

Sunshine Coast Fixed Link Planning Study

Consultation Summary

Prepared for
BC Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure

This independent report of findings was prepared by Lucent Quay Consulting Inc. on behalf of R.F. Binnie & Associates for the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure's Sunshine Coast Fixed Link Feasibility Study.

The report includes input received through public open houses, feedback forms, written submissions, calls to the public information phone line, and stakeholder meetings.

R.F. Binnie & Associates and the Ministry will consider consultation feedback along with technical and financial information in developing the final report.

The online survey undertaken as part of this engagement initiative was conducted using the FluidSurveys platform. Information collected from the survey was stored in Canada by FluidSurveys, which uses the latest firewall and encryption technology to protect private information. Responses to the survey are anonymous and any contact information provided to the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure's study team at the respondents' consent was kept separate from the online data and the survey feedback report.

For questions about the collection of personal information, please contact Andrew Hind, Project Manager, Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure at andrew.hind@gov.bc.ca.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

About the Project

The Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (the Ministry) issued a Request for Proposals in November 2015 to select a consultant to undertake a study of the feasibility of constructing a Sunshine Coast Fixed Link. In February 2016, the Ministry awarded a contract to R.F. Binnie & Associates, with Lucent Quay Consulting Inc. (Lucent Quay) providing consultation and engagement support.

The purpose of the study is to:

- Assess the costs and benefits of possible future overland connections and bridge crossings between the Sunshine Coast and the Lower Mainland;
- Identify the financial and physical feasibility of constructing a fixed link; and,
- Undertake a detailed analysis of potential future fixed link scenarios, providing the benefits and impacts of each of the scenarios considered, as compared with the current ferry service.

Consultation Process

On behalf of the Ministry and the R.F. Binnie & Associates study team, Lucent Quay undertook consultation and engagement for the Sunshine Coast Fixed Link Study between February and December 2016. A three-phase consultation process was developed to seek feedback on: the Project Definition Statement; the fixed link options under consideration; the proposed Multiple Accounts Evaluation methodology; the accounts criteria and draft findings for each account; and the four fixed link scenarios.

Consultation input was used to help finalize the evaluation criteria, perform the financial analysis and complete the Multiple Accounts Evaluation. The results of this analysis, including details on how consultation input was used, are contained in the report, *Sunshine Coast Fixed Link Planning Study* (R.F. Binnie & Associates, March 2017), available under separate cover.

Participation Rates

The project experienced high participation rates from stakeholders and from the public, including participation online and at the open houses held in five communities: Powell River, Sechelt, Gibsons, Squamish and West Vancouver.

More than 30 stakeholder organizations provided advice and input, and more than 2,000 people submitted a feedback form during public consultation (see infographic).



61 people
representing 27 organizations
participated in phone interviews, stakeholder meetings and technical workshops



1,204 people
attended the Phase 2 open houses



1,854 people
submitted a feedback form, of which **1,635 were completed online**



676 people signed up to the project database



18 people/organizations provided written submissions, including 4 received after the requested deadline of November 8



Preliminary meetings were held with 2 First Nations. Several other First Nations also expressed an interest in meeting at dates outside of the scope of this report

Summary of Feedback

The following is a high-level summary of feedback from all sources, including stakeholder meetings, open houses, feedback form responses and written submissions. Consultation feedback will be considered along with technical and financial information in developing the final report for the study. The Ministry will consider these reports in determining if there is merit in further analysis of the potential for a fixed link.

Mixed Support for a Fixed Link:

There is general support for a fixed link connection. Key reasons stated for support for a fixed link include improved travel times, improved community development, addressing B.C.'s jobs and housing challenges, and opening up B.C. However, consultation participants also expressed concerns about the potential negative effects of a fixed link for cyclists and pedestrians, and some participants indicated that they would prefer improved ferry service to a fixed link.

It also must be noted that the Islands Trust Committee has advised that a fixed link across Anvil Island would run contrary to the Islands Trust Policy Statement, approved by the Province, as well as the Official Community Plans of numerous individual islands.

Additionally, a number of First Nations and members of the public expressed concerns about potential impacts on aboriginal interests, including route alignments that cross through First Nations' traditional areas and management lands (*engagement with First Nations is ongoing*).

Additional Study Would Be Required:

While many participants were pleased to see a detailed study take place and provided positive comments about the Project Definition Statement and the process to evaluate the crossing scenarios, several commented that more study would be needed before making a decision whether to proceed.

Municipalities and Regional Districts expressed concerns about potential effects on municipal infrastructure that would come with increased population and tourism, and many stakeholders and members of the public asked about the potential impacts on Highway 99 and Highway 101.

"The study is long overdue..."

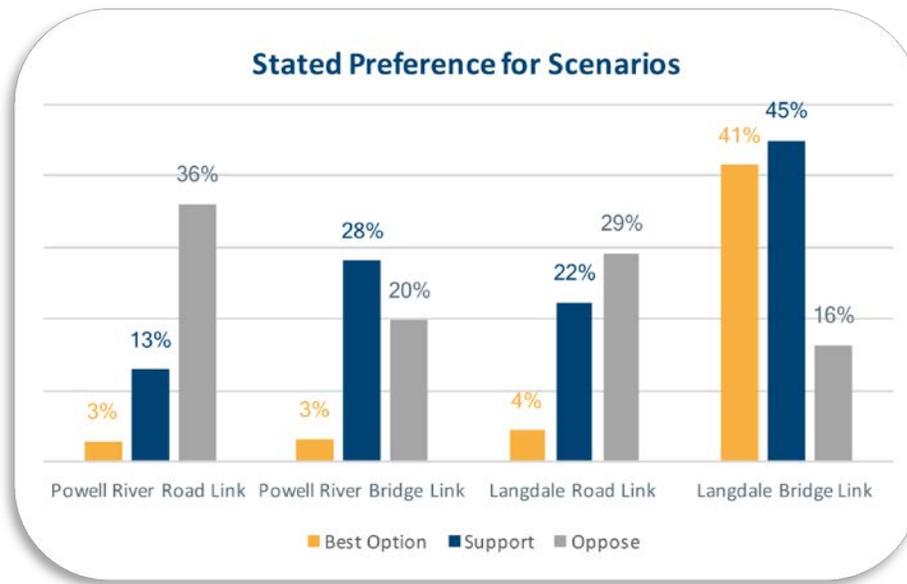
"I agree with the Problem Definition Statement..."

"Very comprehensive and informative..."

Participants who opposed a fixed link expressed strong concerns about potential community impacts and changes to their way of life.

Langdale Bridge Link is the Public's Preferred Scenario:

Of those who support a link, the Langdale Bridge Link is the preferred scenario, followed by the Powell River Bridge Link, as illustrated in the following table. Reasons for supporting the **Langdale Bridge Link** primarily focused on the fact that it is the fastest alternative.



Reasons for supporting the **Powell River Road Link** primarily focused on the broader economic development potential that this scenario creates. It should be noted, however, that many people commented that an additional connection between the Lower Mainland and the B.C. Interior should not be a provincial priority at this time.

Support for a **Powell River Bridge Link** primarily focused on the fact that it would remove one ferry, which would provide vastly improved reliability for travellers

Support for a **Langdale Road Link** primarily focused on lower costs as compared with other scenarios; however, many respondents expressed concern about the additional travel time this scenario would create, as compared with existing ferry service or a Langdale Bridge Link.

Tolls Are Expected, But Expected Toll Rate Varies:

Participants generally accepted that a fixed link would be tolled. Some participants were comfortable with the concept of a ferry-equivalent toll rate; however, most participants' suggested toll rate was generally much lower - typically in the range of \$5 to \$30 per one-way trip, as compared with current ferry rates of approximately \$40 to 45 per one-way trip (for a car plus two passengers).

About this Report

This report provides a summary of stakeholder input received throughout the feasibility study from February to December 2016, as well as public input received during the public consultation period from October 18 to November 8, 2016.

Sections 1 to 3 provide the overview and context for the project and the consultation process as well as participation levels. Section 4 summarizes the key findings from all sources, and Section 5 provides additional detail for each input source, including discussions at stakeholder meetings and open houses, feedback form responses, and written submissions. Section 6 provides a summary of next steps, including how the Ministry will use consultation input to determine the merits of proceeding. Appendices (available under separate cover) contain copies of notification and consultation materials, as well as written submissions received.

1. OVERVIEW

The Sunshine Coast is located northwest of the Lower Mainland on the eastern shore of the Strait of Georgia with a population of approximately 49,000, and is accessed only by BC Ferries, water taxi, and air service (float/airplane).

The region covers an area of approximately 180 kilometres from Gibsons to Lund, with coastal communities including Sechelt and Powell River in between. Highway 101, which runs north-south through the Sunshine Coast, is divided into two separate land segments with a ferry link in between.

Residents and businesses rely on BC Ferries for commuter trips and access to a range of services and facilities, including health/medical and recreational on the Lower Mainland. In recent years, immediate and long-term challenges facing the B.C. Coastal ferry system have led to service reductions for ferry users, with increased pressure during summer months with the addition of tourists and visitors.

With lower growth and economic development as compared with other regions in the Province (despite the area's proximity to the Lower Mainland), and recognizing the recent historical trend of an aging population base, various Sunshine Coast community representatives and residents are increasingly advocating for a cost-effective fixed link connection to the Lower Mainland, with the intent to address access and reliability challenges and support sustainable growth and economic development.

In February 2016, the B.C. Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure awarded a contract to R.F. Binnie & Associates to provide a technical assessment of a future fixed link between the Sunshine Coast and the Lower Mainland as an alternative to existing air and ferry services.

The objectives of this feasibility study are as follows:

- Analyze the physical and financial feasibility as well as the potential customer service, social, environmental, and economic costs and benefits of the various crossing alternatives that have been suggested in the past, along with potential new connection routes.
- Evaluate the scenarios against the existing ferry service through a Multiple Accounts Evaluation (MAE) in accordance with Ministry guidelines. The MAE uses qualitative and quantitative criteria to compare expected benefits and costs of the various scenarios against the existing ferry service (base case), and illustrates the trade-offs between the scenarios. The evaluation considers desktop research, First Nations interests, consultation input, and engineering and environmental expertise and best practice.
- To build on the results of previous studies, with a more comprehensive MAE and new information about potential route scenarios to support an informed discussion about the growing interest in a fixed link connection from the Sunshine Coast to the Lower Mainland.

A road link to the Sunshine Coast, including a fixed link to Powell River, has been the subject of two previous studies developed by the Ministry:

- “Powell River to Squamish Valley Road Link”, a study to establish an order of magnitude cost estimate for this link (1998)
- “Conceptual Alignment Study, Sunshine Coast and the Sea to Sky Highway” (2001), an engineering conceptual alignment study that included a cost estimate for a fixed link between Port Mellon and Squamish. In addition to identifying the technical challenges to achieve this link, the study also identified environmental and socio-economic impacts.

Recognizing the substantial travel time disincentive of these fixed link options, a third shorter option was suggested connecting Highway 99 to Port Mellon (Witherby Point), via bridge crossings to Anvil Island and Gambier Island.

Based on the Ministry’s Request for Proposal, technical analysis, and stakeholder input in Phase 1 and 2 of consultation, nine alternative route scenarios were identified and considered. Four final route scenarios were confirmed for in-depth evaluation and formed the basis for the study.

1. **Powell River Road Link** - A new inland route connecting Powell River to Highway 99 (north of Brackendale), paralleling existing logging roads through mountainous terrain, including five bridges and two tunnels, with an approximate distance of 200 km to Squamish or 250 km to Horseshoe Bay. Based on the study findings, existing ferry services would need to remain.
2. **Powell River Bridge Link (via Nelson Island)** - Includes two clear-span suspension bridges connecting Earls Cove to Saltery Bay via Nelson Island (approximately 19 km long). Some new road construction would be required on Nelson Island to connect the two bridges, and from Ahlstrom Point to Saltery Bay. Based on the study findings, the new bridges would replace the existing Earls Cove-Saltery Bay ferry service, while the Horseshoe Bay-Langdale ferry service would remain.
3. **Langdale Road Link** - A new coastal road connecting Port Mellon to Highway 99 (Squamish), with significant rock cut/fill sections at several locations and approximately 5 km of bridges across streams (approximately 105 km between Horseshoe Bay and Langdale). Based on the study findings, the new road would replace the existing Horseshoe Bay-Langdale ferry service, while the Earls Cove-Saltery Bay ferry service would remain.
4. **Langdale Bridge Link (via Anvil Island)** - Consists of two clear-span suspension bridges connecting Port Mellon to Highway 99 (near Brunswick Point south of Porteau Cove) via Anvil Island and a new 14-km road from McNab Creek to Port Mellon (approximately 50 km long between Horseshoe Bay and Langdale). There would be no direct connection to Anvil Island. Based on the study findings, the new road would replace the existing Horseshoe Bay-Langdale ferry service, while the Earls Cove-Saltery Bay ferry service would remain.

2. CONSULTATION PROCESS

2.1 Overview

A three-phase consultation process was developed to seek feedback on the Project Definition Statement, the fixed link options under consideration as well as the Multiple Accounts Evaluation methodology, and the accounts and criteria for the study. Specifically, the consultation included:

Phase 1: Background Data Collection

- **Pre-consultation (April 2016):** Telephone interviews were conducted with select representative stakeholder groups having local technical and community expertise, supplementing the study team's desktop research and assisting in developing the draft Project Definition Statement, potential alignment scenarios and preliminary evaluation criteria (see also section 5.1).
- **Community Leader Consultation (June 22 - July 7 and August 11, 2016):** MLA Jordan Sturdy hosted meetings with community leaders, First Nations, local and regional governments, chambers of commerce, and trucking companies. These meetings focused on the Ministry's planning process and study schedule and the benefits and constraints of potential fixed links (see also section 5.2).

Phase 2: Public and Stakeholder Input

- **Technical Workshops (July 2016):** Technical workshops with staff from select stakeholder groups were designed to assist in finalizing the Project Definition Statement, to confirm the scenarios to be evaluated and to discuss and refine the evaluation criteria. Technical workshops included participation by invitation from stakeholder groups in the communities of Powell River, Sechelt, Gibsons, Pemberton, Whistler, Squamish, Lions Bay, Bowen Island, Gambier Island and West Vancouver (see also section 5.3).
- **Public Open Houses (October 2016):** The project team hosted five public open houses in Squamish, West Vancouver, Powell River, Sechelt and Gibsons to provide information about the project and to give opportunities for the public to ask questions and share concerns. The open houses sought public feedback on the Project Definition Statement, evaluation criteria, and the preliminary study findings (see also section 5.4).

Phase 3: Ongoing Community and First Nations Engagement

- **Community and Stakeholder Relations (April - November 2016):** The project team established an information office (email and telephone line) for people to provide their input throughout the duration of the feasibility study. The project team provided follow-up calls and emails with stakeholders and established a project database with email addresses of people who are interested in staying informed about the project.
- **First Nations Engagement (April 2016 - January 2017):** The Ministry identified 10 First Nations having an interest in the feasibility study and invited their participation in the study, including Squamish Nation, Sechelt First Nation, Sliammon First Nation, Tsleil-Waututh Nation, Penelakut Tribe, Lyackson First Nation, Lake Cowichan First Nation, Halalt First Nation, Cowichan Tribes, Stz'uminus First Nation. The project team undertook outreach to coordinate in-person meetings where Ministry and project staff could provide information about the study

and request information to support the Multiple Accounts Evaluation criteria related to First Nations interests.

Meetings were coordinated with Squamish Nation and Tsleil-Waututh Nation. Consultation is ongoing with the remaining First Nations. Accordingly, the results of the First Nations meetings are not presented as part of this report.

2.2 Notification

The Ministry invited public participation through a variety of communication techniques as identified in Table 1 below. Copies of all notification materials are included in the Appendices to this report.

| | | | |
|---|--|---|--|
|  | <p>Telephone Interviews 19 one-hour phone interviews with key stakeholders from April 7 to April 20, 2016; 23 follow up phone calls to stakeholders from phone interviews, stakeholder meetings and technical workshops to ensure open house information was received</p> |  | <p>Website Primary source for public information about the Phase 2 consultation launched October 12, 2016</p> |
|  | <p>Newspaper Advertising 6 newspaper advertisements to announce the open house dates in local papers from October 13 to October 20, 2016</p> |  | <p>Community Leader Consultation & Technical Workshop Invitations 45 invitations letters issued to: community leaders, First Nations, local and regional governments, chambers of commerce and trucking companies; 27 email invitations to stakeholder groups to attend technical workshops</p> |
|  | <p>Email notices 50 email notices to stakeholders with open house information</p> |  | <p>Media Release Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure issued a media release and backgrounder on October 13, 2016 to announce start of public consultation</p> |

Table 1: Forms of Notification

3. PARTICIPATION

The study experienced high participation rates from community members and stakeholders. A breakdown of the participation numbers is provided below.



61 people
representing **27 organizations**

participated in phone interviews,
stakeholder meetings and technical
workshops



1,204 people
attended the Phase 2 open houses



1,854 people
submitted a feedback form, of which
1,635 were completed online



676 people signed up
to the project database



18 people/organizations provided
written submissions, including 4 received after the
requested deadline of November 8



Preliminary meetings were held with 2 First Nations. Several other
First Nations also expressed an interest in meeting
at dates outside of the scope of this report

4. SUMMARY OF INPUT FROM ALL SOURCES

The following is a high-level summary of feedback from all sources, including stakeholder meetings, open houses, feedback form respondents and written submissions. Consultation feedback will be considered along with technical and financial information in developing the final report for the study. The Ministry will consider these reports in determining if there is merit in further analysis of the potential for a fixed link.

Study Format/Content

- High level of interest in the study and general sentiment that the study is long overdue.
- General support among stakeholders and the public for the draft Project Definition Statement, with suggestions to confirm changing demographics on the Sunshine Coast and to consider both the provincial and regional benefits of a fixed link.
- A number of First Nations and members of the public expressed concerns about potential impacts on aboriginal interests, including route alignments that cross through First Nations' traditional areas and management lands (*engagement with First Nations is ongoing*).
- The Islands Trust Committee noted that a fixed link across Anvil Island (the Langdale Bridge Link) would run contrary to the Islands Trust Policy Statement, approved by the Province, as well as the Official Community Plans of numerous individual islands.
- While many participants were pleased that the study is happening, several commented that more study would be needed before making a decision whether to proceed. Requested studies included environmental impact assessment and a detailed business case.

"The study is long overdue..."

"I agree with the Problem Definition Statement..."

"Very comprehensive and informative..."

Route Options

- General public support for a potential future fixed link, primarily due to anticipated improved travel times, improved community development, and ability to help open up B.C. and address B.C.'s jobs and housing challenges.
- Of those who support a link, the Langdale Bridge Link is the preferred scenario, as illustrated in the chart to the right. Reasons for supporting the Langdale Bridge Link primarily focused on the fact that it is the fastest alternative.
- Participants who opposed a fixed link expressed strong concerns about potential community impacts and changes to their way of life.
- Some participants indicated that they would prefer improved ferry service to a fixed link.

Multiple Accounts Evaluation

- Interest in evaluating the options from the perspective of local benefits and broader provincial benefits.
- Desire for an equally robust analysis of the base case (ferry service), including suppressed demand analysis, commuter vs. economic generating traffic, growth analysis and economic opportunities.

Financial Considerations

- Numerous comments about the importance of considering all costs, including local infrastructure costs associated with increased population or visitor traffic, costs (or avoided costs) of Horseshoe Bay and Langdale terminal upgrades.
- Municipalities and Regional Districts expressed concerns about potential effects on other infrastructure like water and sewer that would come with increased population and tourism.
- Whether for or against a fixed link, many people questioned the additional congestion impacts this scenario would have on Highway 99 and Highway 101 traffic.

"I would prefer the provincial government to address the shortcomings in the ferry service rather than pay the huge capital costs associated with a fixed link."

5. CONSULTATION RESULTS

Input was collected through five key sources: telephone interviews, stakeholder meetings, open houses, the feedback form and written submissions. Key theme summary results from each of these sources are described in the subsections that follow.

5.1 Pre-Consultation Telephone Interviews

Telephone interviews were conducted with 23 stakeholders, representing 19 organizations with local technical and community expertise to assist in developing a comprehensive stakeholder list and a preliminary understanding of local interests and concerns. A 16-question interview script was developed to guide the discussion. The interviews helped the study team supplement their research and information gathering to assist in developing the draft Project Definition Statement, including potential alignment options and preliminary evaluation criteria.

Table 2 lists the participating organizations, which were selected based on their knowledge and expertise with respect to:

- Local official community planning
- Transportation planning
- Urban and industrial growth
- Short, medium, and long-term planning
- Goods movement

Communities/Organizations

City of Powell River

District of Sechelt

District of Squamish

District of West Vancouver

Gibsons and District Chamber of Commerce

Islands Trust

Pender Harbour Chamber of Commerce

Powell River Chamber of Commerce

Powell River Regional District

Resort Municipality of Whistler

Sechelt and District Chamber of Commerce

Squamish Chamber of Commerce

Squamish-Lillooet Regional District

Sunshine Coast Fixed Link.com

Sunshine Coast Regional District

Town of Gibsons

Village of Lions Bay

Village of Pemberton

Table 2: Telephone Interview Participants

Key themes from the feedback include:

- High level of interest in the study and general sentiment that the study is long overdue
- Comments that the existing Official Community Plans are based on current ferry service and that the positive and negative effects of increased growth brought by a fixed link should be considered
- Comments that the Islands Trust has a policy opposing any bridge connections to Gambier Island
- Comments that the public opinion about building a fixed link is split and that consultation will be important to the affected communities
- Comments that First Nations legislative frameworks should be respected, and completed through a transparent process that is concurrent with the public consultation process
- Strong desire that funding, including tolling scenarios, should be part of the analysis

5.2 Community Leader Consultation

MLA Jordan Sturdy (West Vancouver - Sea to Sky) hosted eight project kick-off meetings with community leaders. Invitations were issued to 45 representatives from local and regional governments, First Nations, chambers of commerce, major employers, and local trucking operators.

The purpose of the meetings was to seek input and feedback on the study from an organizational perspective. The meetings were held in Powell River (June 22), Sechelt (June 23), Squamish and North Vancouver (July 7 and August 11). Dates, locations and attendees are as noted in Table 3.

| Stakeholder Group | Date | Attendees |
|---|---------------|--|
| Powell River Area Stakeholders | June 22, 2016 | City of Powell River Powell River Chamber of Commerce Powell River General Hospital Powell River Regional District Powell River-Sunshine Coast MLA School District 47 |
| Powell River Area Trucking Stakeholders | June 22, 2016 | Miltown Transport Shaun Gloslee Excavating T&R Contracting Texada Transfer West Coast Fish Culture |
| Third Crossing Society | June 22, 2016 | Third Crossing Society Representatives |

| Stakeholder Group | Date | Attendees |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|--|
| Lower Sunshine Coast Stakeholders | June 23, 2016 | District of Sechelt Gibsons and District Chamber of Commerce Howe Sound Pulp & Paper Islands Trust Pender Harbour and District Chamber of Commerce Powell River Chamber of Commerce School District 46 Sechelt and District Chamber of Commerce Sunshine Coast Regional District Area A - Egmont/Pender Harbour Area B - Halfmoon Bay Area D - Roberts Creek Area E - Elphinstone Area F - West Howe Sound Town of Gibsons |
| Sea-to-Sky Area | July 7, 2016 | Bowen Island District of Squamish District of West Vancouver Resort Municipality of Whistler Squamish-Lillooet Regional District Village of Lions Bay Village of Pemberton West Vancouver Chamber of Commerce Whistler Chamber of Commerce |
| Trucking Operators | July 7, 2016 | BC Trucking Association City Transfer Columbia Fuels |
| Tsleil-Waututh First Nation | July 7, 2016 | Tsleil-Waututh Nation Representatives |
| Squamish Nation | August 11, 2016 | Squamish Nation Representatives |

Table 3: Community Leader Consultation Participants

Highlights of the discussions at these meetings include:

- Expectation that the community will be divided. Once the potential options are confirmed, there will be substantial debate about the relative benefits and the preference for each.
- Consensus that most, if not all technically feasible options would cross through First Nations territories, so their participation in the process is an important consideration.
- Requests to consider all costs including local infrastructure costs to manage increased population or visitor traffic, costs (avoided costs) of Horseshoe Bay and Langdale terminal upgrades.
- Expectation of significant travel time saving benefits for commercial carriers which have difficulty making a round trip from Powell River during the summer due to ferry schedules and congestion; even one avoided ferry trip would provide significant economic benefits.

- Questions about the rationale for the study at this time and its relative priority given that a fixed link is not part of the Ministry's *B.C. on the Move* vision.
- Importance of presenting the options from the perspective of local benefits and broader provincial benefits.

5.3 Technical Workshops

The Ministry sought feedback from key technical stakeholders through a series of facilitated workshops (by invitation) with the intent to refine the Project Definition Statement, base case description and proposed MAE criteria, while also considering high-level alternative route options and identifying additional proposed criteria. All topic areas were discussed in detail at each of the three workshops.

Twenty-seven stakeholders were invited to participate in the three-hour workshops held in three communities - Powell River, Sechelt and Squamish - covering the Sea to Sky corridor communities as noted in Table 4.

Twenty-six participants attended from six municipalities, three regional districts, Islands Trust, four chambers of commerce, and economic development groups.

| Community | Date/Time | Stakeholder Groups |
|--|-----------------------------------|--|
| Powell River Town Centre Hotel 4660 Joyce Avenue | July 11, 2016 2 p.m. - 5 p.m. | City of Powell River |
| | | Powell River Regional District |
| | | Powell River Chamber of Commerce |
| Sechelt/Gibsons Sechelt Seniors' Activity Centre 5640 Trail Avenue, Sechelt | July 12, 2016 9 a.m. - 12 p.m. | District of Sechelt |
| | | Town of Gibsons |
| | | Sunshine Coast Regional District |
| | | Sechelt Chamber of Commerce |
| | | Gibsons and District Chamber of Commerce |
| Sea to Sky Area Brennan Park Recreation Centre 1009 Centennial Way Squamish | July 13, 2016 1 p.m. - 4 p.m. | Resort Municipality of Whistler |
| | | District of Squamish |
| | | Squamish-Lillooet Regional District |
| | | District of West Vancouver |
| | | Islands Trust |

Table 4: Technical Workshop Participants

Highlights of the discussions at these workshops include:

- Comments on the draft Project Definition Statement, including confirming changing demographics on the Sunshine Coast, and the importance of considering provincial and regional benefits from a fixed link.
- Comments on the draft route options identified including suggested minor alignment modifications to improve the efficiency of these crossings.
- Suggestions for new MAE criteria including First Nations economic development opportunities, land development, emergency access/evacuation, and food security.
- Suggestions to consider the effects of various policy documents and provincial commitments on the feasibility of various alignments.
- Would like to see a robust analysis of opportunity costs in the base case (ferry service), including suppressed demand analysis, commuter vs. economic generating traffic, growth analysis and economic opportunities.

This input was used to refine the Project Definition Statement, the short list of crossing scenarios evaluated and the criteria used to evaluate them.

5.4 Open Houses

The Ministry hosted five open houses, noted in Table 5 below. These open houses were an opportunity to present preliminary findings on potential future fixed link connections between the Sunshine Coast and the Lower Mainland and provide the public with an opportunity to ask questions and to comment on the purpose and scope of the study, the four route scenarios identified for consideration and the draft MAE accounts and criteria.

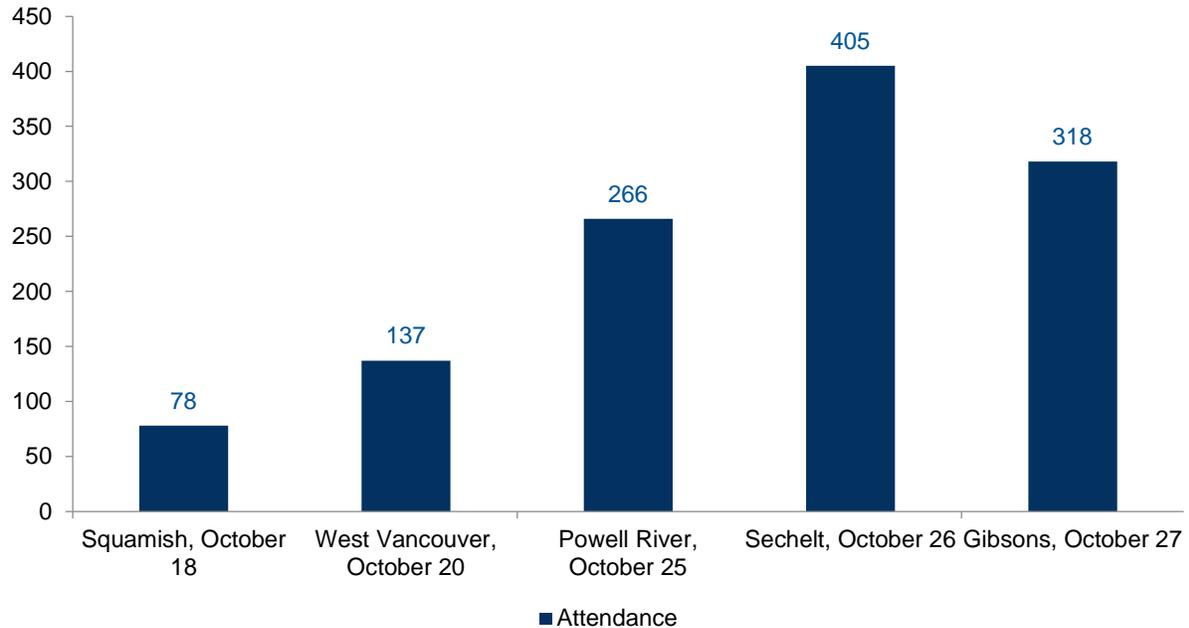
Each open house included an informal drop-in style session where participants could view the 17 consultation display boards that provided information about the study, the corridor maps, and speak with the study team and Ministry representatives. Each participant was asked to sign in, was offered a hard copy of the feedback form and informed that all the display boards were available online as well as an online version of the feedback form.

| Community | Date/Time | Venue | Attendees |
|----------------|---|--|-----------|
| Squamish | Tuesday, October 18 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. | Squamish Valley Golf Club, 2458 Mamquam Road | 78 |
| West Vancouver | Thursday, October 20 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. | Gleneagles Community Centre, 6262 Marine Drive | 137 |
| Powell River | Tuesday, October 25 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. | Powell River Town Centre Hotel, 4660 Joyce Avenue | 266 |
| Sechelt | Wednesday, October 26 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. | Seaside Centre, 5790 Teredo Street | 405 |
| Gibsons | Thursday, October 27 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. | Gibsons Garden Hotel, 963 Gibsons Way | 318 |

Table 5: Open Houses

Chart 1 provides a breakdown of open house attendance by location.

Chart 1: Open House Participation



5.4.1 Summary Input from all Open Houses

- Most open house participants expressed keen interest in the study scope.
- During the open houses, most participants indicated support for the evaluation criteria as proposed and most agreed with the scoring of these criteria (from “much better” to “much worse” than the current condition base case) for each of the Fixed Link Scenarios assessed.
- Several open house participants asked for more detailed information regarding how the draft ratings were assigned (more detailed information is presented in the MAE report).
- Many open house participants expressed interest in reviewing the financial criteria when it is available.
- Open house participants generally assumed that a fixed link would be tolled and had questions about how much the toll would be.
- Numerous open house participants suggested that in lieu of a fixed link, the province should consider improving ferry service.

5.4.2 Key Themes from Open Houses

All open house participants were encouraged to fill out a feedback form at the event, submit by mail, or by complete the survey online, and this feedback is discussed in detail in Section 5.5. A summary of key themes of discussions with participants at each open house, as collected and reported by project team representatives, is presented in Table 6.

| Open House/Date | Key Themes |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Squamish October 18 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comments that the information presented is comprehensive and detailed • Concerns about Highway 99 traffic and the improvements required south of Squamish • Diverse range of preferences on the four options |
| West Vancouver October 20 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive comments about the timing of the study and the information presented • Comments that the Lions Gate Bridge and Second Narrows congestion must be addressed before adding more traffic to Highway 99 • High level of interest in the MAE results and the alternative scenarios, including Bowen Island |
| Powell River October 25 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questions about how long it would take to implement the Powell River road link and the winter maintenance costs • Langdale link is the priority but unclear if road or bridge link is preferred • Powell River links are secondary priority and public opinion is split on which of the two is better • Interest in combining the two bridge links, to eliminate both ferry routes • A toll is generally acceptable with an average suggested fee of \$30 • Powell River economy needs stimulation and population growth • Frustration with inability to reserve for travel on the Earls Cove-Saltery Bay ferry, and with general public communications |
| Sechelt October 26 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong preference for a Langdale Bridge Link and general support for the project • Concerns that a fixed link would change the nature of the coast and would prefer to keep the ferries • Questions about why improving the existing ferry service is not being considered • Questions about timing and priority for constructing the project • Seniors noted a link is important for family connections and medical services • Comments that improvements to Highway 101 are also needed • Questions if there will be a net benefit to the region if a Powell River road link was built • General assumption and support that a fixed link would be tolled (most suggested a fee between \$25 and \$40) • Concerns about walk on/commuter traffic and how they would be able to travel with a fixed link |

| Open House/Date | Key Themes |
|------------------------------|---|
| Gibsons October 27 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong preference for a Langdale Bridge Link and a desire to move forward with the project • Some participants preferred to keep things as they are, out of concern that a new link would bring more traffic and out of concern for foot passenger traffic • Highway 101 and 99 improvements are also needed (even now) and a new bypass is required before a fixed link is built • Some suggestions that money should be spent to improve the existing ferries • Concerns with foot passenger traffic and cycling accommodations with a fixed link • Questions and concerns about increased crime, impacts on water infrastructure and the vision for growth on the Sunshine Coast • Questions about timeline for construction • General assumption and support that a fixed link would be tolled • Questions if there will be a net benefit to the region if a Powell River Road Link was built • Questions about how the federal government is involved now and for potential funding in the future |

Table 6: Key Themes from Open Houses

5.5 Feedback Form

A 13-question feedback form invited comments about the Project Definition Statement, the four potential route scenarios and the evaluation methodology as well as any additional open comments. Participants had the option to submit the feedback form at the open house, by mail, by email, or online.

A total of 1,854 people submitted a feedback form, of which 1,635 were completed online. A summary of the comments received is included in the subsections below.

5.5.1 Participant Mix

Just under 60 per cent of respondents live on the Sunshine Coast, just over 20 per cent in Powell River and just under 20 per cent live elsewhere.



Twenty-two per cent of respondents work on the Sunshine Coast.

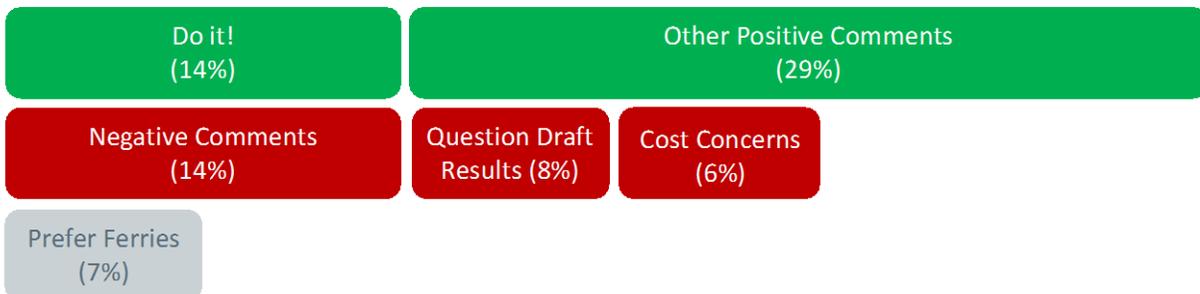
5.5.2 Study Purpose and Scope

The purpose and scope of the Sunshine Coast Fixed Link Feasibility Study is to:

- Assess the costs and benefits of possible overland connections and bridge crossings between the Sunshine Coast and the Lower Mainland;
- Identify the financial and physical feasibility of constructing a fixed link; and,
- Undertake an analysis of potential fixed link scenarios, providing the benefits and impacts of each of the scenarios considered.

Respondents were asked to comment on the study purpose and scope. A total of 43 per cent took the opportunity to express general support for considering a fixed link, including 14 per cent who provided comments to the effect of “just do it.” By comparison, 14 per cent expressed opposition to such a link.

Key theme feedback on study purpose and scope is as follows:



5.5.3 Why a Fixed Link?

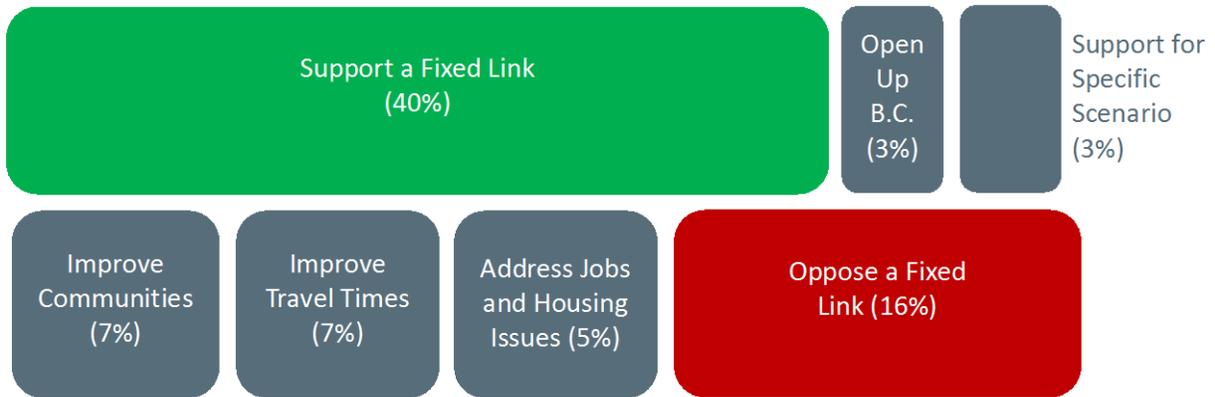
The Project Definition Statement and rationale for the study that was presented for feedback is:

Since 1951, B.C.'s Sunshine Coast has been connected to the rest of the mainland through two ferry routes. Immediate and long-term challenges facing the BC Coastal ferry system have led to service reductions for ferry users in recent years.

With lower growth and economic development as compared with other regions in the Province, despite the area's proximity to the Lower Mainland, and recognizing the recent historical trend of an aging population base, various Sunshine Coast community leaders and stakeholders are increasingly advocating for a cost-effective fixed link connection to the Lower Mainland.

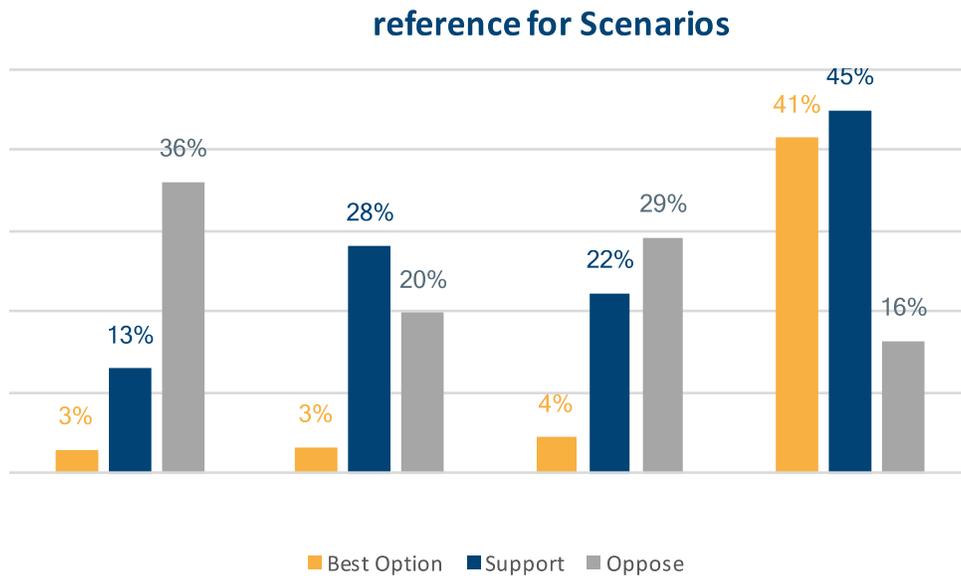
The intent is that the connection would improve access and reliability for businesses, residents and visitors, provide improved access to emergency services and foster sustainable growth and economic development for the Sunshine Coast while strengthening the region's attractiveness as a recreational and vacation tourism destination and generating added provincial economic benefits.

Forty per cent of respondents used this question as an opportunity to express support for a fixed link, more than twice as many as respondents who expressed opposition. Key reasons stated for support for a fixed link include improved travel times and improved community development. Key theme feedback on the Project Definition Statement is summarized in the following chart



5.5.4 Fixed Link Options

Although each of the four scenarios had strong supporters and strong opponents, the most preferred scenario is the Langdale Bridge Link option. This option consistently received the most positive comments and was generally perceived to be the most effective solution in terms of travel time savings and convenience. A breakdown of feedback specifically noting support or opposition for each of the four scenarios is as follows:



As can be seen in the chart above, 45 per cent of respondents provided comments indicating some level of support for the Langdale Bridge Link, including 41 per cent¹, who indicated that it was the best of the four scenarios. Only 16 per cent expressed specific opposition to this scenario. The Powell River Road Link received the least support and the highest opposition. Primary reasons for support for each scenario are discussed below.

¹ Statements of “Support” and “Best Option” were not necessarily exclusive. Therefore, these percentages are not additive.

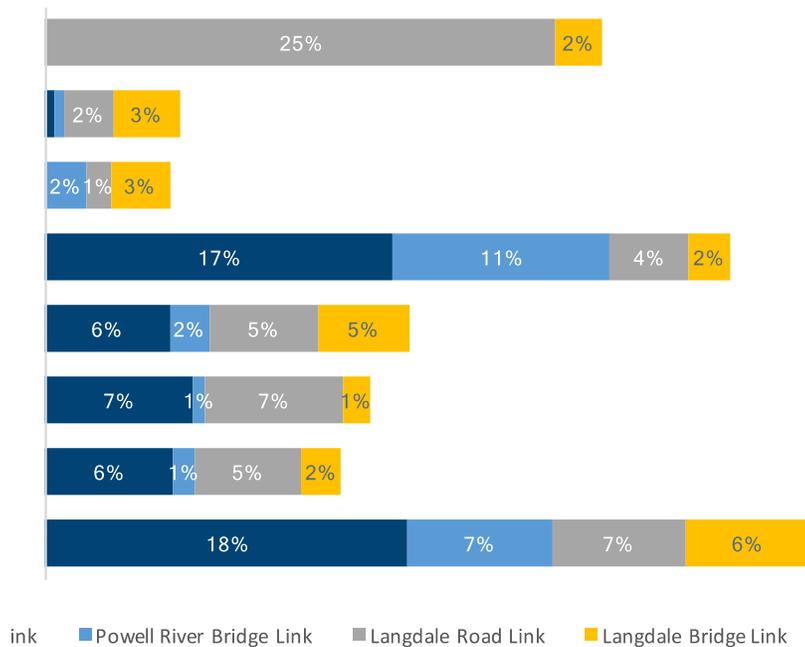
Powell River Road Link - Reasons for support primarily focused on the broader economic development potential that this scenario creates, including, linking providing a reliable truck route between Powell River and the rest of B.C., as well as, if combined with improvements to the Powell River - Comox ferry service, providing as an alternate route for Vancouver Island traffic that would relieve pressure on and potentially eliminate the need for improvements at the already constrained Horseshoe Bay and Departure Bay ferry terminals. It should be noted, however, that many people commented that this scenario serves a different purpose, and that construction of a third crossing between the Lower Mainland and the B.C. Interior is not a provincial priority identified in the *B.C. on the Move* transportation plan, and likely would not be needed in the foreseeable future.

Powell River Bridge Link - Reasons for support primarily focused on the fact that it would remove one ferry, which would provide vastly improved reliability for travellers, and help provide guaranteed same-day turnaround for freight movements. However, many respondents expressed concerns about the cost to benefit ratio of this scenario, and eight per cent of respondents specifically noted that while they support this scenario, it should only be constructed in combination with a Langdale fixed link connection.

Langdale Road Link - Reasons for support primarily focused on lower costs as compared with other scenarios. However, one quarter of respondents expressed concern about the additional travel time this scenario would create, as compared with existing ferry service or a Langdale Bridge Link.

Langdale Bridge Link - Reasons for support primarily focused on the fact that it is the fastest alternative. It should also be noted, however, that for this scenario in particular, many people questioned the additional congestion impacts that a Langdale Bridge Link scenario would have on Highway 99 and Highway 101 traffic.

Highlights of comments related to areas of concern for each scenario are highlighted in the chart below.



5.5.5 Evaluation Criteria

As part of the study, a Multiple Accounts Evaluation (MAE) of the scenarios was conducted in accordance with the Ministry’s guidelines and standards of practice to ensure consistency with other studies involving evaluations of similar scope and size. The MAE compares the benefits and impacts of the various scenarios as compared with the base case (existing ferry service) and illustrates trade-offs between scenarios to inform decision-making. In addition to the standard Ministry evaluation accounts, Financial, Customer Service, Environment, Economic and Socio-Community, the results of discussions with First Nations will be incorporated into the final assessment.

“The scenarios as shown provide a comprehensive look at the pertinent information needed for a study of this magnitude. The forum was well prepared and gave a very real insight into the choices offered.”

The criteria, or factors for each account that had been developed based on Ministry requirements, best practice, and results of consultation and engagement to date were presented for feedback during the public consultation period, along with the preliminary MAE results and the order of magnitude capital cost estimates that had been developed based on Ministry process and overall cost. Participants were asked to indicate their level of satisfaction with the criteria and to provide comments on the criteria and the draft findings. Consultation input was subsequently used to help finalize the evaluation criteria, perform the financial analysis and complete the Multiple Accounts Evaluation.

Most respondents (just over 90 per cent) indicated their level of satisfaction with the criteria. Of these, 79 per cent indicated satisfaction, including 43 per cent who said they were either extremely satisfied or very satisfied, as noted in the graphic below.



Very few respondents offered specific comments about the MAE ratings, ranging from six per cent who commented on the Economic and Socio-Community accounts, to one per cent who offered comments on First Nations interests. Nine per cent offered positive comments about the thoroughness of the MAE. With respect to the comments on the MAE, general highlights include:

General Comments - Some criteria are too subjective.

Customer Service Account - Concerns about whether the effects of winter conditions had been adequately considered in the *Safety* criteria; concerns as to how strongly accommodation of pedestrians and cyclists would be factored into the *Multimodal Accessibility* criteria and the overall analysis.

Economic Development Account - Suggestions to *add new criteria* including expected/potential lifestyle and economic benefits of each scenario, for both residents of Sunshine Coast and residents of Lower Mainland.

Socio-Community Account - Questions about the costs of road improvements that would be required to accommodate additional traffic on Highway 99 and Highway 101 would be considered within the *Effects on Population-supporting Infrastructure* criteria; concerns that a fixed link would mean more crime on the Sunshine Coast.

Environment Account - *Marine* effects of new roads should be weighted higher due to the impact of salt and pollutants on draining from the road (*it is noted that this is considered under the "Freshwater Fish, Wildlife & Habitat" criteria*).

First Nations Considerations - Questions about *First Nations'* feedback on the various options.

5.5.6 Tolling

While no decision has been made with respect to tolling, for the purpose of this study, the focus was a cost-effective alternative to existing ferry service, which assumes that a fixed link would include a toll equivalent to the existing ferry fares. Should further analysis be done on the various options, more detailed tolling analysis and consultation would take place.

With tolling a consideration for many participants, 17 per cent of respondents specifically commented about tolling including 16 per cent who suggested a specific toll rate. Of those who commented, most generally supported a toll to help pay for the new crossing and several suggested appropriate toll rates, ranging from \$5 to \$50 per trip.

"I could leave at any time and I wouldn't be dependent on weather or a vessel breaking down. I would gladly pay a toll to have this option."

"No one on the Sunshine Coast expects the fixed link to be without a toll, and most would be happy to pay \$30-\$50 per round trip."

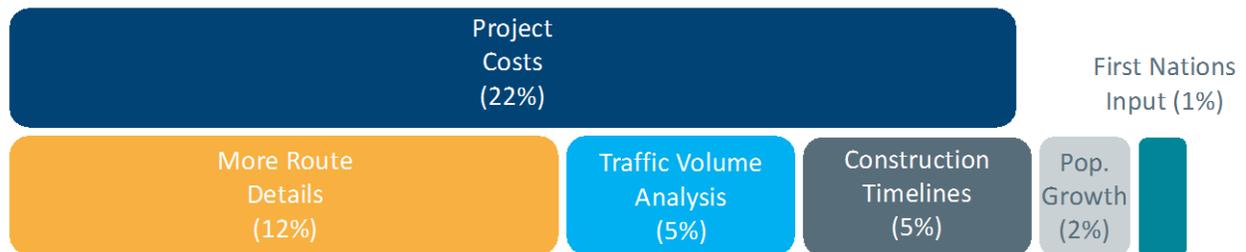
"If you build a fixed link people would be more than happy to pay a toll like the one on the Hope to Kamloops. We would be more than happy to pay \$10."

Some respondents expressed concern about the cost of tolls and some recommended considering an annual toll rate for frequent users.

Additionally, almost all of those who commented about tolls also requested more information, including more detailed financial analysis to demonstrate the costs to be recovered by tolls and the savings that would come from reducing or eliminating ferry service.

5.5.7 Other Comments

Participants were asked to indicate what **additional information** they would like to see if the study determines there is merit for further analysis and consultation. Six key themes emerged, as noted in the graphic below.



Consultation participants were also invited to provide any additional comments. The most frequent responses were to re-emphasize previously mentioned support or opposition to a fixed link (as discussed in various sections above) or to comment on tolling (as discussed in Section 5.5.6 of this report).

A total of 13 per cent of respondents encouraged the province to get started with additional work that would be needed to construct a fixed link, while 11 per cent expressed a preference for increased ferry service. Seven per cent suggested various phased approaches or scenario combinations, and four per cent requested more detailed routing information.

Four per cent of respondents suggested a variety of alternate routes including:

- A link via Bowen Island and Keats or Gambier Island
- A new highway from Capilano Lake to Furry Creek and across Howe Sound
- A Powell River-Vancouver Island link

Four per cent of respondents suggested that a fixed link provides an opportunity to address current housing challenges in the Lower

"Part of the magic of living on the Sunshine Coast is its relative inaccessibility. Lower growth and development is a crucial key to the livability of the Sunshine Coast."

Mainland; however, it should be noted that almost as many expressed concerns that the Sunshine Coast would become another suburb of Vancouver.

Finally, while many participants were pleased to see a detailed study take place, several commented that more study would be needed before making a decision whether to proceed. Requested studies included environmental impact assessment and a detailed business case.

5.6 Written Submissions Summary

The Ministry received 18 written submissions from members of the public and stakeholders, including four received post consultation close. Copies of these submissions are included in Appendix I.

Stakeholder submissions included:

- Squamish Chamber of Commerce
- Gambier Island Local Trust Committee
- Islands Trust
- Third Crossing Society

A summary of the feedback from each of these stakeholder submissions is included below.

Squamish Chamber of Commerce

- Expressed empathy and general support for the communities of the Sunshine Coast which have advocated for the feasibility study.
- Agreed that regional transportation and transit issues are important and are a high priority for Chamber advocacy.
- Regard the study's Purpose and Scope and Project Definition Statement to be entirely valid.
- Specific route feedback:
 - *Powell River Road Link* - Improvement of the Highway 99 route from Pemberton north through Lillooet, and Highway 12 from Lillooet to Lytton, are higher priority investments for the Province as a whole, involving an important alternate commercial transportation link between the Interior and Coast (tidewater portals at Squamish and the Lower Mainland) and a key tourism circle route.
 - *Powell River Bridge Link* - Very advantageous to Powell River and a cost-effective way to alleviate current access issues. This potential investment should be given a high priority.
 - *Langdale Road and Bridge Link* - Equal preference for both options but regard the Highway 99 route from Pemberton north through Lillooet to Highway 97 as a higher priority investment for the Province as a whole at this time. Also believe the road link will not be supported by the current investors of the Woodfibre LNG project. Increased traffic is a concern and more information on the potential impact is needed, including data on anticipated vehicle traffic on the Squamish-Horseshoe Bay section of Highway 99. Present congestion issues on this stretch of highway must be alleviated before adding traffic.

Islands Trust

- Noted that the Islands Trust Policy Statement, approved by the province, as well as numerous Official Community Plans from individual islands, oppose fixed connections between these islands to Vancouver Island, the Mainland or another island.
- Indicated that islanders and non-islanders recognize that such connections destroy the very essence of islands; something that, once lost, can never be restored.
- Expressed concerns about long-term and irreversible effects of fixed links to the

environmental, social and cultural foundation of the island communities.

- Reaffirmed the Islands Trust's strong desire and vision for enduring relationships with First Nations, and as part of that commitment, copied 22 First Nations (including the 10 First Nations consulted in the study) on the written submission to the study.

Gambier Island Local Trust Committee

- Expressed opposition to the Langdale Bridge Link scenario and noted that the Local Trust Committee communities have not been among those advocating for a fixed link.
- Offered Islands Trust Council Policy Statement which indicates that no island in the Trust Area should be connected to Vancouver Island, the mainland, or another island by a bridge or tunnel.
- Strongly advocated for an in-depth public consultation process when considering provisions of transportation services and specifically encouraged the Ministry to work with local communities through a public consultation process to evaluate and modify road construction and road system proposals to encompass the environmental, economic and social values of the community.
- Noted that Anvil Island, an Associated Island in the Gambier Island Local Trust Area, is governed by policies and regulations in the Gambier Associated Islands Official Community Plan and Land Use Bylaw, which look to preserve the relatively low density residential character of the island.
- Noted that five of the eight residentially-zoned properties on Anvil Island have the potential for subdivision and that a bridge and highway along the eastern side of the island would impact not only the current character of Anvil Island, but also would significantly influence future development of the island.
- Suggested that a fixed link would represent a major shift away from current policy and that this is not sufficiently captured in the study's Socio-Community Account criteria: *"Consistency with Community Policies, Character, and Identity"*.
- Noted that as per the Official Community Plan policies, consultation with the entire Anvil Island community would be very necessary should the Langdale Bridge Link be further considered.

Third Crossing Society

- Expressed interest in reviewing the detailed cost estimates presented in the final report, specifically for structures (bridges/tunnels) and the various road segments.
- Requested further clarification on the proposed tunnel rationale at the west approach of Lausman Pass as part of the Powell River Road Link scenario.
- Emphasized the value of using existing logging roads as part of the Powell River Road Link scenario to reduce travel time.
- Noted that contrary to the study team's assessment, the Powell River Road Link scenario could replace the ferry service at Earls Cove/Salter Bay.
- Suggested there would be significant financial advantage to BC Ferries with the additional traffic on the Comox - Powell River ferry.
- Reaffirmed the Third Crossing Society's strong desire to expand the scope of the study to include considering the significant economic benefits of an east/west connection between Kamloops and Courtenay.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Consultation results indicate interest in the concept of a fixed link, but many questions about the large and complex challenges associated with construction. Of the options assessed, the bridge link across Anvil Island was the most popular amongst consultation participants, but this opinion was far from unanimous.

While many participants were pleased to see a detailed study take place and provided positive comments about the Project Definition Statement and the process to evaluate the crossing scenarios, several commented that more study would be needed before making a decision whether to proceed.

Municipalities and Regional Districts expressed concerns about potential effects on municipal infrastructure that would come with increased population and tourism, and many stakeholders and members of the public asked about the potential impacts on Highway 99 and Highway 101.

Participants who opposed a fixed link expressed strong concerns about potential community impacts and changes to their way of life.

It is important to note that at the time of consultation, the feasibility assessment was only partially complete. Consultation input was used to: inform the remaining technical work, complete the financial analysis, and finalize the MAE.

Given the anticipated high capital costs of all the fixed scenarios assessed and the level of public interest in the financial analysis, the Ministry worked with the technical team to ensure that the financial analysis met the Ministry's requirements and considers the most current unit cost information available for construction in B.C.

Further consultation, if warranted, of a potential future fixed link would include a more detailed engagement in understanding impacts to First Nations, consultation with the local communities to understand the local and highway network impacts; and engagement on a more detailed environmental assessment.