HIGHWAY 4 – KENNEDY HILL SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS

PROJECT INFORMATION SESSIONS SUMMARY REPORT

1. BACKGROUND

On March 9, 2017, the Province of British Columbia in Partnership with the Government of Canada announced an agreement to jointly fund upgrades to a stretch of the Pacific Rim Highway located about 14 kilometers northeast of the Ucluelet-Tofino junction near Kennedy Lake. The total estimated cost of the project was $30 million with Canada contributing $13.5M and BC $16.5M.

The Pacific Rim Highway 4 is the only east-west corridor on Vancouver Island servicing the west coast communities of Ucluelet and Tofino as well as the Pacific Rim National Park Reserve at Long Beach. This is a critical route for moving goods, linking communities, and supporting a thriving tourism industry in the region.

The project starts at the bottom/south end of Kennedy Hill at the TR19 Creek culvert, and continues up the hill towards Port Alberni for a distance of approximately 1.5km.

More information about the project can be found at www.gov.bc.ca/highway4kennedyhill.

2. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

On January 23rd and 24th, 2018, the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure held public information sessions in Tofino and Ucluelet respectively. The information sessions were an opportunity for interested residents from the area to preview the proposed plan and provide comments. This engagement followed one-on-one meetings with the municipalities of Tofino and Ucluelet, including local first nations and the Alberni-Clayoquat Regional District.

The information sessions were held in Tofino at the Tin Wis Best Western on January 23rd and in Ucluelet at the Ucluelet Community Centre on January 24th, with both sessions being held between 4 to 7 p.m. The events were designed as a come-and-go style session with the intent to:

- Present the proposed plan for the Kennedy Hill Safety Improvements to community members;
- Obtain input from community members on the improvements and proposed construction traffic management strategies and other general comments on the Project; and,
- Enable community members to discuss the Kennedy Hill Safety Improvement project with the project team, and have their questions about the project answered.

The input received has been considered, along with constructability, technical and engineering factors, financial information and input from other key stakeholders. A number of adjustments to the proposed traffic management strategies have now been made as a direct result of this input.

2.1 Information Session Participation

The information sessions were well attended with **134 community members in attendance** total across both sessions. Attendees were encouraged to complete a comment form either in-person at the event or at their own convenience following the information session (deadline: February 4, 2018). In total, **71 comment forms** were completed with further additional feedback being received via emailed submissions following the sessions.

3. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT RESULTS

The following is a summary of the input collected through the **71 comment forms** received at the information sessions and correspondence by mail/email following the sessions. Overall comments were very positive towards the improvements, with concerns and questions primarily relating to the proposed Traffic Management strategies. The table below illustrates the main themes identified based on the responses to the comment form questions.

THEME	NUMBER OF MENTIONS
1. Concern with proposed 9pm start of stoppage window in shoulder and winter seasons being too early. Primarily relating to Ferry traffic arrivals.	12
2. Emergency First Responder access abilities through the Site during stoppage periods or during regional emergencies.	8
3. Concerns with queues in summer creating large platoons of vehicles behind RV's and lack of Slow Moving Vehicle Pullout compliance.	8
4. Flaggers and/or advanced signage notices nearer to Port Alberni and increased advanced signage east of Alberni and at Hwy 19.	7
5. Concern with proposed 8am end of stoppage window in winter season being too late. Primarily relating to commuting abilities.	7
6. Comments relating to more improvements needed along corridor.	4
7. Comments / questions relating to relocating the highway inland away from the lake and/or providing a construction detour inland.	4
8. General comments in support of the proposed new rest area.	6
9. General comments not in support of new rest area.	3
10. Concerns relating to seismic stability of the new highway once complete.	2

4. RESPONSES TO FEEDBACK AND CHANGES IMPLEMENTED

The following is a summary of the changes made to the project plans and commentary in direct response to the public feedback received during and following the information sessions. The table below outlines the changes implemented specific to the primary public engagement themes previously listed.

THEME # from previous table	Responses to Feedback and/or Changes Implemented
1.	To provide consistency for travel planning, and to accommodate evening ferry arrivals on Friday's for weekend tourists visits, the following changes were made; - The start of the first nighttime stoppage period has been amended to 10pm all year round for consistency. - The first stoppage window on Friday nights has been eliminated all year, meaning that the first stoppage period on Friday nights will not occur until 1am.
2.	Emergency responders will be given priority access through the construction operations at all times. A communications protocol is being developed with First Responder agencies to further ensure emergency vehicle passage is accommodated through the site with no delay, even during nighttime prolonged stoppage periods. Although continuous safe public access through the site cannot be practically achieved during the nighttime stoppage periods due to overhead slope rock works, emergency vehicles can be given access via the complete shutdown of operations onsite to ensure safe and efficient passage through the site. In the event of a regional emergency, public access would be restored immediately as the case may warrant.
3.	Strategies will be pursued within the Construction Traffic Management Plan to help mitigate platooning behind slow moving vehicles during the summer months when queues will be longer. These strategies may include implementing a traffic controlled slow moving vehicle pullout setup within the site operations and reviewing improved signage at existing slow moving vehicle pullouts beyond the site.
4.	An additional 3 portable changeable message signs (CMS) will now be utilized strategically along the corridor bringing the total to 8 CMS to be deployed to inform motorists of traffic conditions relating to the project. The placement of traffic control flagging personnel beyond the site closer to Sproat Lake and the Junction may be pursued to inform and direct motorists in advance of arriving at the construction site.
5.	To provide for consistency in travel planning the end of the last nighttime stoppage period will be at 7am consistently all year round.
6.	While the Kennedy Hill project is being delivered, the corridor will continue to be monitored and assessed for future improvements including potential slope stabilization works and asphalt resurfacing.

7.	During the planning and design stages of the project, an alternate 5km alignment concept was investigated further east and inland away from Kennedy Lake. This alignment generally left the existing Highway 4 alignment at/near the Maggie Lake (Toquart Bay) Road intersection and climbed the shoulder of the mountainside reaching a summit pass area proximal to Draw Lake before descending back down and tieing back into the existing highway alignment at a location approximately 5km north/east of the Maggie Lake Rd intersection near the Doyle Creek Bridge. There are no existing connecting forestry roads in this area that bypass the project site. This alternate alignment resulted in an extensive elevation gain to get over the mountain side with a summit about equal in elevation to that of the existing Sutton Pass summit. The costs of this alternate alignment were estimated in the order approaching $100M. The estimated costs to upgrade the remaining 3.5km of this existing segment of Highway 4 beyond the current 1.5km project limits is well under the difference of $70M. Due to the negative winter conditions and grade aspects of introducing another mountain pass on the corridor, and due to the magnitude of the costs to bypass compared to upgrading the existing alignment, this realignment concept was not pursued any further.
8/9.	The negative comments pertaining to the rest area where generally related to the perceived additional costs to deliver this new facility. Due to the extensive rock excavations required elsewhere on the project, this blasted rock is more economical to place in fill onsite then it is to haul and dispose of offsite. This greatly discounts the costs to deliver this new rest area facility as the footprint is provided as a direct result of utilizing and repurposing the surplus blast rock as fill onsite. With the discounted cost to provide the rest area and view point overlooking the lake, and the resulting tourism related economic spinoff benefits of this type of facility, this makes the rest area a very worthwhile investment.
10.	The design of the new improvements achieves modern engineering standards which include seismic stability requirements specific to the local regional seismic risks to ensure the highway remains operational immediately following a major seismic event. As an example, in order to achieve these standards, a long row of steel piles will be driven within one localized area of the alignment to ensure slope stability is achieved specifically with earthquake loading forces being the driving factors behind this slope reinforcement improvement.