

Okanagan Lake Second Crossing Project

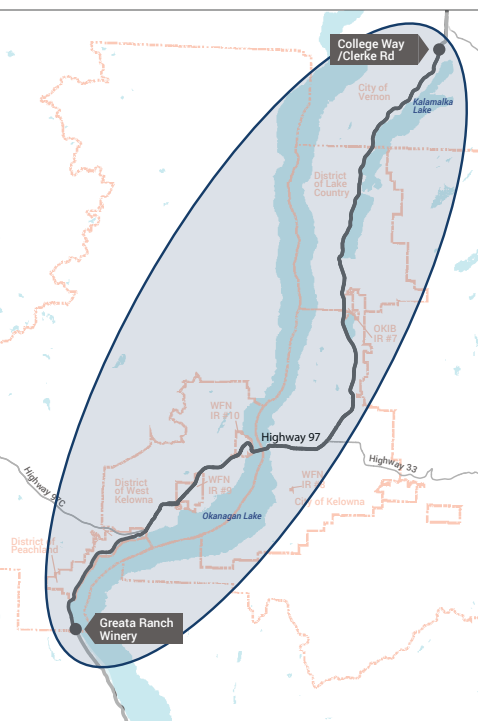
Central Okanagan Planning Study Existing Conditions and Performance Assessment



Consultation Companion
Open House — Spring 2015



Ministry of
Transportation
and Infrastructure



Welcome

Thank you for participating in the Phase 1 consultation for the Okanagan Lake Second Crossing Project. This Consultation Companion document explores current conditions on the Highway 97 corridor through Central Okanagan between Peachland and Lake Country and important factors to consider in long-term planning, including a possible second crossing of Okanagan Lake. The accompanying Feedback Form seeks your input on these considerations.

How to get involved and help plan for the future:

- Visit engage.gov.bc.ca/okanagansecondcrossing – read consultation materials and technical information
- Attend an open house – see schedule below
- Arrange a presentation/dialogue session for your group or organization
- Read this Consultation Companion and complete a Feedback Form (online or hard copy)
- Sign up to receive ongoing updates – see contact details below

Please submit your feedback by May 31, 2015.

Public Open House Schedule*

Community	Date	Time	Venue
Kelowna	Tuesday, May 19, 2015	4:30 pm – 8:00 pm	Ramada Kelowna Hotel and Conference Centre, 2170 Harvey Avenue, Kelowna
West Kelowna	Wednesday, May 20, 2015	4:30 pm – 8:00 pm	Westbank Lions Community Centre, 2466 Main Street, West Kelowna

*Please visit engage.gov.bc.ca/okanagansecondcrossing for the most current information

Stakeholder Meetings

In addition to open houses and online consultation, the project team is meeting with stakeholder groups being established in consultation with local governments and organizations, allowing more in-depth discussion with representatives of local and regional business, environmental, transportation, agricultural and other interests.

Other Opportunities

Presentations and dialogue sessions with local groups and organizations can be arranged by contacting us via the information below. Also, watch for café-style drop-in sessions in coming weeks.

Web: engage.gov.bc.ca/okanagansecondcrossing

Email: okanagansecondcrossing@gov.bc.ca

Phone: 250-712-3660

Planning for the Future

Since 2001, the Highway 97 corridor in the Central Okanagan area has received over \$400 million in upgrades to improve safety and mobility. This includes the replacement of the lake crossing on Highway 97 with the new W.R. Bennett Bridge in 2008.

At the time it was built, it was estimated that the new bridge would be adequate for 25 years, and current growth projections continue to support that estimate. However, the long-term view requires that planning begin now to address future mobility in the Central Okanagan, including congestion relief.

On September 15, 2014, the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure announced that Delcan Corporation (now Parsons) had been selected as the consulting firm to undertake this planning study. The study area for the Highway 97 corridor extends from Greata Ranch, 4 km south of Peachland, northward to Clerke Road / College Way south of Vernon, encompassing the communities of Peachland, West Kelowna, Kelowna, Lake Country, the West Bank First Nation and Okanagan Indian Band.

The planning study will examine the Central Okanagan to understand and explore the transportation needs of the area. The study will look at route options including preferred locations for a future alternate lake crossing and potential timing for future project planning purposes.

Your Input is Important

Your input will help determine the collective interests that need to be considered in developing requirements and potential options for future transportation improvements in the Central Okanagan. The Ministry will consider input from this consultation in conjunction with existing provincial plans, technical data and local government input as it works to develop the picture of future needs for discussion and further public consultation.

Purpose of this Consultation

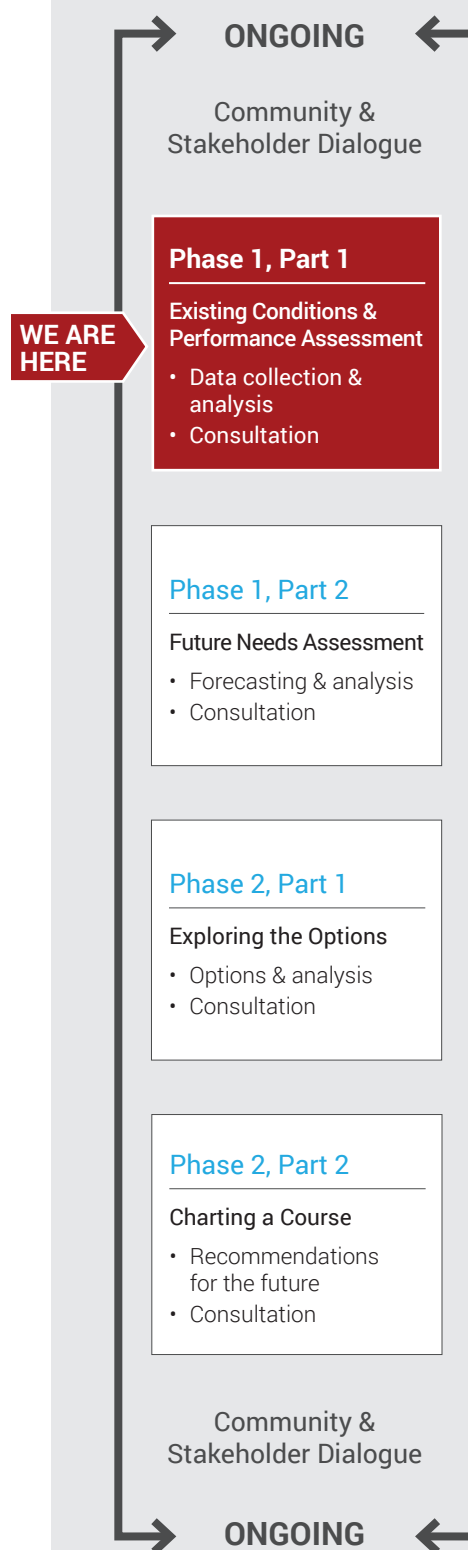
The study of Existing Conditions and Corridor Performance considers:

- Trends in population, economic development, land use, sustainability initiatives, community livability, traffic and travel modes in the Central Okanagan
- Travel patterns, the role and function of the Highway 97 corridor and the W.R. Bennett Bridge, and the needs of all users, including car drivers, goods movers, transit riders, carpoolers, cyclists and pedestrians
- The performance of the corridor, including congestion and safety factors
- Connection to and support for local, regional, provincial and national growth and transportation plans
- Your experience with respect to all of the above

Future consultations will consider:

- Future transportation needs
- Possible improvement options for the long and near-to-intermediate term
- Your input

Stages of Planning and Consultation



How to use this Consultation Companion

This booklet is designed to work as a companion to information displays and the Feedback Form, which includes questions related to each section of the Companion.

Relevant Feedback Form questions are noted throughout the booklet. Participants are encouraged to read each section of the Guide and then complete the same section of the Feedback Form before moving to the next section.

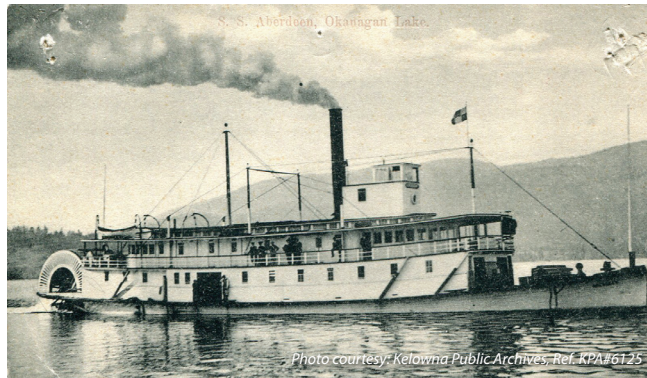
Your responses, combined with those of other participants, will help in confirming the existing conditions and performance of the Highway 97 corridor, and in setting the stage for determining future needs.

History

The Okanagan Lake Crossing

Like much of British Columbia and other parts of Canada, the Central Okanagan has a rich history that features First Nations hunter-gatherers, fur traders from the Old World, missionaries and seekers of gold. European settlement in the 1800s laid the foundation for trade and agriculture. As the early crops of tobacco gave way to fruit orchards, Kelowna was incorporated as a city in 1905.

The wood-burning vessel S.S. Aberdeen, launched by the CPR in May 1893, was the first sternwheel steamer on Okanagan Lake. In the 20th century, cars and passengers were ferried between Kelowna and West Bank by the Pendozi, Lequime (later renamed Fintry Queen) and Lloyd Jones.



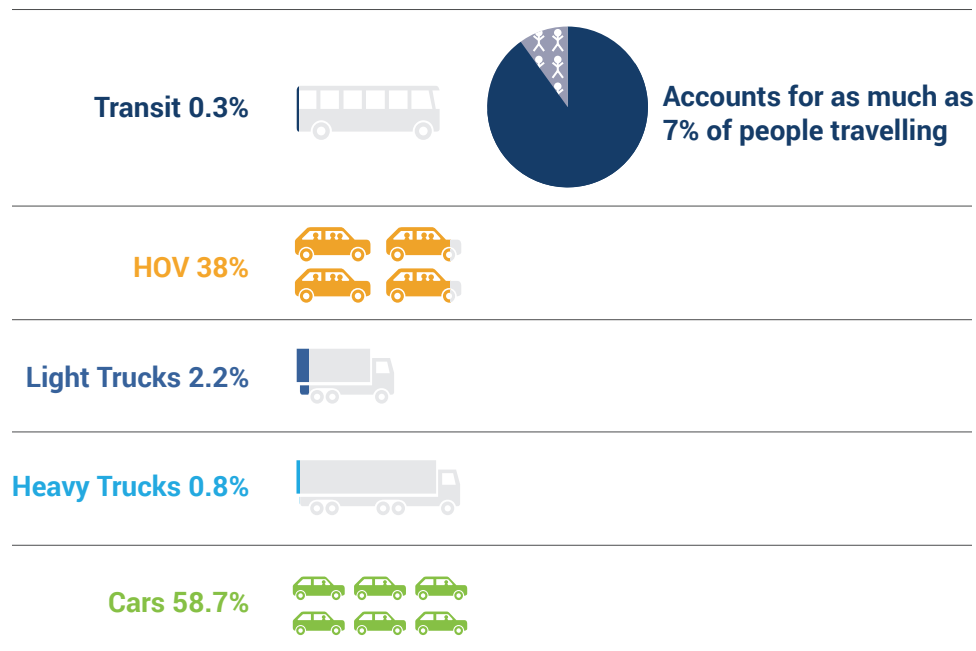
In 1958, the original Okanagan Lake Floating Bridge was opened as the first of its kind in Canada, and one of just a few floating bridges on the continent.



Fifty years later, with the capacity of the original three-lane bridge stretched beyond its limits, the new floating bridge, named after Kelowna-born former premier William R. Bennett, was opened. Featuring five lanes, it is expected to provide sufficient capacity well beyond 2030.

W.R. Bennett Bridge Profile

Peak Hour Snapshot: Who Crosses Okanagan Lake?



Transit

Transit comprises about 0.3 per cent of peak period (4 p.m. to 5 p.m.) traffic on the approaches to the bridge, but carries up to 7 per cent of people making trips. BC Transit operates one primary bus route on the bridge, which is the RapidBus connecting UBCO to the Westbank Exchange. This route generates up to 15 buses per hour during the peak period, and ridership has risen about 10% since the RapidBus service was introduced in 2010.

Carpoolers

HOV users (carpool and vanpool) comprise about 38 per cent of peak period corridor traffic.

Trucks

Trucks represent 3 per cent of peak period corridor traffic, and up to 10 per cent during off-peak times. Light trucks making local deliveries are 75 per cent of the truck traffic, while the other 25 per cent are heavy trucks hauling goods and materials.

Cars

The remaining 58.7 per cent of corridor users are single-occupant cars.

Cyclists and Pedestrians

As a proportion of total travel on the corridor, active transportation is very minor. However, its contribution to sustainability and healthy lifestyles is significant and is being recognized with investment in active transportation infrastructure and convenient connections with other sustainable modes such as transit.

Use of Past Studies

The corridor has been studied in the past, resulting in the identification of route improvements. Many of these have been completed or initiated, such as the W. R. Bennett Bridge, the Westside Road Interchange, Highway 97 six-laning from Highway 33 to Edwards Road, four-laning from Winfield to Oyama and HOV lanes in Kelowna.

This study draws on previous and current studies, including those that have led to plans for future safety and mobility improvements at intersections through Westbank First Nation and West Kelowna. In addition, it considers the inputs and outcomes of the 2011 Okanagan Valley Transportation Symposium while taking into account changes that have occurred or are expected in local, regional and provincial infrastructure and travel patterns.

We begin with a look at existing conditions and corridor performance: where we live, work and go, and our travel experience along the way...confirming scientifically what users already know from experience.

The Regional Context

The Regional Transportation Network

In recent years, the regional transportation network has undergone significant improvements for all modes of travel. While automobile use dominates (81.6% of the labour force drives a car, truck or van, 10% higher than the provincial average), investment to support all modes of travel is intended to support healthy, sustainable lifestyles.

Overall, with the level of investment that has occurred, the physical condition of the existing highway infrastructure in the corridor is generally quite good.

Highlights of past, current & announced projects:

Highway improvements

- W. R. Bennett Bridge
- Westside Road Interchange
- Highway 97 six-laning from Water St to Edwards Rd
- Four-laning from Winfield to Oyama
- HOV lanes in Kelowna
- Numerous intersection upgrades

Transit improvements

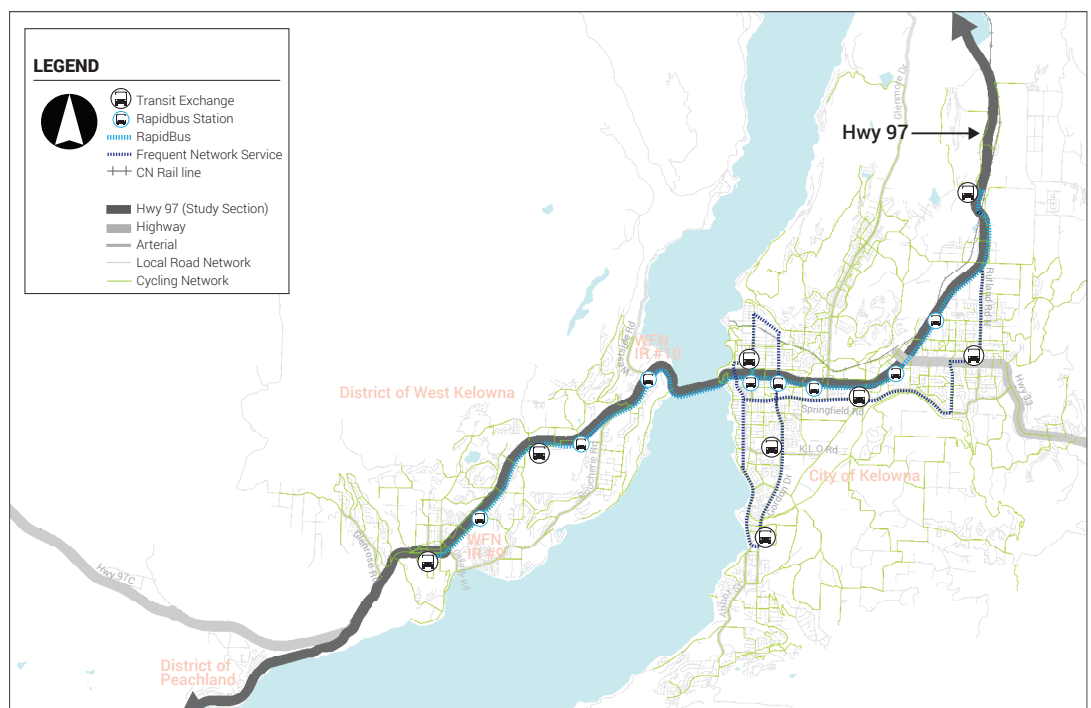
- RapidBus service connecting West Kelowna, Westbank First Nation, Kelowna & UBCO, with direct access provided by the frequent transit network
- Five new RapidBus stations, doubling the total to ten
- Improvements to four transit exchanges
- Real-time passenger information displays
- Addition of 15,000 annual service hours in fall 2014

Active Transportation

- Growth in Kelowna's Active Transportation Corridors and cycling network
- Development and implementation of Pedestrian and Bicycle Infrastructure Plan in West Kelowna
- ICBC and BikeBC investments in cycling and pedestrian infrastructure in Kelowna, West Kelowna and Lake Country

How often do you travel on the Highway 97 corridor in the Central Okanagan?

Existing Multi-Modal Transportation Network



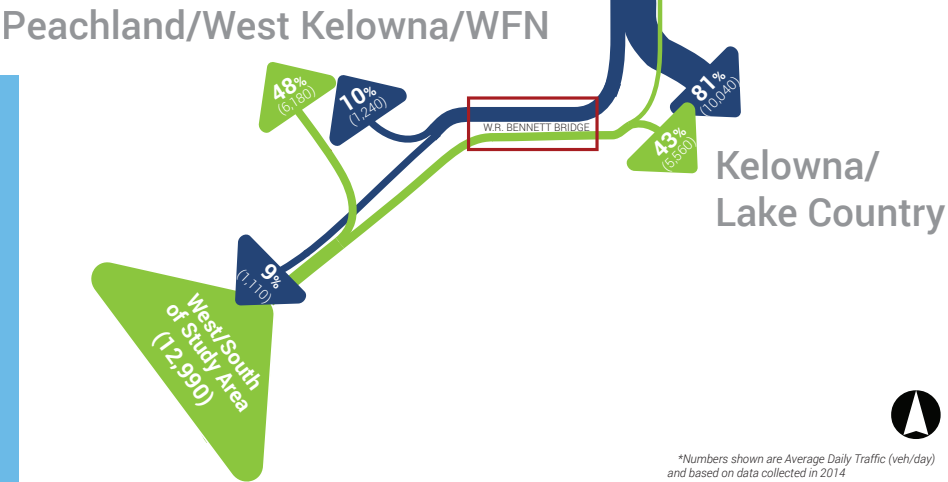
Regional Travel Patterns

External Trips into the Region—How They’re Distributed

As the largest concentration of population and employment in the region, Kelowna has a major influence on travel patterns in the Central Okanagan and is the primary destination for those arriving from outside the region.

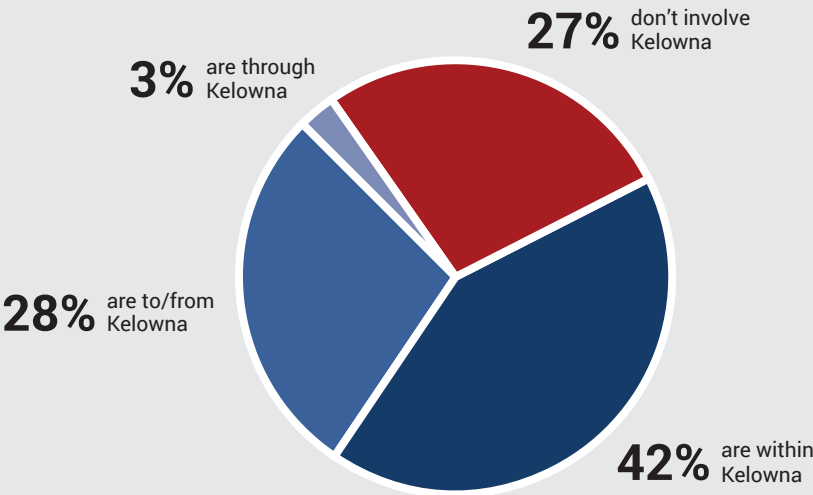
Over 25,000 vehicles/day enter the Central Okanagan - most destined for Central Okanagan Communities. Interestingly, only about one-third of all vehicles entering the Central Okanagan actually cross the bridge. Nearly half the traffic entering from the south ends up in Peachland, West Kelowna or Westbank first Nation, and more than three-quarters of the traffic from the north goes no further than Kelowna.

“Approximately what percentage of your total trips take you outside the study area?”



All trips in the Region — Kelowna’s role

Among all the trips in the Central Okanagan area (i.e. originating both within and outside the region), nearly three-quarters involve Kelowna in some way. Nearly half (42%) are contained within the city itself, 28% are going to or from Kelowna, and 3% are just passing through.



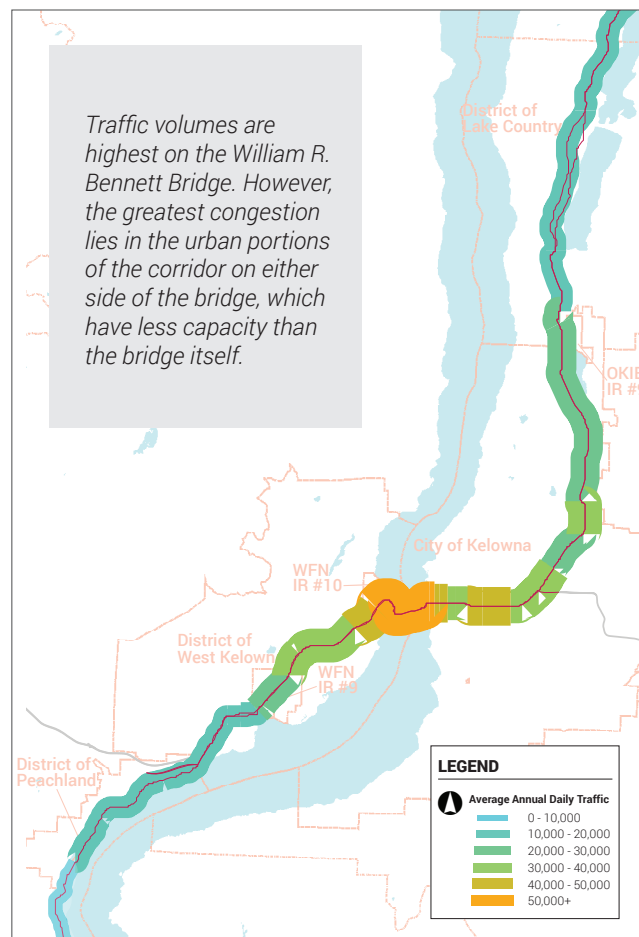
Traffic Characteristics

One Region—Many Subsets

Traffic patterns typically fall into three major categories:

- **Urban** – notable AM and PM peaks with sustained high traffic volumes during the day.
- **Suburban** – very pronounced AM and PM peaks, with lower traffic mid-day and high Saturday traffic.
- **Non-Urban / Rural** – no notable peak hours, traffic builds in the morning, then stays steady through the day.
- All three categories exist on the Highway 97 corridor in the Central Okanagan.

The effects of summer traffic are more pronounced in the rural areas, as the growth of the urban areas has created a higher proportion of local traffic throughout the day, year-round.



Highway 97 Central Okanagan Traffic Characteristics

Section	Fall/Winter/Spring	Summer
South of Vernon	Typical suburban pattern, indicating importance of commuting	AM and PM peaks are present, but higher tourist traffic means volumes continue to build through the day
Lake Country	Typical suburban pattern; peak volumes are about half of Kelowna	AM and PM peaks are slightly higher than Fall/Winter/Spring; mid-day volumes are considerably higher
Kelowna	Typical urban pattern, high commuter influence	Summer traffic volumes are slightly higher
West Kelowna / WFN	Typical suburban pattern	Traffic builds steadily through the morning and stays high all day
Peachland	Peak hours are later in the AM and earlier in the PM than most urban areas	Summer volumes are considerably higher than the rest of the year
South of Peachland	Typical non-urban patterns	Summer traffic is much higher than the rest of the year (37% higher)

W.R. Bennett Bridge: Traffic at the Crossing

Meeting Current Needs

As the only crossing of Okanagan Lake, the William R. Bennett Bridge is a key component of the Highway 97 corridor in the Central Okanagan. Not only does it connect the communities on the east and west sides of the lake, but it also supports longer distance travel from the South Okanagan to Kelowna International Airport (YLW) the North Okanagan, Shuswap and national parks in the Rocky Mountains. It is expected to meet or exceed its capacity expectancy of 25 years.

Regional Traffic Dominates the Bridge

A snapshot of traffic on the bridge shows the effect of the growing population and economy of the Central Okanagan area. In years past, the difference between daily traffic volumes in the summer and fall/winter/spring was much greater than today. While tourist traffic continues to grow, today's traffic is dominated by commuters and local purpose travel as the proportion of local traffic is growing faster.

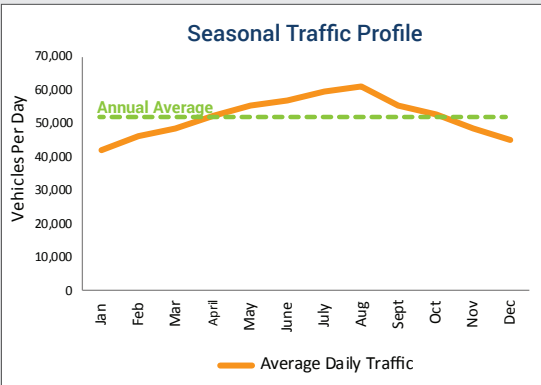
The summer traffic doesn't appear to have a major impact on the peak commuter hours, but it results in elevated traffic levels throughout the day.

Fully 87% of the traffic on the bridge is travelling between Kelowna and all points west and south of the lake crossing. Only 13% of the bridge traffic simply passes through Kelowna. Just 4%* of bridge traffic is simply passing through the entire Central Okanagan.

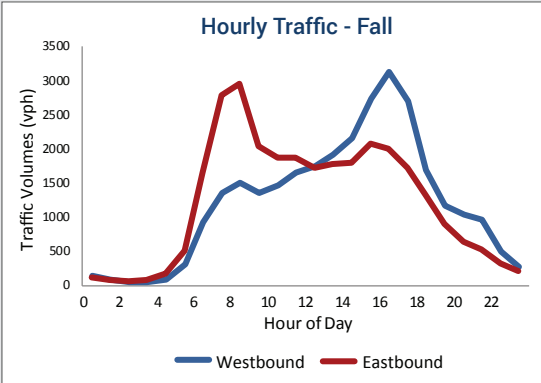
**The difference between this 4% figure and the 3% figure on page 7: the 3% figure on page 7 refers to all trips in the Central Okanagan, not all of which involve the bridge; the 4% figure on this page refers only to traffic on the bridge.*

“How often do you travel across the bridge?”

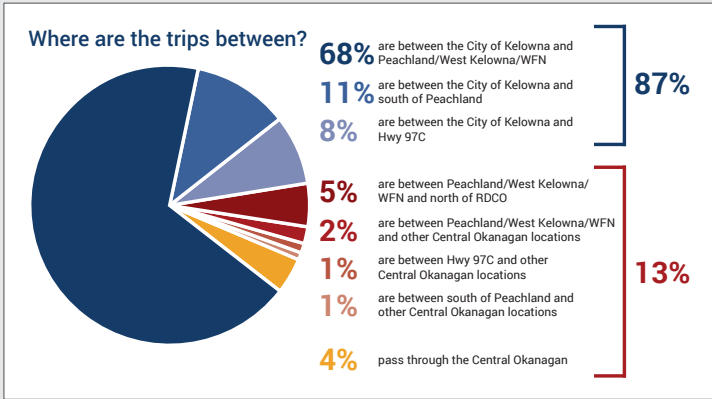
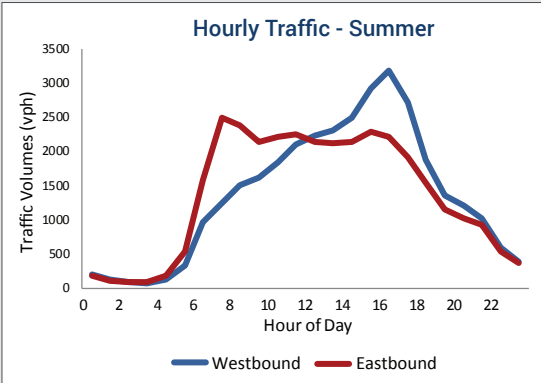
Daily traffic in August is 17% higher than the annual average of approximately 53,000.



The hourly traffic reflects commuter travel patterns, with high morning and afternoon peak hours.



Summer traffic stays higher during the day than in the rest of the year.



More than two-thirds (68%) of the trips on the bridge are between Kelowna and Peachland/West Kelowna/Westbank First Nation.

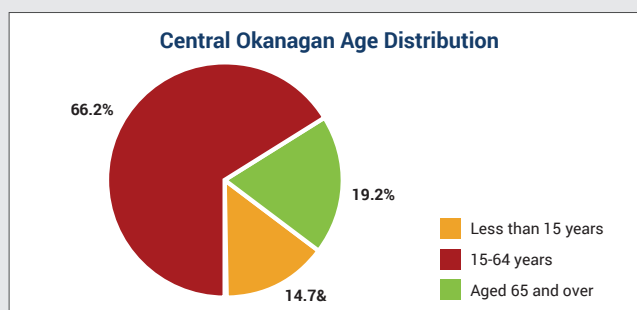
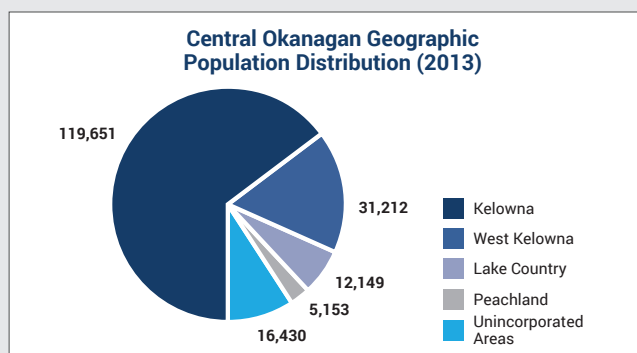
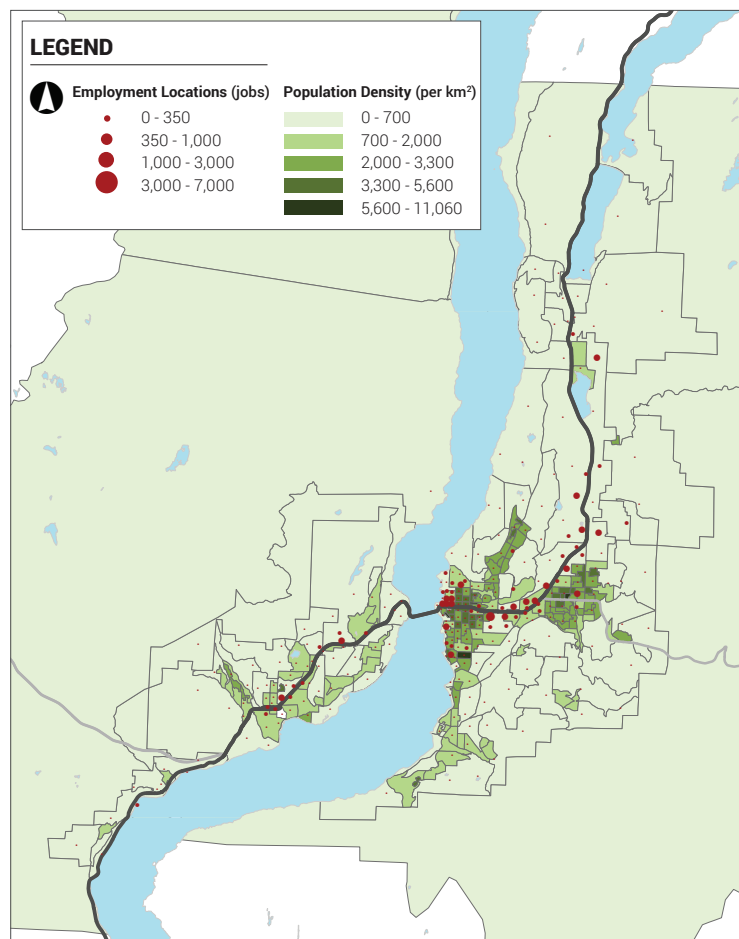
The Growing Region

Population and Demographics

The population of the Central Okanagan is 187,058 (2014), with the vast majority located in Kelowna (65%) and West Kelowna (17%). From 1996 to 2011, the Central Okanagan population grew 32%, and Kelowna's population grew 31%, much higher than the provincial average of 18%. The trend over 15 years has also shown a gradual increase in the annual growth rate. By 2034, the Central Okanagan population is expected to grow to nearly 255,000, an increase of more than 36% in 20 years.

With a median age of 44.2, the population in the area tends to be older than the rest of British Columbia (41.9) and Canada (40.6). Seniors (aged 65 and older) make up a major segment of the total population at 19.2%, compared to the British Columbia average of 15.7% and the Canadian average of 14.8%. By 2034, about 24% of the population is projected to be in the senior category. As this grows, the need for transportation systems to support the needs of an aging population may become more important in the area.

When looking at the modes of transportation for the employed labour force, the region has a much higher rate of vehicular travel (81.6%) as compared to the province (71.3%) and a lower rate of public transit use (3.4% versus 12.6% respectively). BC Transit's Transit Future Plan for the Central Okanagan seeks to double the share of transit ridership to 7% by 2035.



Economy

The Okanagan Valley is within reach of a regional market that exceeds nine million consumers within a range of 600 km, equivalent to a one-day trip by road. More than 56 million consumers are located within 2,500 km by road and less than 3 hours by air.

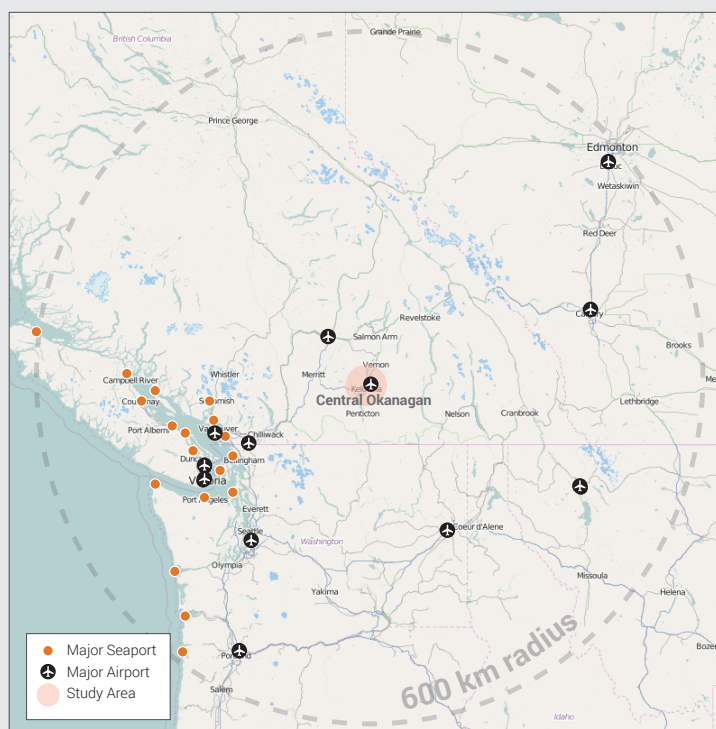
Construction, retail and wholesale trade, healthcare and social assistance industries in the Kelowna census area employ more than 36,000 individuals accounting for 40% of total employment. Another 18,500 individuals, or 20%, are employed in professional services, educational services and accommodation food services industries. This industrial distribution of employment is in general similar to that for all of British Columbia. More than 30,000 jobs in Kelowna are in industries that are highly dependent on the transportation network.

With reasonable proximity to major coastal and inland ports, the Central Okanagan area is well-positioned for trade. While transportation of goods through the area does not represent a major proportion of vehicular traffic, good quality infrastructure helps maintain the competitiveness of the region, particularly for the distribution of agricultural and manufactured products.

Supported by the area's climate, natural beauty, vineyards, craft breweries, distilleries and related culinary sector, tourism is a major economic driver for the region. According to a 2011 study done for Tourism Kelowna, visitor spending in Kelowna and area amounts to over \$279 million per year. The provincial highway provides vital connections to local road networks and even to the airport, which greeted a record 1.6 million passengers in 2014.

In 2014, employment in Kelowna amounted to approximately 91,500 jobs, which, despite a dip in 2012 and 2013, is 17% higher than in 2004. This 10-year rate of employment growth is greater than the 14.5% experienced by the province overall.

The economic outlook for the Okanagan is positive, with more than 70% of employers anticipating a period of growth over the next five years. The annual rate of growth in the Central Okanagan workforce is forecast by employers to be 3.1%.



**30,760
Jobs**

Retail Trade = 11,895

Construction = 9,135

Manufacturing = 5,010

Wholesale Trade = 3,495

Agriculture = 1,225

This figure shows Employment in Key Industries Depending on Transportation, for Kelowna (not the entire region), 2010.

The Cost of Congestion

Corridor improvements cost money, but so does congestion. A forecast by HDR Consultants in 2009 predicted that by 2030, the cost of congestion in the Central Okanagan (i.e. value of lost travel time due to excess commuting delays) would average \$937 per year per commuter. Excess vehicle operating costs add another \$104 annually to the burden. There are even impacts on labour and business activity. If congestion issues remain unaddressed there would be a cumulative reduction of more than 900 jobs and business revenues of more than \$72 million by 2030.

Information such as this helps government decision-makers as they consider the business case for infrastructure investment.

Land Use

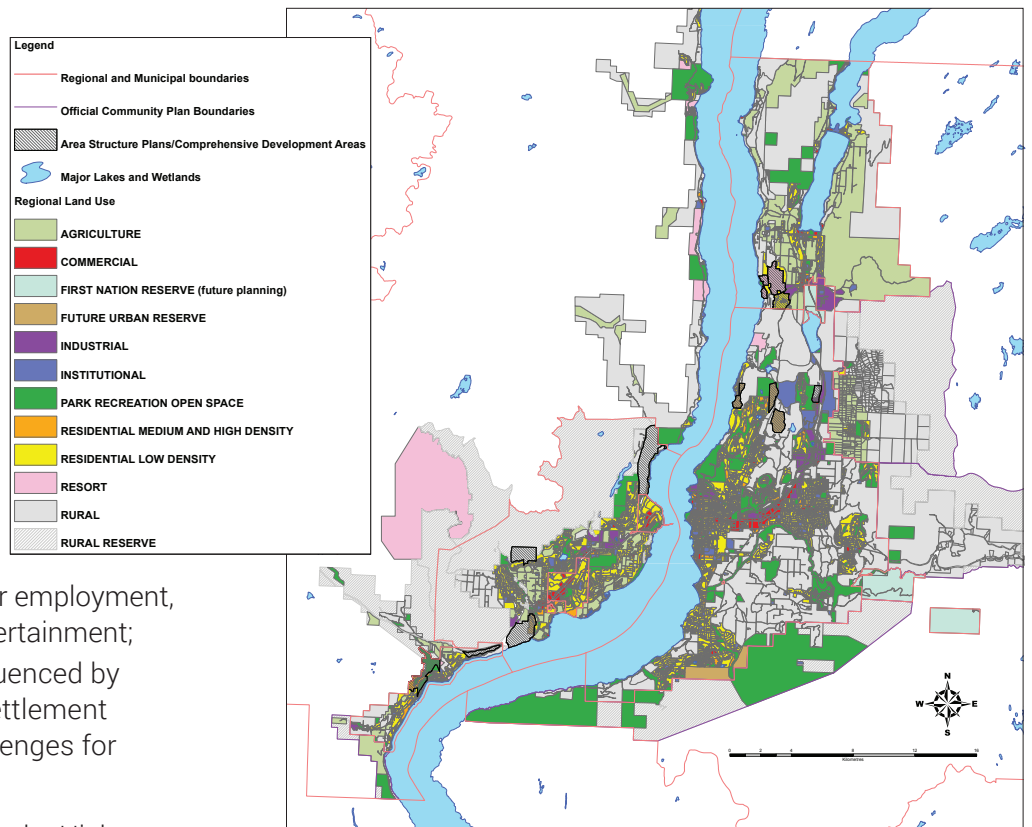
Land use and transportation are closely linked.

The Highway 97 corridor provides connections to:

- Regional employment and service centres such as the university, airport, hospital, industrial and commercial areas;
- Outlying areas such as Peachland and Lake Country, which are dominated by single family residences. Residents travel to the larger centres for employment, shopping, education and entertainment;
- Dispersed development, influenced by topography and historical settlement patterns which creates challenges for service by public transit.

For many sections of the corridor, the Highway is the only available direct route, used by both local and through traffic. Existing development, environmental constraints and the agricultural land reserve limit opportunities for local parallel road alternatives, putting pressure on existing corridors.

Land use and transportation patterns are slow to change. Municipal official community plans look ahead 20 years, and planning for major transportation facilities generally begins at least 20 years before implementation. For transportation planning purposes, we can expect that residential areas will tend to remain residential and that commercial and employment centres will largely remain in their current locations. As the region grows, more efficient land use by way of infilling and higher density development will be encouraged. By directing growth to existing areas, sprawling development patterns will be discouraged. However, urban densification, live/work developments and similar initiatives create new transportation network demands.



Land Use Map – Regional District of Central Okanagan



Photo courtesy: tourismkelowna.com



Photo courtesy: tourismkelowna.com - Delta Grand Okanagan Resort Kelowna

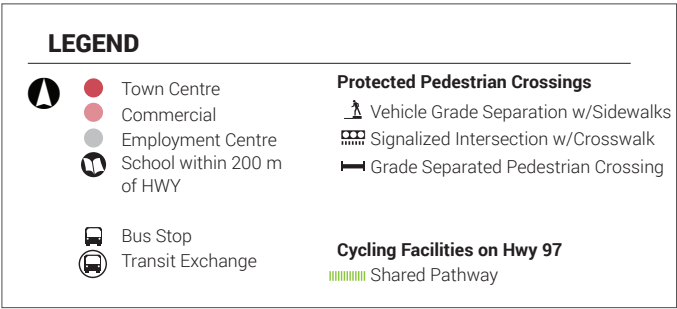
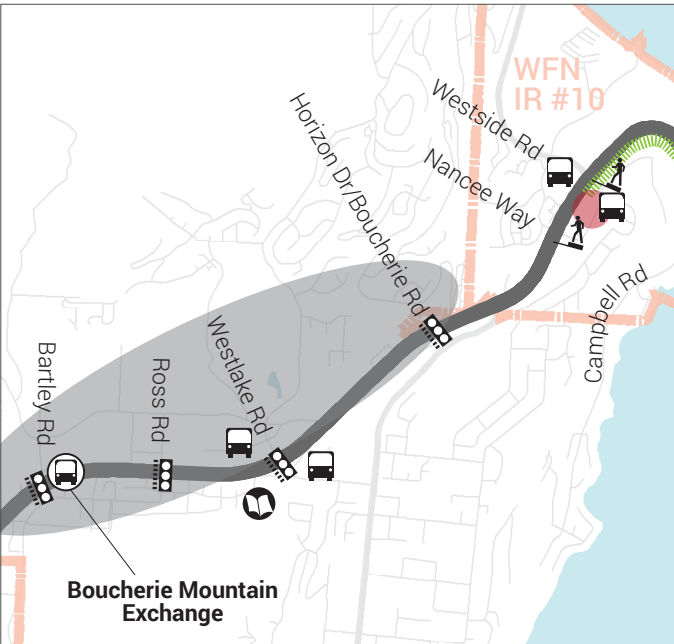
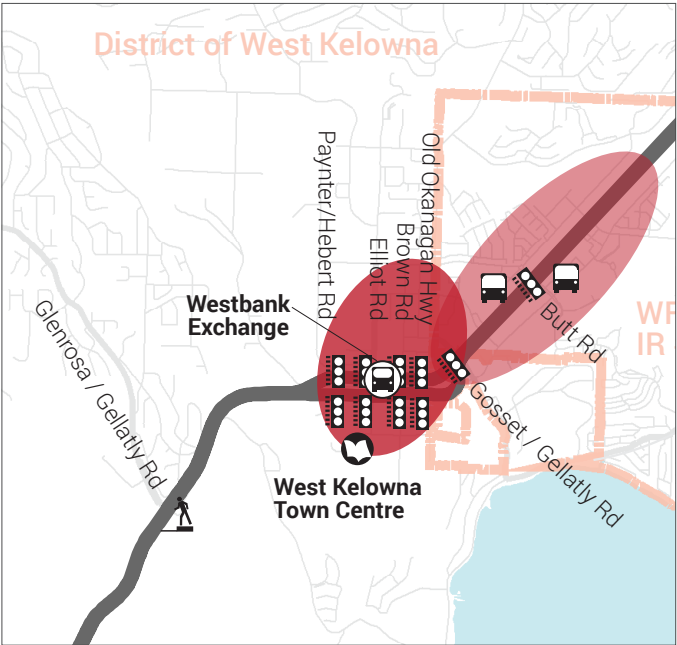
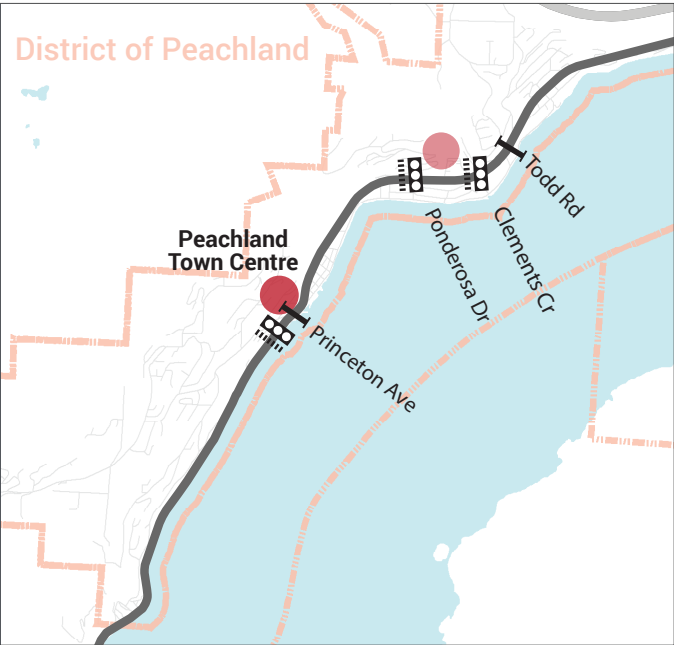
Key Activity Centres & Pedestrian Connectors

Where We Go (South/West)

Peachland and West Kelowna’s town centres generate significant travel by all modes. Active mode connections across the highway are important in these areas.

The Town Centre, commercial zone and commercial/industrial district in West Kelowna are major travel generators.

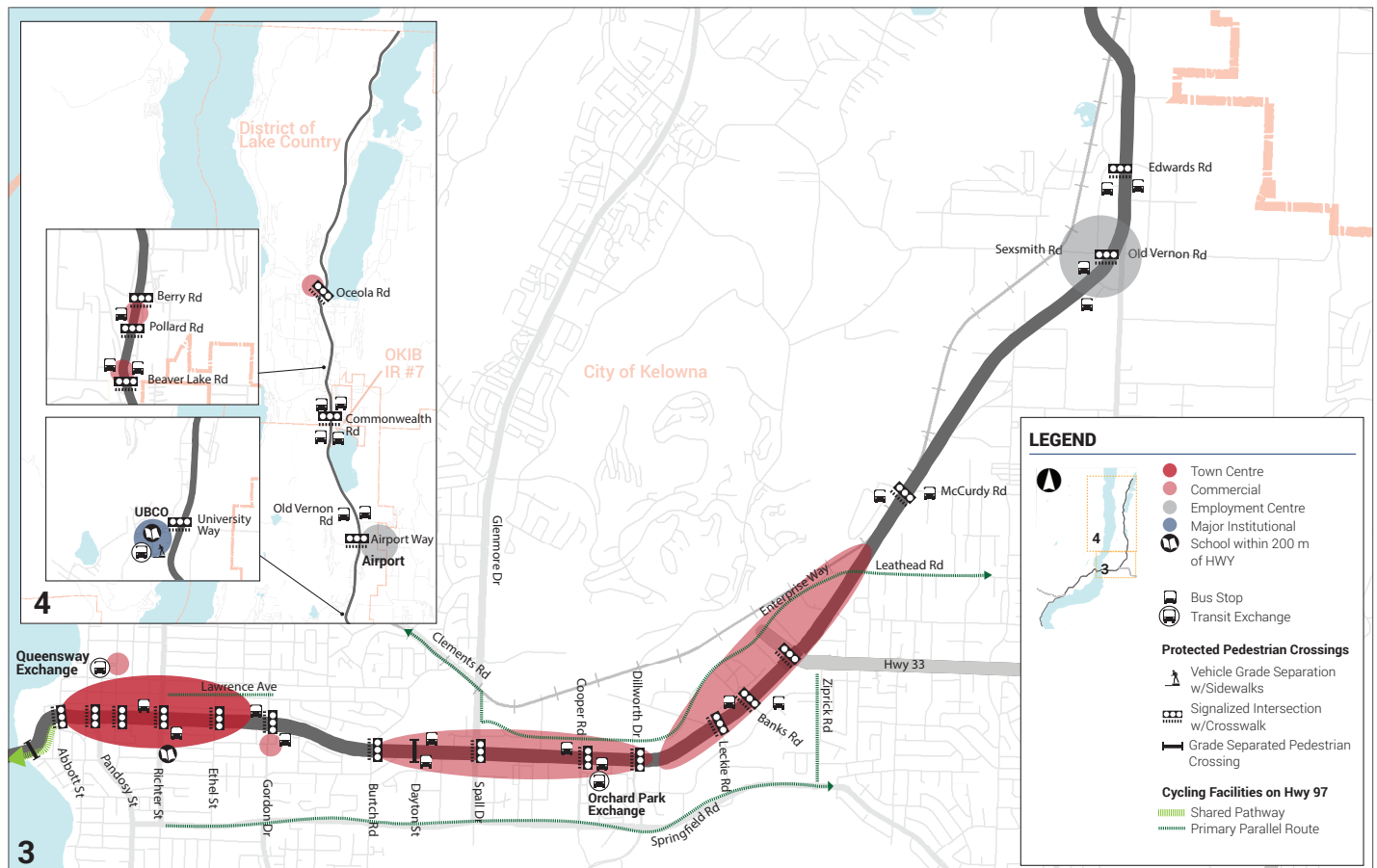
Good pedestrian access to transit will help to provide travel choices.



“Do your trips take you to or from one of the key activity centres shown in these maps?”

Where We Go (North/East)

The majority of travel generators east of Okanagan Lake are located around Kelowna's core area, along the extensive commercial strip and industrial zone, as well as the airport and UBCO.



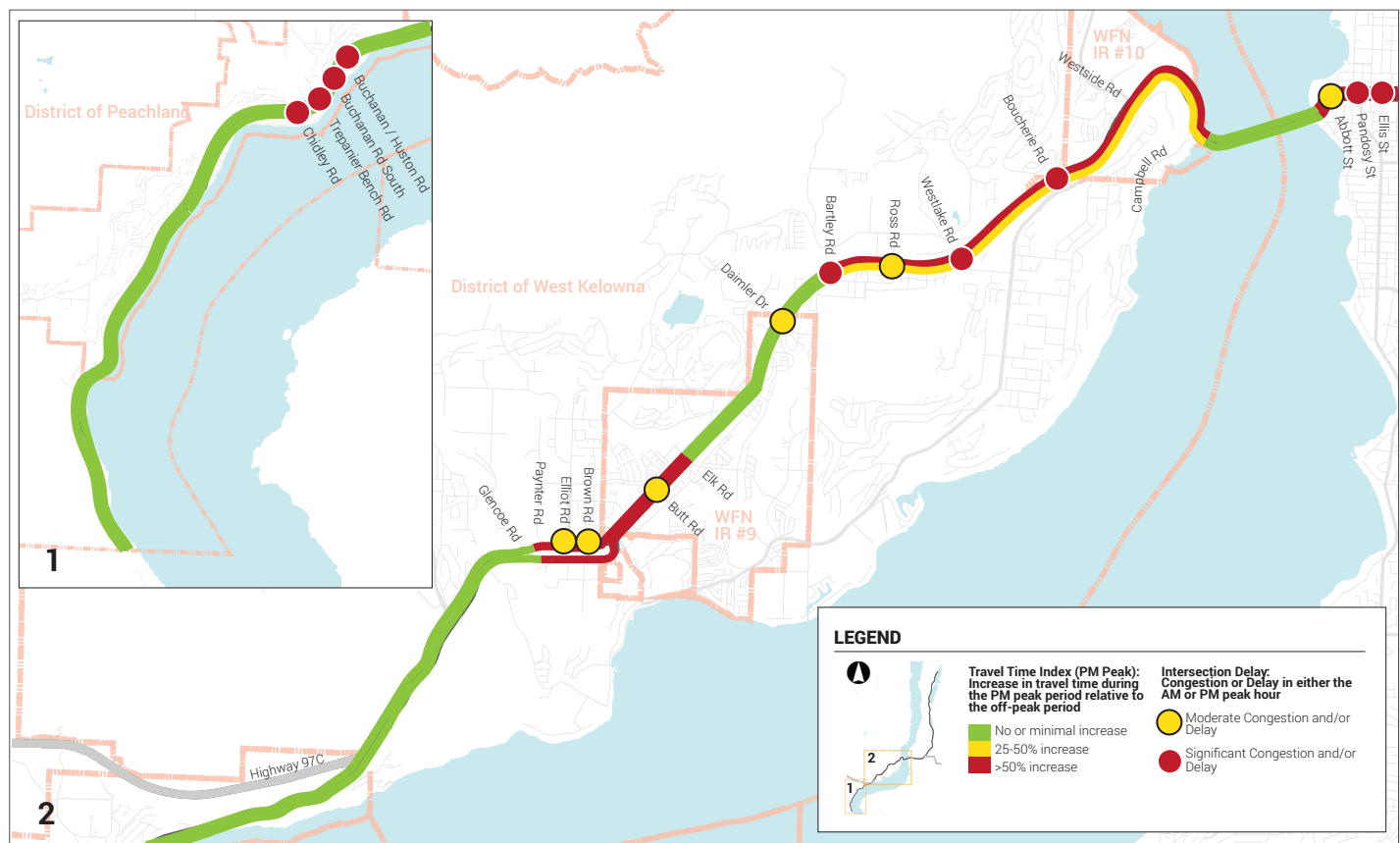
“Do your trips take you to or from one of the key activity centres shown in these maps?”



Traffic Congestion

Where We're Being Held Up (South/West)

With the concentration of activity centres on the Highway 97 corridor and few alternative routes, the greatest congestion is around these activity destinations. The influence of commuter/employment travel patterns is much higher in the afternoon peak hour. For example, a trip from Elk Road to west of Glencoe Road at 5 a.m. takes two minutes and 48 seconds. In the afternoon peak (4 p.m. to 5 p.m.), it takes more than 5 minutes.



What is the Travel Time Index?

The Travel Time Index begins with an ideal off-peak baseline, such as 5 a.m., when there is generally very little traffic to cause delay. If a trip takes 10 minutes at 5 a.m. and takes only 10-12 minutes at the peak period (5 p.m.), then congestion is considered to be minimal. If the same trip at 5 p.m. takes 13-15 minutes (a 25-50% increase over the baseline), the congestion or delay is considered to be moderate. If the trip takes more than 15 minutes longer (greater than 50%), then the congestion or delay is considered to be significant.

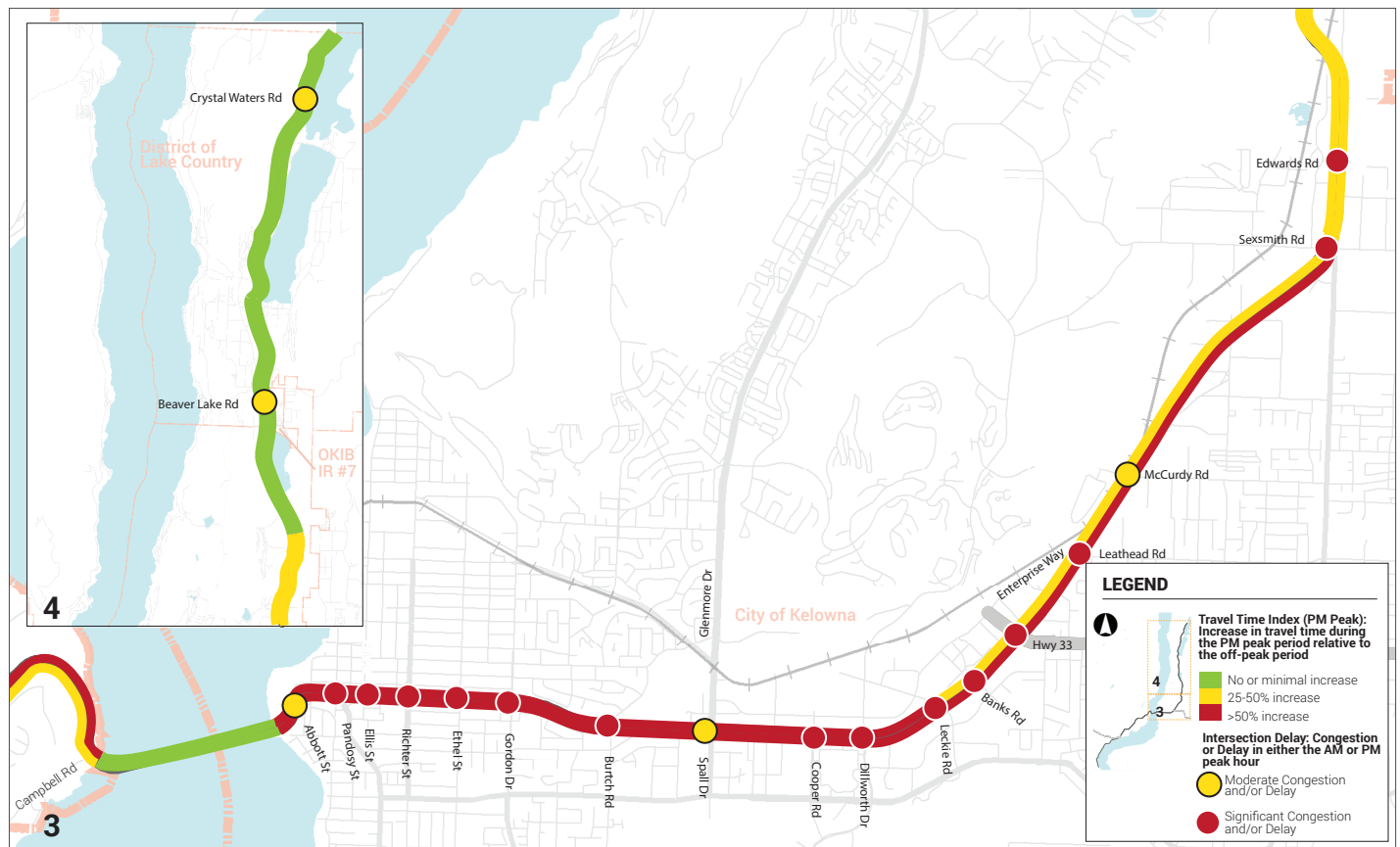
“Does your experience match the findings of the existing conditions / corridor assessment presented at this open house?”

Traffic Congestion

Where We're Being Held Up (North/East)

Highway 97 through Kelowna is congested. During afternoon peak hours, trips by vehicles through downtown Kelowna take more than 50% longer than during most non-peak hours.

Even more pronounced than in West Kelowna, the concentration of activity centres on the main route results in the greatest congestion around these destinations. This is reflected in long travel times in both directions in the afternoon peak hour. For example, a trip from east of Water Street to west of Leckie Road that takes four minutes and 42 seconds at 5 a.m. will take ten minutes during the peak hour of 4 p.m. to 5 p.m., or more than twice as long. The corresponding southbound trip in the same afternoon peak hour takes nearly nine minutes.



Traffic Safety

Top Collision Locations – 2009 to 2013

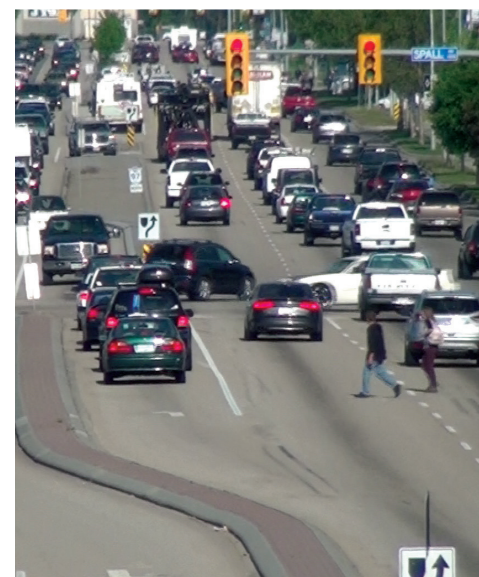
The highest concentration of collisions is at intersections.

The frequency of collisions is highest in urbanized, low speed sections. The severity of collisions is highest in non-urban, high-speed areas.

Based on a combination of the number and severity of collisions, intersections that require closer examination include those shown below.



“Which do you consider to be the most serious issue on the corridor?”



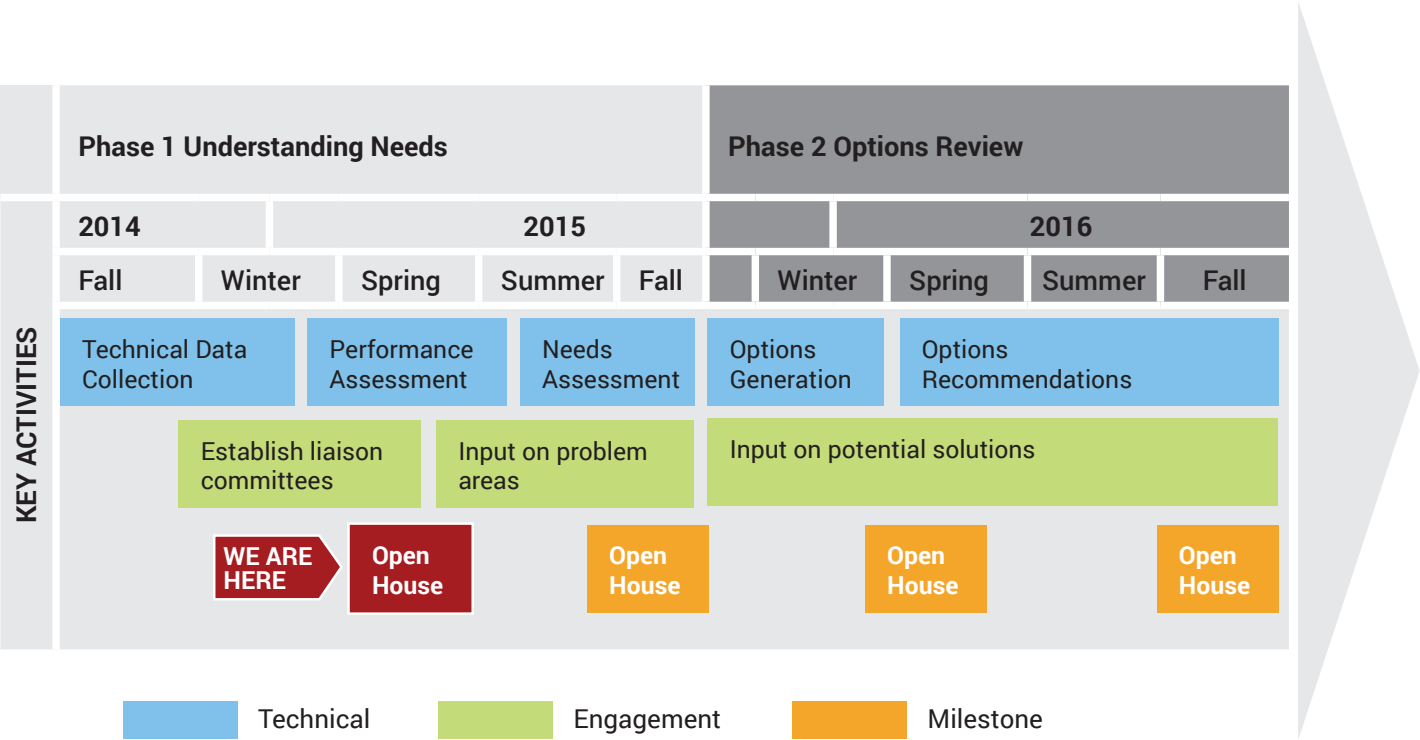
Looking Ahead

Next Steps

At this point in the study, we have merely taken a snapshot of the existing conditions. The completion of this portion of work will include an assessment of future needs, based on local economic, population and traffic growth forecasts.

The steps that follow will involve the generation of primary corridor options. We will return to obtain feedback on those primary options.

Finally, we will identify advanced improvement options for the long term, including recommendations for timing. We may also identify some nearer-term improvements which, like those that are already under way, will address some of the more immediate issues on the corridor.



“Is there anything that you feel the study team should know about the performance of the corridor that may have been overlooked?”

Public and stakeholders involved at many levels

Public and stakeholder engagement are essential to the success of this study, which benefits from the knowledge and experience of those who travel in and through the Central Okanagan. The project team is already working with local governments, including First Nations.

A Technical Advisory Committee is providing expert information and feedback. We are also developing a Community Working Group with representation from major stakeholder groups and the public at large.

Considerations for the Future

The purpose of the work in the current study to date has been to take stock of the current situation, with only occasional and brief glances ahead. This will change as we move forward toward an assessment of needs and, after that, proceed with the development of options to meet those needs. These next steps will need to take into account a wide range of considerations, including those listed below.

Congestion Reduction Techniques

There is more to congestion reduction than building more roads. Great strides have already been made to help address congestion through improved transit, support for car-pooling, cycling and walking.

Land Use Impacts

Any transportation improvements should, as much as possible, be integrated with existing and planned future land use. Review of official community plans and ongoing stakeholder engagement are essential.

Environmental Protection

Air Quality and Emissions: In 2007, the B.C. Government set a bold target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in British Columbia by 33 per cent by 2020. Some of this reduction will come from cleaner fuels, but some will also come from reducing congestion-related idling, and reducing our dependency on the single-occupant vehicle.

Habitat: The balance of human interaction with nature is often a delicate one. Plants, animals and fish require consideration and protection.

Local Economy

While the economy of the Central Okanagan is currently strong, future transportation improvements need to ensure that this strength is enhanced and not jeopardized. We will work closely with local governments and business organizations in this regard.

Goods Movement

The Highway 97 corridor through the Central Okanagan is part of the National Transportation System. However, it is not a primary through route for goods movement and the majority of traffic is regional. Nevertheless, future plans need to support the movement of goods into and out of the area.

Tourism, Recreation & Health

With the increasing importance of tourism to the Central Okanagan, the corridor of the future must do more than provide safe and efficient travel and access to services, but support visitors and residents alike in their desire to view and experience savour the boundless natural beauty and recreational opportunities in the area.

Community Liveability

Any improvements to the corridor, including route changes, will occur with consideration of community impacts. Communities must remain accessible, there must be consideration of visual impacts, and noise impacts must also be taken into account. Public and stakeholder consultation will be essential in assessing and avoiding or mitigating such impacts.

Heritage & Archaeology

Engagement is ongoing with the Westbank First Nation and the Okanagan Indian Band to identify and address matters of heritage and archaeology, as well as current and future economic opportunities and development.

Affordability & Cost

The study will provide cost estimates to be applied in a business case that will be required to assess the feasibility of significant initiatives.

Consideration of past studies (local & provincial), including possible crossing locations, bypasses etc.

It is not necessary to re-do valuable past work. Wherever possible, past studies will be applied in the current study and updated as necessary.



Photo courtesy: tourismkelowna.com - Bruce Knight

Contact Information:

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Sources:

BC Transit	ICBC	Partnerships BC
City of Kelowna	Kelowna Museums	Regional District of Central Okanagan
District of West Kelowna	Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure	Statistics Canada
HDR Consultants/Economic Development Commission of the Central Okanagan	Parsons – Central Okanagan Planning Study	Tourism Kelowna



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