future. Traffic growth has been slow, but in 25 years the duration of trips through Peachland may increase up to three minutes. Furthermore, crossing and turning onto the highway will be more challenging and risk-taking at intersections may increase as wait times grow.

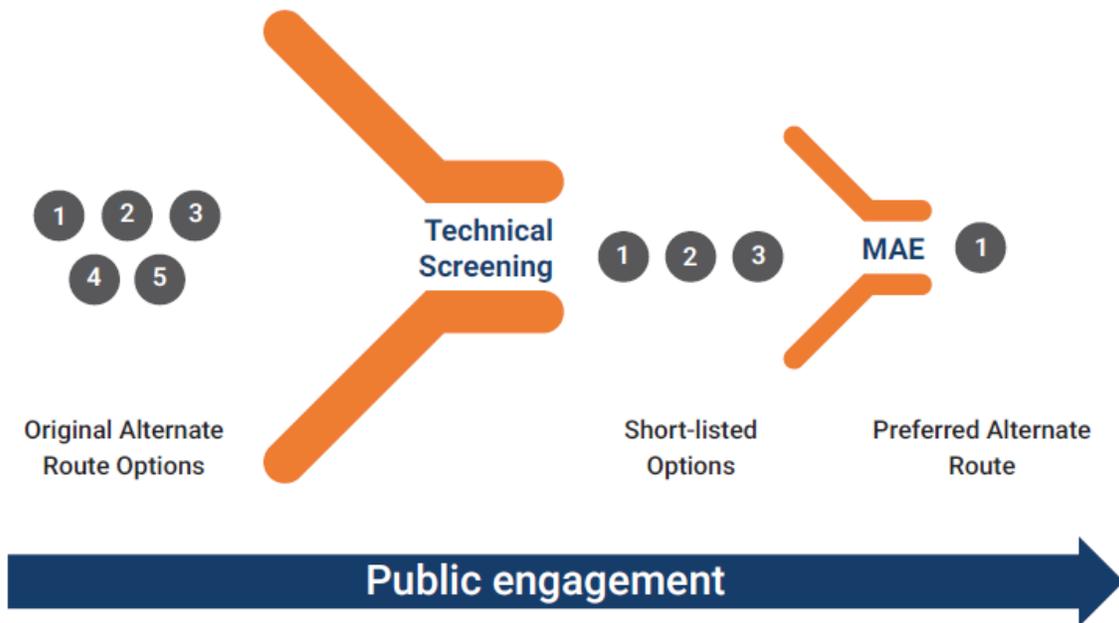
Since 2015, MoTI has been evaluating the transportation needs of the Central Okanagan area. As part of the Central Okanagan Planning Study, the Highway 97 - Peachland Transportation Study is exploring options for improving future safety and mobility along this segment of the corridor.

Phase I of the Highway 97 - Peachland Transportation Study is now complete. In this first phase, MoTI focused on understanding the current conditions of the Highway 97 corridor through Peachland and the future needs for transportation through the district.

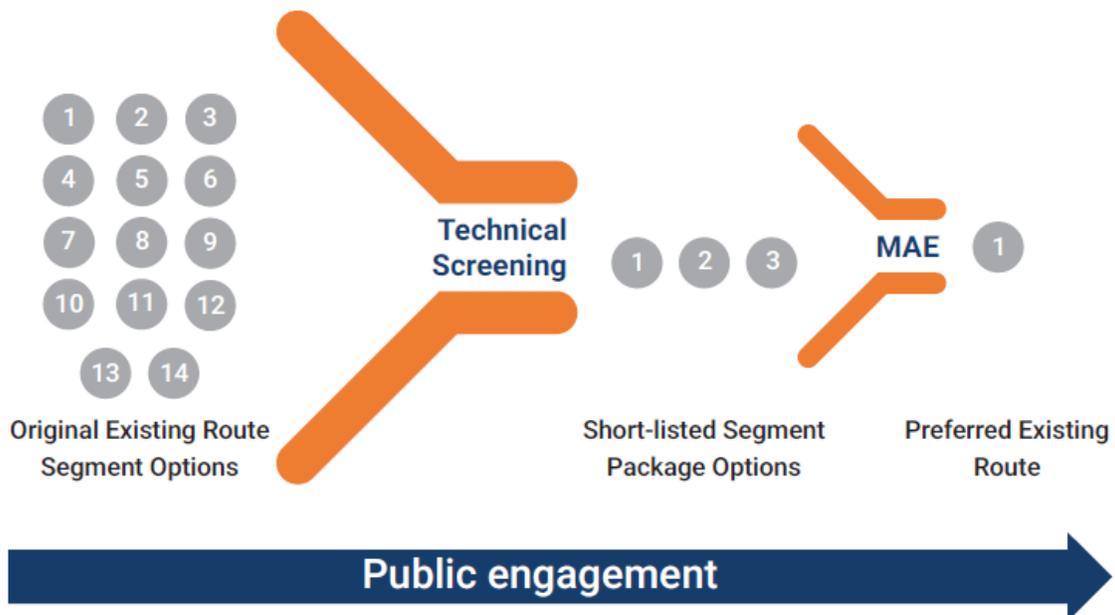


Through 2016 potential options for the alternate and existing routes were presented to the public. Since then, the alternate route options and existing route segment options have gone through a technical screening process. Based upon technical screening, the project team identified three short-listed routes for the alternate route and three short-listed existing route segment packages.

## Preferred Alternate Route Evaluation Process



## Preferred Existing Route Evaluation Process



During the spring and summer of 2019, two recommended options – one that uses the existing corridor and one that uses an alternate corridor – were selected. The two options were selected through the use of the Province’s Multiple Account Evaluation (MAE) framework.

The Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure uses standard accounts and project-specific metrics when evaluating different options. The MAE is a comprehensive evaluation framework typically used in the MoTI studies. Local governments, Indigenous Communities, stakeholders and the public helped to identify key impacts and trade-offs that are incorporated into the MAE process. The MAE was used to compare and contrast the qualities and drawbacks of each route option. The five evaluation accounts include: Economic Development, Customer Service, Financial, Environmental and Social and Community. However, for Phase I of the project the Economic Development account was not applied. The Economic Development account will be applied during Phase II of the Peachland Highway 97 Transportation Study.



## Stakeholder and public input to date

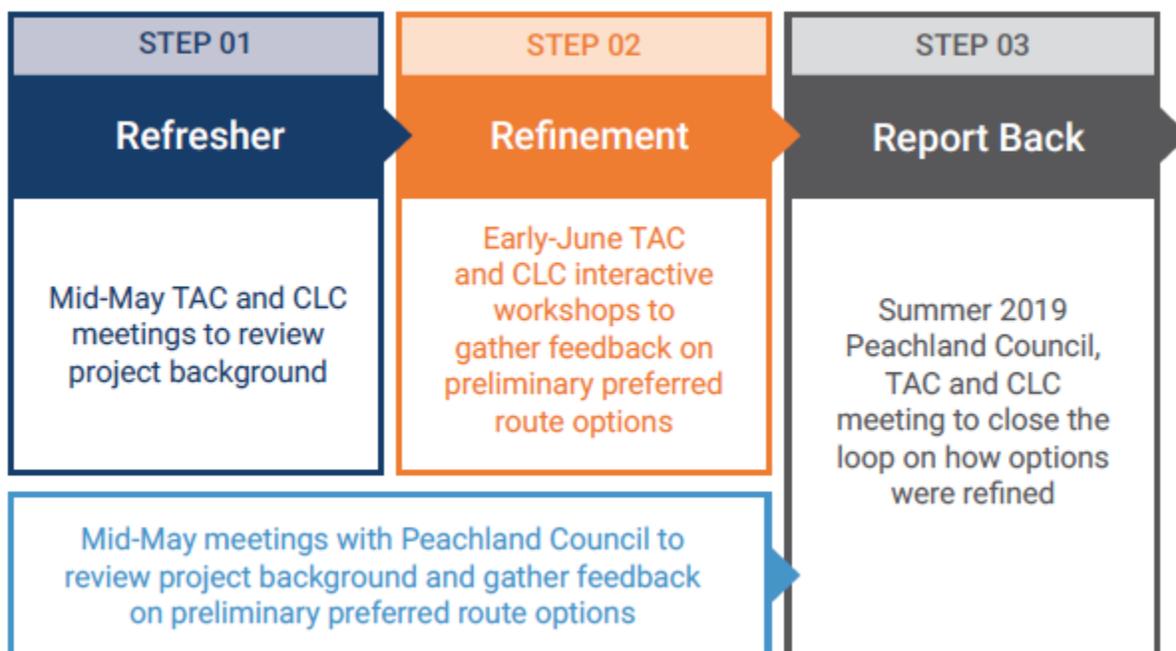
In 2016, a Community Liaison Committee (CLC) representing a cross section of the Peachland community was formed to provide feedback on the transportation study. At the same time, a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) was established to provide technical advice/guidance for the project.

Through 2016 two public open houses were held to examine a number of possible options to improve movement along the highway using existing route options and alternate route options. Feedback on issues, concerns and opportunities were gathered from the sessions. To review the findings from the open houses, visit: [https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/driving-and-transportation/reports-and-reference/reports-and-studies/okanagan/peachland/peachland\\_engagement\\_report.pdf](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/driving-and-transportation/reports-and-reference/reports-and-studies/okanagan/peachland/peachland_engagement_report.pdf) and [https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/driving-and-transportation/reports-and-reference/reports-and-studies/okanagan/peachland/peachland\\_engagement\\_report\\_20161116.pdf](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/driving-and-transportation/reports-and-reference/reports-and-studies/okanagan/peachland/peachland_engagement_report_20161116.pdf). The options were also presented to stakeholders, Peachland District Council, and local Indigenous Communities. Stakeholder groups were involved in exploring these different options alongside considerable technical analysis and design.

## Input on recommended route options

Between May and June 2019, MoTI engaged with Penticton Indian Band and Peachland District Council to better understand how the recommended alternate and existing route options might be refined to better reflect the

community's unique needs. MoTI also undertook a series of meetings to gather feedback from CLC and TAC stakeholders.



The Technical Advisory Committee, Community Liaison Committee and Peachland District Council each participated in workshops in which members identified concerns, considerations and opportunities for the recommended alternate and existing route options. Each group was provided a review of Phase I of the Highway 97 – Peachland Transportation Study. The review included information about the project's context, feedback received to date and a review of the alternate route and existing route segment options presented through 2016 public events. Building on this shared understanding, the project team presented an in-depth review of the technical evaluation framework and the Province's MAE. Participants were walked through the different options as they related to each aspect of the evaluation frameworks.

Through the workshops participants were invited to comment on the recommended routes through large, table-top maps. Comments made during the map exercise activity have been transcribed and digitized. Reproductions of the maps in the following sections illustrate specific comments participants noted as considerations. The sections below highlight key themes we heard. Comments and considerations have been categorized into the five MAE accounts: Economic Development, Financial, Customer Service, Environmental and Social and Community. Note: while the project team heard comments related to the 'economic development' account, this account was not analyzed as part of Phase I of the study, instead the account will be considered through Phase II.

Dialogue and opportunity for feedback from Penticton Indian Band are ongoing at the time of writing this report. In late-June 2019 a meeting was held between the project team and PIB Chief and Council. PIB representatives also provided feedback through their participation as TAC and CLC members at meetings in May and June 2019.

## Preliminary recommended alternate route

The preliminary recommended alternate route is AR-C. This lower elevation route was selected because of three factors. AR-C has the highest projected traffic volumes, fewest impacts on the local environment and the lowest cost to implement.



## Recommended alternate route feedback

During a series of interactive workshops with the CLC, TAC and Peachland District Council participants provided input on how to refine the recommended alternate route option. Participants noted considerations on workshop maps. Below is a summary of the key themes we heard followed by a digitized reproduction of the workshop maps.

### Customer service

When it comes to Customer Service considerations, stakeholders were mostly concerned about intercity travel and the use of the existing corridor should an alternate route be selected.

## Intercity Travel

During stakeholder workshop sessions, participants expressed that greater points of access to the community could be beneficial. Some participants identified that access near Pincushion Mountain would be ideal for residents living in the area. Another point of access was identified between Vernon Avenue and Sanderson Avenue as a potential truck entrance to the industrial zone. On the other hand, it was identified that Princeton Avenue would not be able to handle additional traffic should an access point be added along that section. While some participants would like to see access points, others did not feel more access points were necessary.

## Use of the existing corridor

Should an alternate route be chosen as the recommended corridor option the majority of participants expressed that the existing route's speed limit should be reduced. Participants suggested a range of posted-speeds between 50 – 70 kilometers per hour. There were also discussions around whether or not the existing corridor could be converted into a municipal road.

## Social and community

A number of considerations raised by stakeholders relate to the social and community aspects of the recommended alternate route. Key themes include Indigenous rights, property and development impacts, noise and visual impacts, and community connection.

## Indigenous rights

Workshop participants identified that the recommended alternate route has implications on the South Okanagan Commonage Land Claim. Stakeholders stated that the bypass option would have severe environmental impacts and socio-cultural impacts as the area is used by the Okanagan Nation Alliance for harvesting and hunting.

## Property impacts

Many participants raised concerns regarding the impact of the recommended alternate route on proposed and existing developments in Peachland. Stakeholders expressed concern that the recommended alternate route would cut through existing homes and properties. The Ponderosa development and golf course were specifically highlighted by stakeholders as properties that would be negatively impacted. In addition to residential properties, a number of parks and outdoor recreational spaces, trailheads and the cemetery were identified by stakeholders as also having the potential to be impacted by the recommended alternate route alignment. Furthermore, participants noted that the recommended alternate route cuts through much of the Agricultural Land Reserve.

## Noise and visual impacts

Noise was identified as a concern for residents living along the recommended alternate route option. In addition to noise pollution, concerns were raised about the look and feel of a bypass going through a small municipality like Peachland. Additionally, concern was raised about the visibility of the diminished mountain views from the lake due to construction and the addition of a bypass.

## Community connection

Stakeholders were divided about whether or not an alternate option would further divide the District of Peachland. Some participants expressed concern that the route would create a physical divide within the

community, while others shared that having a bypass with access along the route would conversely create a more connected district.

## **Wildfire mitigation**

During the workshops, discussions were had about recent Peachland wildfires. Participants identified that a bypass could bring opportunities for wildfire mitigation by creating a firebreak around the community.

## **Environmental**

The most frequently identified theme regarding the recommended alternate route related to environmental impacts. Specific concerns were raised around Mule Deer habitats, wildlife passages and wildlife access to water.

### **Wildlife**

Many stakeholders highlighted the potential impacts on wildlife, specifically on Mule Deer habitat and the population at large. Stakeholders proposed a number of solutions to protect wildlife, include building passage connections and erecting fences to reduce animal mortality along the corridor. Participants also shared the view that Mule Deer more frequently use underpasses rather than overpasses. In addition, concerns were raised about the bypass eliminating the only remaining access to drinking water for wildlife.

### **Aquatic impacts**

A number of water management considerations were raised during the stakeholder sessions. Participants raised considerations about run-off and the surfacing of groundwater, which occurs when glacial sediment and bedrock are cut during the construction process.

### **Terrestrial impacts**

Participants raised concerns around motorized recreation vehicles (e.g. dirt-bikes and ATVs) being a disturbance to the natural environment should access points or turn-offs be added along the recommended alternate route. However, stakeholders felt that access to recreation for hikers would be less problematic.

### **Economic development**

While the Economic account of the MAE is not yet considered in this Phase I of the Peachland Transportation Planning Study, participants felt that an alternate route connecting to Peachland's industrial area could provide the community with economic development opportunities. Participants shared that they would like more information about the economic impacts of a bypass should an alternate route option be selected as the recommended corridor option.

### **Other recommended routes**

A number of stakeholders expressed a desire for the project team to re-examine alternate route option AR-4 to determine feasibility with a slower posted speed limit along the existing corridor. Participants shared that alternate route option AR-4 would decrease the number and scale of property impacts on Peachland.

The maps below illustrate the location-specific comments received from participants on the recommended alternate route.

# Alternate Route Option Comments

## North End



# Alternate Route Option Comments

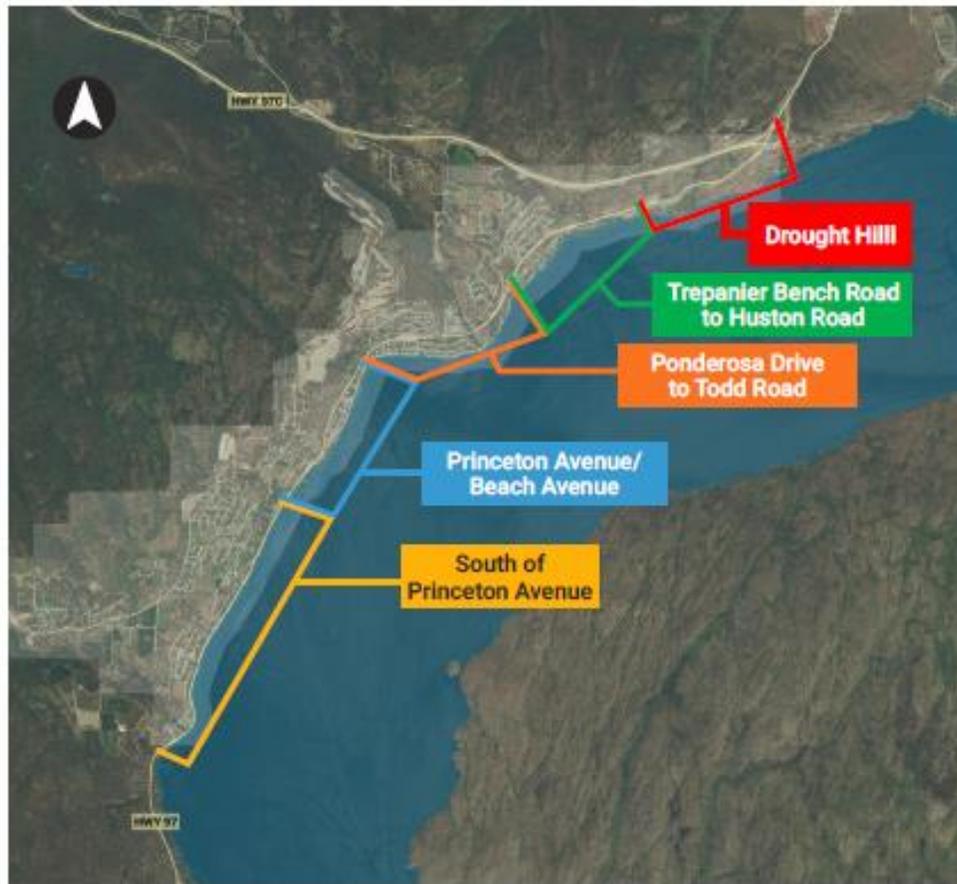
## South End



## Recommended existing route

The existing route is divided into five segments based on how the highway and intersections interact with each other and how local traffic accesses Highway 97. The five segments are:

- Drought Hill segment
- Trepanier Beach Road to Huston Road segment
- Ponderosa Drive to Todd Road segment
- Princeton Avenue/Beach Avenue segment
- South of Princeton Avenue segment

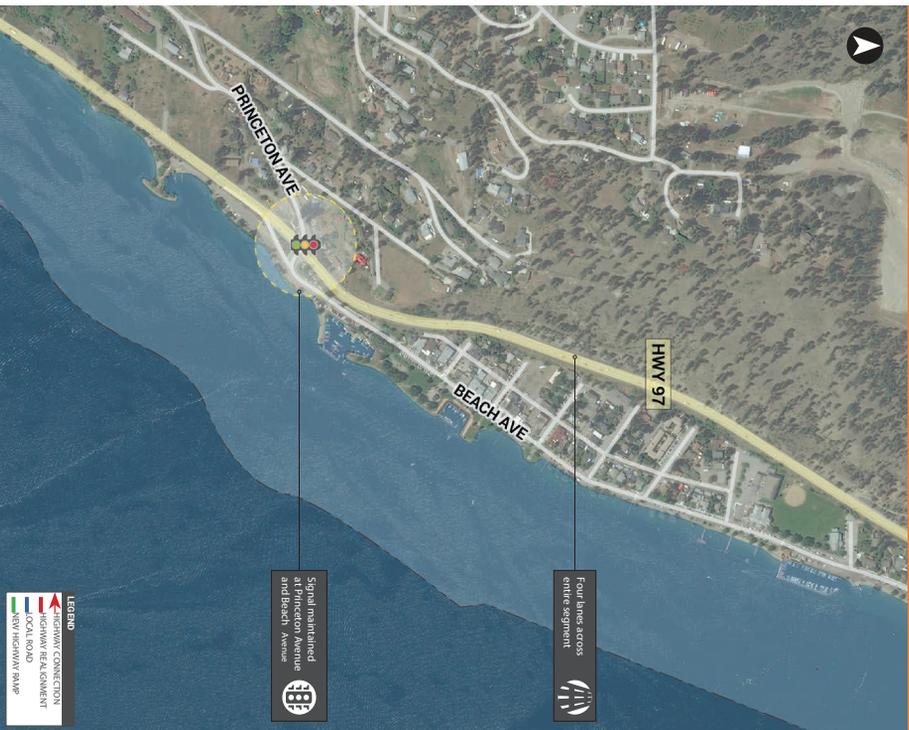


Segment options that passed technical screening were combined together to create option packages that encompassed the entire existing route area. Three options packages were developed to demonstrate different potential characteristics to rebuild the existing route, including to:

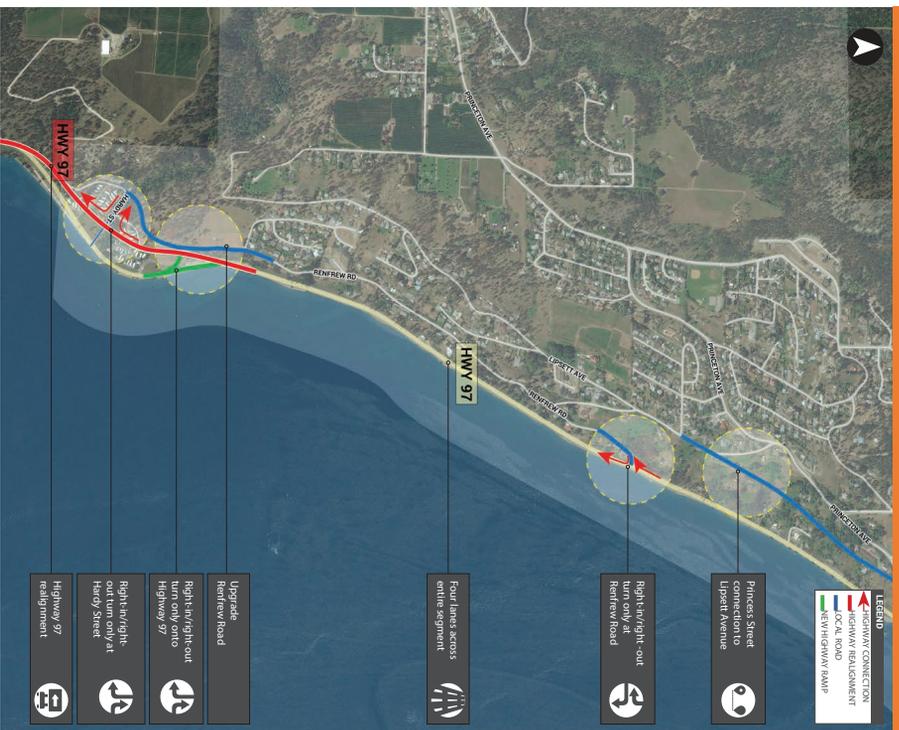
- Maintain at-grade intersections;
- Create grade separation and add interchanges; and
- Create grade separation and add interchanges with a larger bypass.

The three option packages were then analyzed through MoIT's MAE process. Based upon the results of the MAE, the option package to maintain at-grade intersection was selected as the recommended existing route option. The recommended existing route is made up of the following segment:

ER-4B: Retain signal at Princeton



ER-5A: Realignment at Antlers Beach



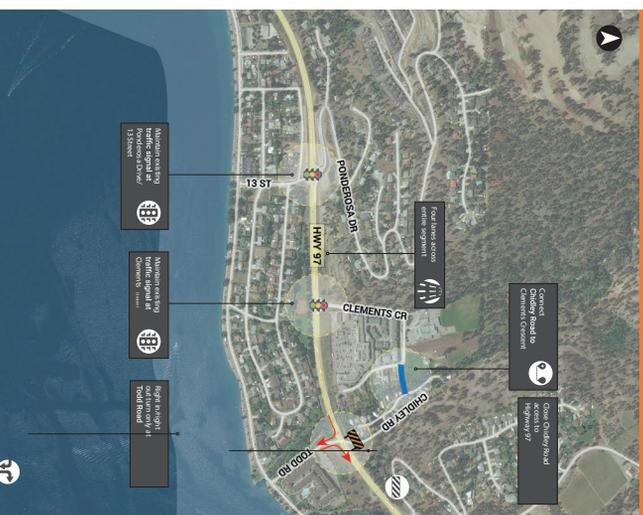
### ER-1A: Drought Hill Expressway



### ER-2D: Extension of Shaw Road and Huston Road



### ER-3B: Retain signals at Clement Crescent and Ponderosa Drive



## Recommended existing route feedback

During a series of interactive workshops with the CLC, TAC and Peachland District Council participants provided input on how to refine the recommended existing route option. Participants noted considerations on workshop maps. Below is a summary of the key themes we heard followed by a digitized reproduction of the workshop maps.

### Customer service

Participants frequently noted safety as a key consideration. Specifically, participants mentioned safety concerns for pedestrians, drivers and due to the conditions of the existing corridor. In addition to safety, the project team heard calls for improving pedestrian infrastructure and concerns regarding the capacity along some segments of the highway to carry growing traffic volumes.

### Safety

Pedestrian safety was identified as a key consideration in the recommended existing route option. Stakeholders would like to see more pedestrian crossings along shopping and school routes. It was identified that students walk along the side of the highway to access the school, beach and skate park. While participants would like to see the highway better connected to support pedestrians, concerns around the safety of pedestrian underpasses was also raised.

When it comes to driver safety, participants noted that they would like improved sightlines along the corridor. Specifically, it was suggested to straighten the curve on the northern end of the corridor alignment. Participants would also like the default posted speed limit to be lowered, although no particular sections were identified for specific lower speed limits. It was further identified that turning left between Greta Ranch Road and Antlers Beach to access properties along that section is currently dangerous and that safety along this segment should be considered in the refinement process. Lastly, participants highlighted the need to eliminate dangerous left-hand turns off the highway and to introduce signalization at Trepanier Road and Houston Avenue. Lastly, the project team heard from concerns that the base of Clements Crescent is being used as a truck stop, which was flagged as a safety concern.

### Pedestrian connectivity

Participants expressed the need for more connected pedestrian infrastructure. Participants highlighted the need for crosswalks and intersections to be situated close to bus stops along the recommended existing corridor option.

### Capacity

When it comes to capacity, the project team heard that sections of Renfrew Avenue may be unable to carry additional vehicle capacity should local traffic be diverted to Renfrew Avenue through the existing route network updates.

### Social and community

A number of themes related to social and community impacts were raised by workshop participants. All of these considerations fell within one of four themes: inter-city travel, property impacts, noise impacts and community connectivity.

## Inter-city travel

Some participants expressed that greater connection and access points connecting Peachland to the recommended existing route option would be beneficial to the community. For example, it was noted that the new development on Princess Avenue would benefit from greater access. Additionally, it was identified that keeping internal connections on Princeton Avenue and/or Renfrew Avenue would be ideal.

## Property impacts

Concerns were raised about how future plans such as the Parks Master Plan or development applications currently in review would be impacted by the recommended existing route option. In addition to the impacts on future development plans, participants were also concerned about the impacts on existing properties that would be partially or fully impacted should the existing route option be selected.

## Noise impacts

Participants shared concerns around potential noise pollution with the recommended existing route option. More specifically they raised questions about the future of the tennis courts and the trees that currently line the highway. Participants noted that these features currently act as a sound barrier for residents living close to the corridor.

## Community connection

Lastly, some participants shared their concerns regarding how the recommended existing route could further divide and separate the community. To mitigate the division, access and connection points were discussed. However, consensus on how many access points were needed or where they should be located could not be reached.

## Environmental

A number of impacts and opportunities identified were related to the environment, particularly as it relates to wildlife habitat and aquatic impacts.

### Wildlife

Participants identified opportunities to enhance wildlife features through the recommended existing route option. Should properties need to be purchased, participants highlighted opportunities to enhance the mobile home park area for salmon and other wildlife. Additionally, concerns were raised about increased deer mortality on the highway since last year's wildfire. Stakeholders would like to see a wildlife crossing to better protect Mule Deer populations.

### Aquatic

The second most discussed environmental concern was related to flooding along the existing route option. Participants noted that Antler's Beach Mobile Home Park and Trepanier Creek Mobile Home Park are located on an alluvial fan and are at high risk of overland flooding. The project team was advised to avoid expanding the corridor along the area given its high-risk potential.

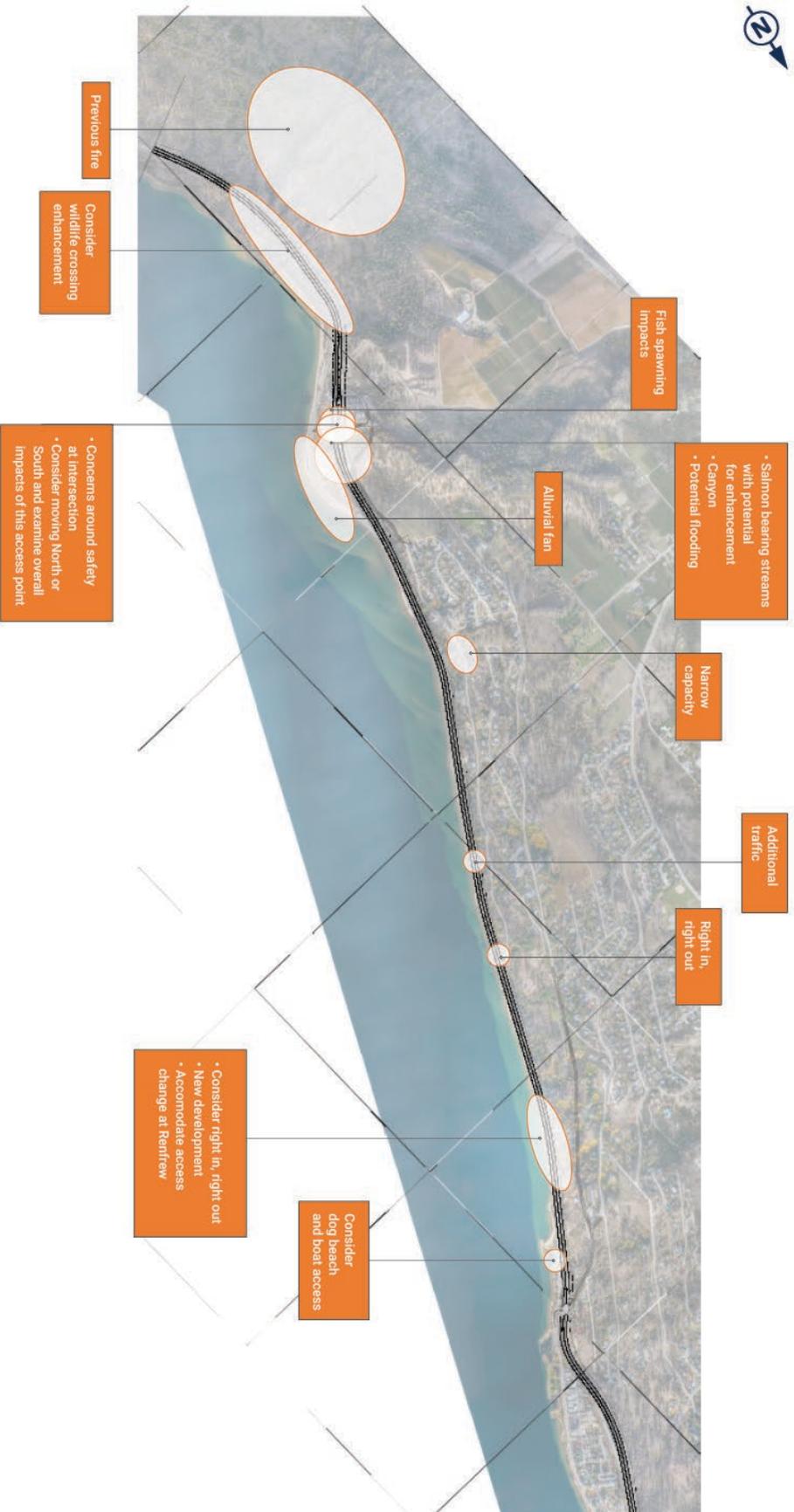
In addition to the key themes we heard from participants, a number of individuals expressed a lack of support for the recommended existing route option. Stakeholders shared that the option would be too disruptive to the community through its construction, and that it has too many property impacts. Finally, participants noted community skepticism of the existing route's potential to provide long-term solutions for the community. The maps below capture location specific considerations we heard during the workshop.

# Existing Route Option Comments

## North End



# Existing Route Option Comments South End



Fish spawning  
Impacts

- Salmon bearing streams with potential for enhancement
- Canyon
- Potential flooding

Alluvial fan

Narrow  
capacity

Additional  
traffic

Right in,  
right out

Consider  
dog beach  
and boat access

- Consider right in, right out
- New development
- Accommodate access change at Renfrew

- Concerns around safety at intersection
- Consider moving North or South and examine overall impacts of this access point

Previous fire

Consider  
wildlife crossing  
enhancement

## Conclusion

In a series of workshops members of the Technical Advisory Committee, Community Liaison Committee and Peachland District Council offered feedback on both the recommended alternate route option and the recommended existing route option. While each group offered unique perspectives on impacts, we heard that safety, impacts on wildlife and the environment, and property impacts were top of mind. Lastly, as a result of the feedback we heard from stakeholders, alternate route, AR-4 will be re-introduced for further analysis and evaluation.