

HIGHWAY 97 PEACHLAND TRANSPORTATION PLANNING STUDY - PHASE II

What We Heard Report

October 2020

Prepared by:



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Introduction

Peachland Transportation Study Overview



Highway 97 through Peachland is a vital corridor for long-distance, regional and local traffic. Over the next 20 years, Peachland's population is expected to grow by approximately 50%. The Peachland Transportation Study is examining the current conditions of the highway and the future needs for transportation through Peachland to determine solutions to help meet needs both now and in the future.

The Peachland Transportation Study launched in 2015 and is part of the broader Central Okanagan Planning Study. Planning studies play an important role as they are required before any funding requests can be made for a project to proceed to further design and construction.

The Highway 97 – Peachland Transportation Study is a long-term multi-phase study examining:

- opportunities to improve multi-modal transportation through the Peachland segment of Highway 97;
- constraints that may impact the options; and

- the development, refinement and assessment of options informed by technical data and community feedback

How Did We Get Here?

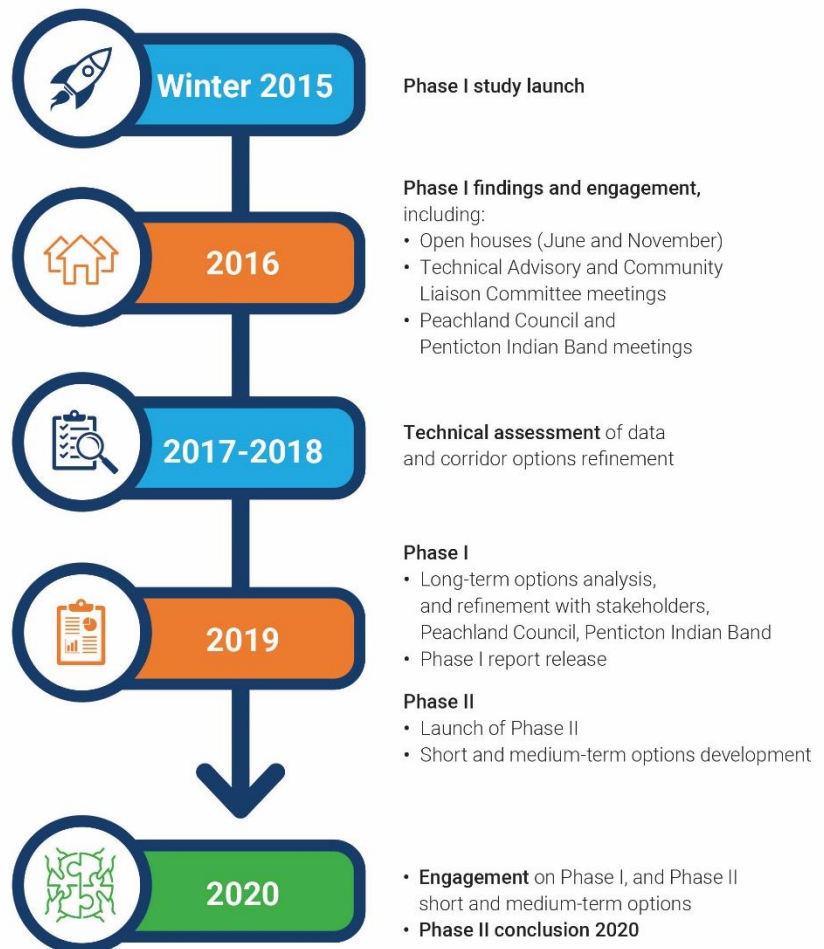
In **Phase I** of the study, completed in 2019, the project team confirmed that under average peak-hour conditions, the two-lane highway corridor that runs through Peachland will not reach capacity until 2040. The project team also identified three long-term improvement options: two options that follow an alternate route, bypassing Peachland, and one option that follows the existing highway route. Refinement continued with stakeholders through summer 2019. To read the Phase I report, please [click here](#).

Phase II of the study, the current phase, includes long-term planning guidance for the region. It also includes the development of short- and medium-term safety improvement options for the existing corridor, intended to address safety issues, and support transit service and active transportation options.

During Phase II, the team:

- completed a comprehensive Multiple Account Evaluation to compare the route options;
- identified short- and medium-term improvements to the existing highway to address near-term multi-modal transportation operations and safety challenges;
- gathered public feedback on all options; and
- supported future funding requests, both provincially and federally.

To prevent the spread of COVID-19, during Phase II, the ministry collected input online and by mail instead of hosting an open house event. The Peachland Transportation Study will conclude with Phase II in 2021.



Who we heard from

Public and stakeholder input is an essential component of the study. The ministry has benefited from meetings with communities, stakeholders and local and Indigenous governments through Phases I and II of the study, including:

- **Public** open houses (replaced by a virtual survey during COVID-19 pandemic)
- **Stakeholder** engagement, including presentations to:
 - *Community Liaison Committee (CLC)*
 - *Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)*
- **Government** engagement, including presentation to:
 - *District of Peachland Mayor and Council*
 - *Penticton Indian Band Chief and Council*

Public

During Phase II, we consulted the public through an online and mail-in survey on the short and medium-term options and an online discussion forum on long-term options. To accompany the online engagement, the team prepared a [Community Guidebook](#) and [Frequently Asked Questions](#) document. The online engagement was open from Aug.12, 2020, through Sept. 4, 2020.

By the numbers

Throughout the engagement, there were **1,955 site visits** to the Peachland Engagement site, featuring the Community Guidebook and survey. There were **166 survey participants** (including one paper survey) and **159 online discussion comments**.

Communications

In addition to measuring visits to the project webpage and survey completions, there was activity on social media and in the media throughout the duration of the public engagement. To promote engagement, there were also paid newspaper advertisements.

Facebook paid ads	Facebook organic posts	Media	Newspaper ads
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Overall reach of 25,572• 296 comments• 398 link clicks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Overall reach of 3,170• 8 comments• 19 link clicks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Media release went out on August 12, 2020• 7 media mentions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Peachland View: Aug.7, 14, 21 and 26• Kelowna Capital News: Aug. 13 and 27• Kelowna Daily Courier: August 12 and 19

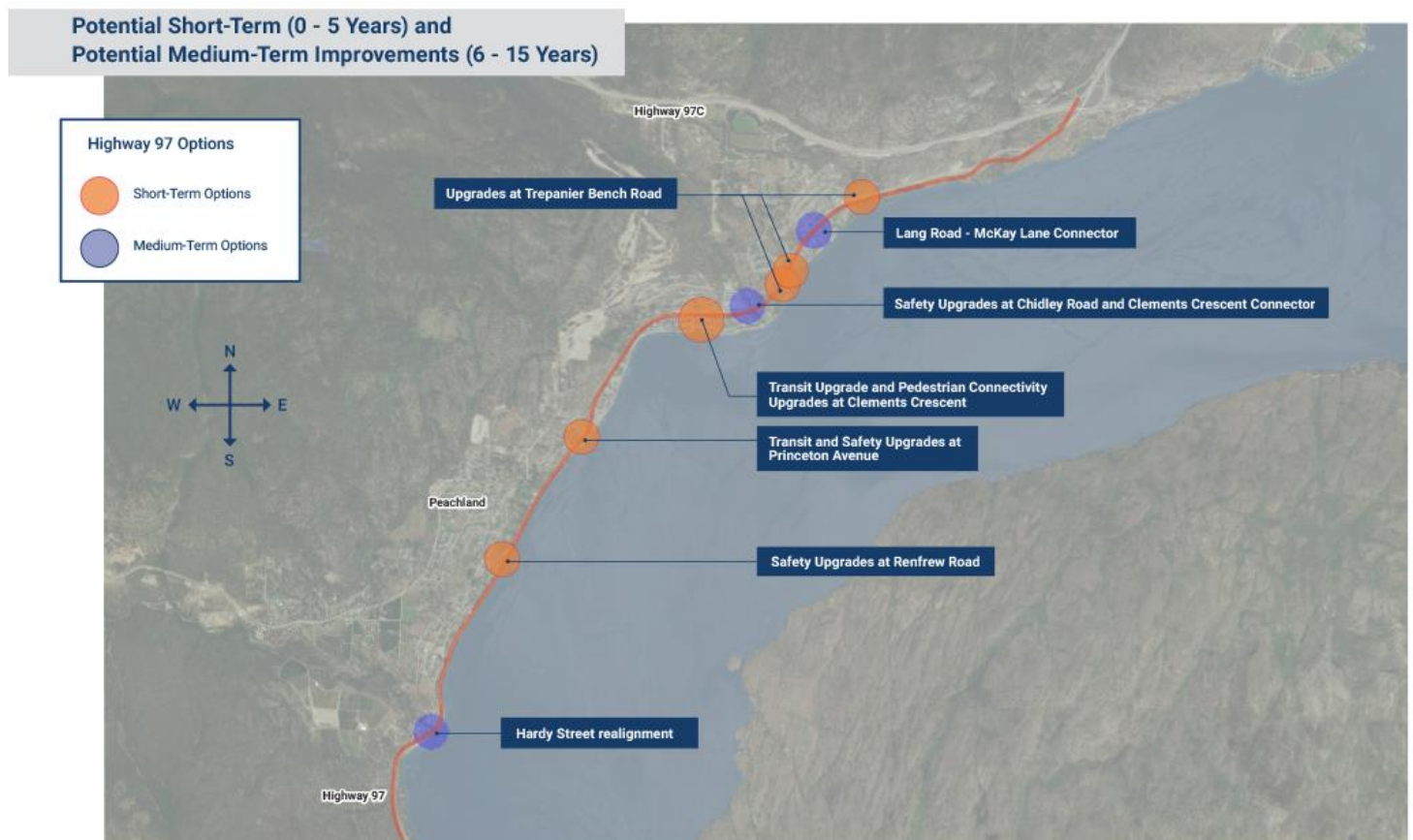
Local and First Nations governments and stakeholders

In addition to public engagement, the team met with the District of Peachland Mayor and Council, Penticton Indian Band Chief and Council, and the project's Community Liaison and Technical Advisory Committees (CLC & TAC). These meetings helped the ministry identify opportunities, considerations, issues and concerns for the short-, medium- and long-term options and improvements for the corridor. During these meetings, the team presented the engagement plan, as well as a summary of the short- and medium-term options.

What we heard

As noted above, from Aug. 12 – Sept. 4, 2020, we invited community feedback on short-, medium- and long-term corridor safety improvements. The team prepared an accompanying [Guidebook](#) and a document to answer [Frequently Asked Questions](#) to help walk participants through the study's background and provide an overview of the findings to date. Participants then completed an online or paper survey to respond to the project team's questions.

The map below lays out the locations of the potential short- and medium-term improvements.



Potential short-term safety improvement options

The lower-cost or simpler-to-implement improvement options were categorized under the short-term time frame. We asked survey participants a series of questions about improving safety and access within Peachland, ranking the potential changes in order of preference, and then responding to an open-ended question.

A note on ranking questions

In order to determine the community's preference in the ranking exercise, we assigned a weighted value to each answer. Options that are ranked first are given a higher value or "weight" than items ranked second or third. The total score for each option reflects the "Weighted Ranking Score" (located on the y axis of each table below). Those numbers are **not** a reflection of the number of participants who stated a preference for that option. It is also important to note that absolute scores should not be compared across the graphs, as some questions differ in the number of ranking options.

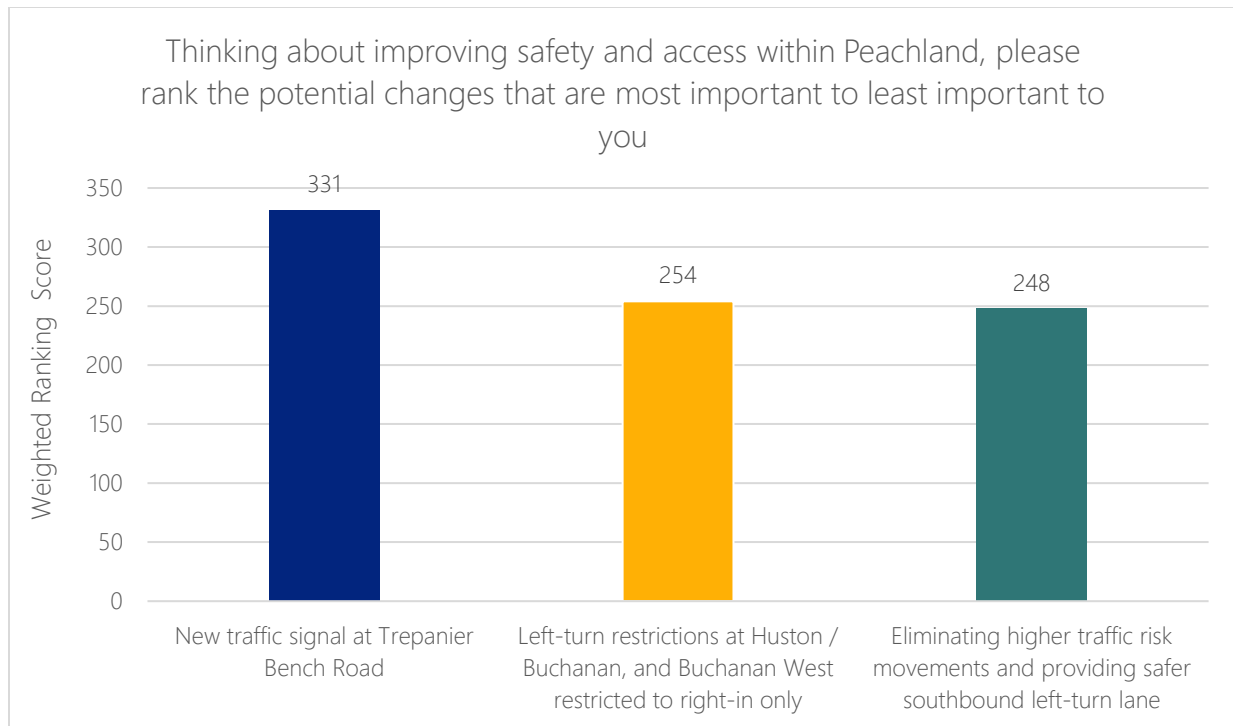
It is important to note that not every survey participant completed answers for all of the survey questions in their entirety. As such, some of the questions have more respondents than others.

Upgrades at Trepanier Bench Road

Changes include:

1. New traffic signal at Trepanier Bench Road
2. Eliminating higher traffic risk movements and providing safer southbound left-turn lane
3. Left-turn restrictions at Huston / Buchanan, and Buchanan West restricted to right-in only





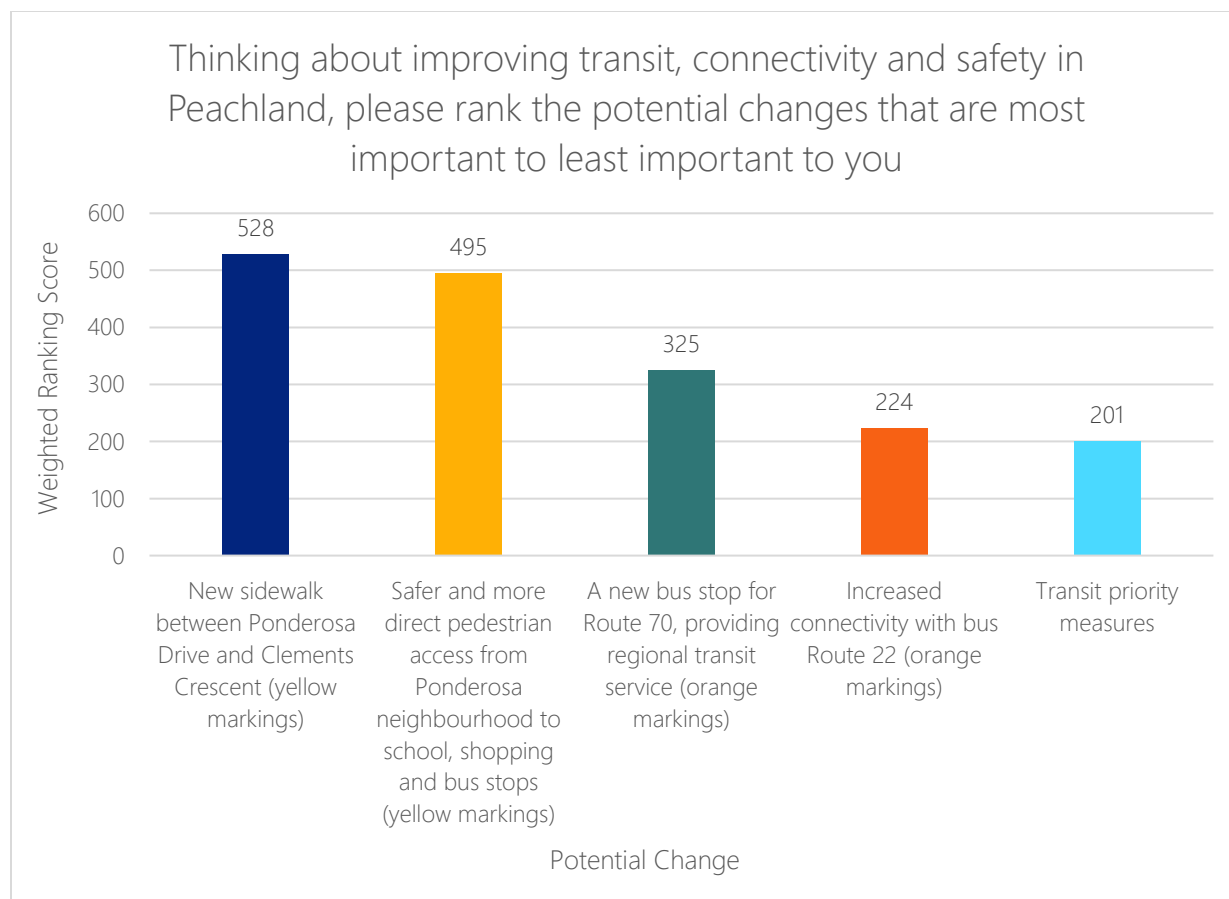
The highest-ranked option was a new traffic signal at Trepanier Bench Road. The graph above shows the order in which the options were ranked. On this ranking question, 149 respondents answered in total. Note that some respondents only ranked one or two of the options.

Transit Upgrade and Pedestrian Connectivity Upgrades at Clements Crescent



Changes include:

1. A new bus stop for Route 70, providing regional transit service
2. Increased connectivity with bus Route 22
3. Transit priority measures
4. New sidewalk between Ponderosa Drive and Clements Crescent
5. Safer and more direct pedestrian access from Ponderosa neighbourhood to school, shopping and bus stops

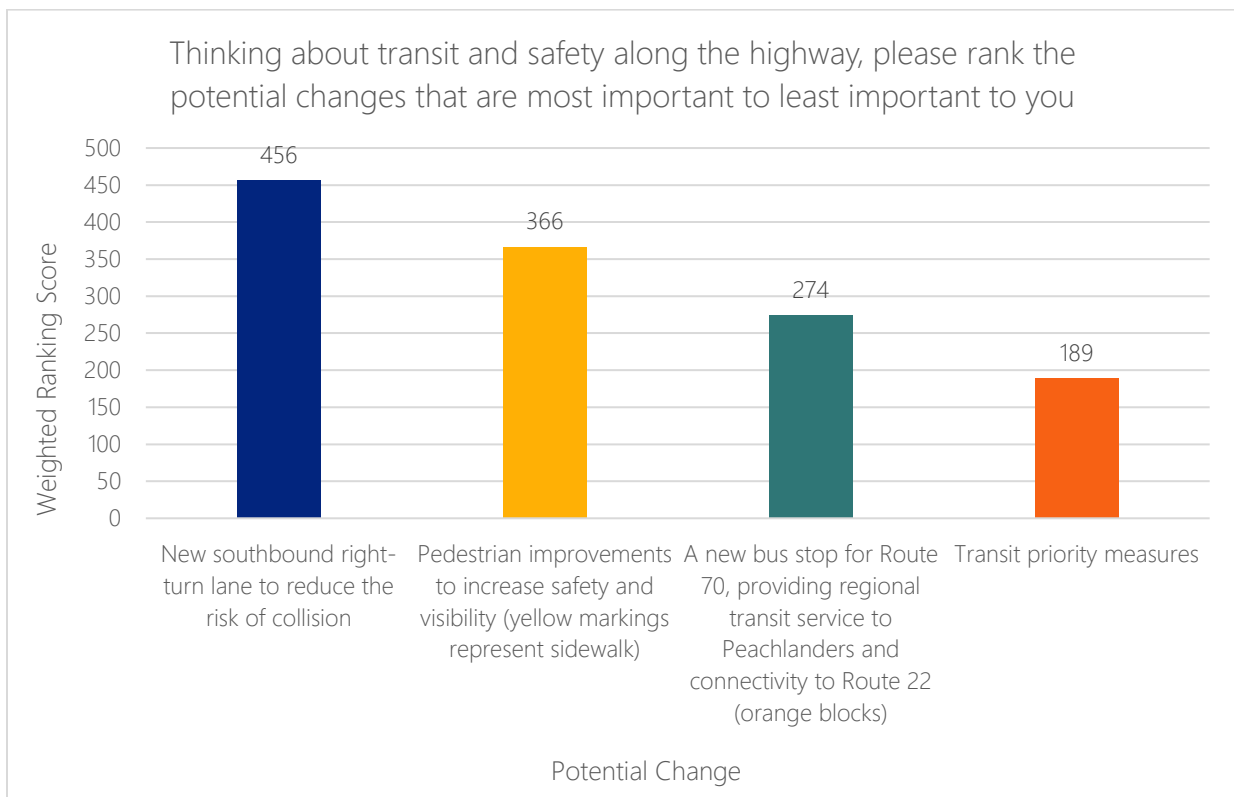
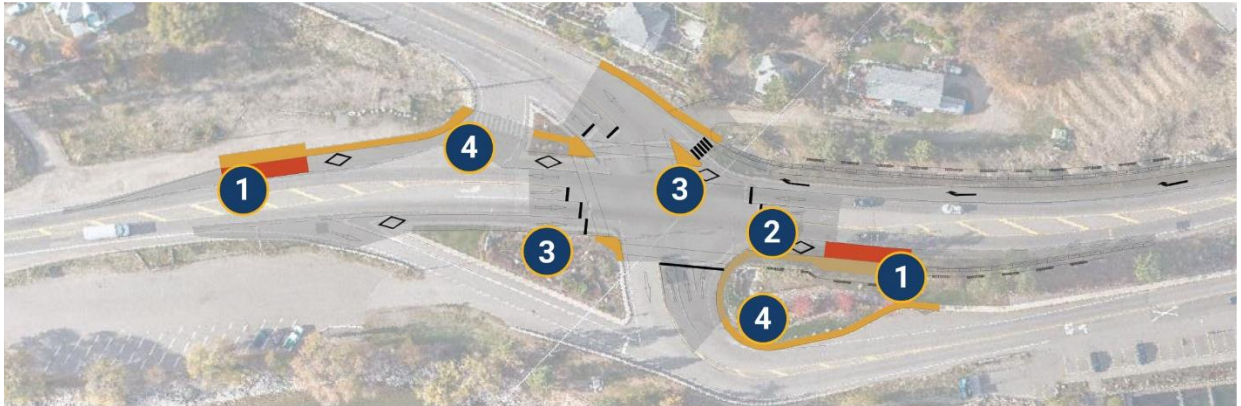


The highest-ranked option was a new sidewalk between Ponderosa Drive and Clements Crescent. Similar to the previous question, transit priority measures were ranked lowest. The graph above shows the order in which the options were ranked. On this ranking question, 132 respondents answered in total. Note that some respondents only ranked one, two, three or four of the options.

Transit and Safety Upgrades at Princeton Avenue

Changes include:

1. A new bus stop for Route 70, providing regional transit service to Peachlanders and connectivity to Route 22
2. New southbound right-turn lane
3. Transit priority measures
4. Pedestrian improvements

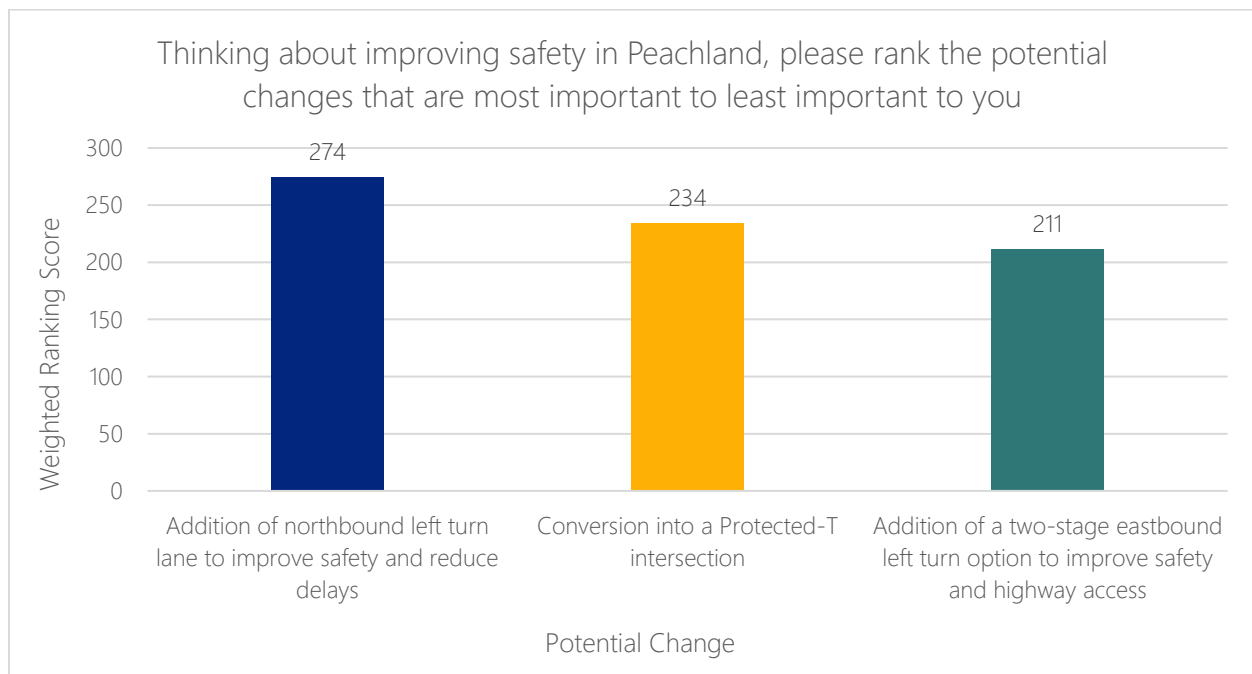


The highest-ranked option was a new southbound right-turn lane that would reduce the risk of collision. Transit priority measures was the lowest-ranked option. The graph above shows the order in which the options were ranked. On this ranking question, 141 respondents answered in total. Note that some respondents only ranked one, two or three of the options.

Safety Upgrades at Renfrew Road

Changes include:

1. Conversion into a Protected-T intersection
2. Addition of northbound left turn lane to improve safety and reduce delays
3. Addition of a two-stage eastbound left turn option to improve safety and highway access



The highest-ranked option was the addition of a northbound left turn lane to improve safety and reduce delays. The graph above shows the order in which the options were ranked. The weighted scores indicate that there is not a clear preference between the second- and third-ranked options. On this ranking question, 127 respondents answered. Note that some respondents only ranked one or two of the options.

Open-ended question

The final question on short-term options was an open-ended question that asked respondents to:

"Tell us about any benefits you see or concerns you have with the short-term corridor safety improvement options, or if we've missed any key considerations."

Out of about 50 responses to this question, the majority expressed concerns with the short-term corridor safety improvement options. **The top concern listed was around congestion, due to traffic lights, choke points and summer tourism.**

Other concerns, in order of mentions, included:

- Speeding and safety
- General concerns about the study itself and the projections and modeling
- General concern for short-term options and a preference to focus on long-term options
- Turning at intersections

There were a few mentions of the following additional concerns:

- Pedestrian safety
- Sight lines and curves in the road
- Property impacts

In discussing benefits, a few participants found all of the short-term options to be beneficial. Other participants mentioned the benefit of added traffic lights, added sidewalks and intersection improvements.

Additional respondents included statements around the need for an alternate route (or bypass) option, stating that it would be the most suitable solution. Participants made statements such as, "Please save money on these improvements and focus on bypassing above Peachland, using the AR3 route."

In addressing missing key considerations, participants brought up questions and comments related to specific safety improvements needed for Drought Hill and the Hardy Street turnoff by Antler Beach. Safety improvements to the Hardy Street turnoff are considered in the medium-term improvements section.

Potential medium-term safety improvement options

We asked survey participants a series of questions about medium-term improvements to the existing corridor as part of Phase II and asked participants to select the change(s) most important to them. Potential medium-term safety improvement options include those projects that are more costly or challenging (for example, those with greater potential for property impacts or other complexities), or for which the design concept could be further influenced/optimized based on which long-term option is ultimately selected.

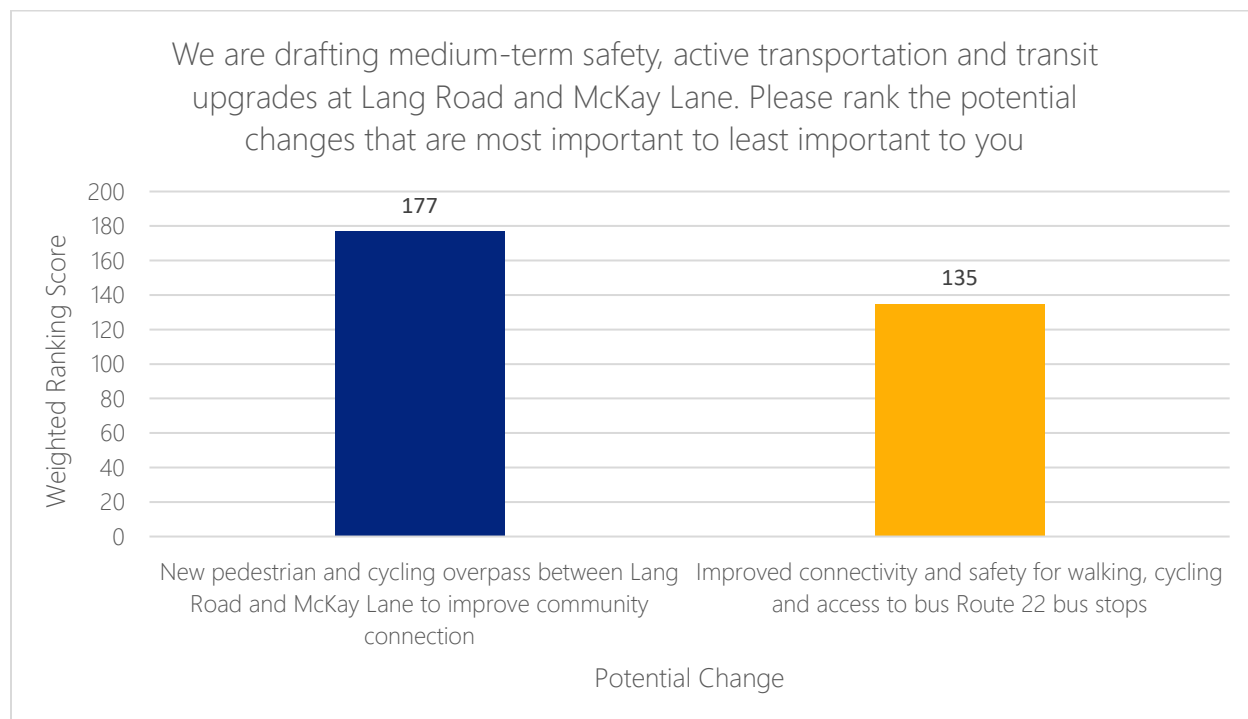
Medium-term options are in the conceptual stage of design. As a result, no design drawings are available at this time. To review the location of these options, please see the map on page 7.

Ranking questions

Lang Road - McKay Lane Connector

Changes include:

- New pedestrian and cycling overpass between Lang Road and McKay Lane
- Improved connectivity and safety for walking, cycling and access to Route 22 bus stops

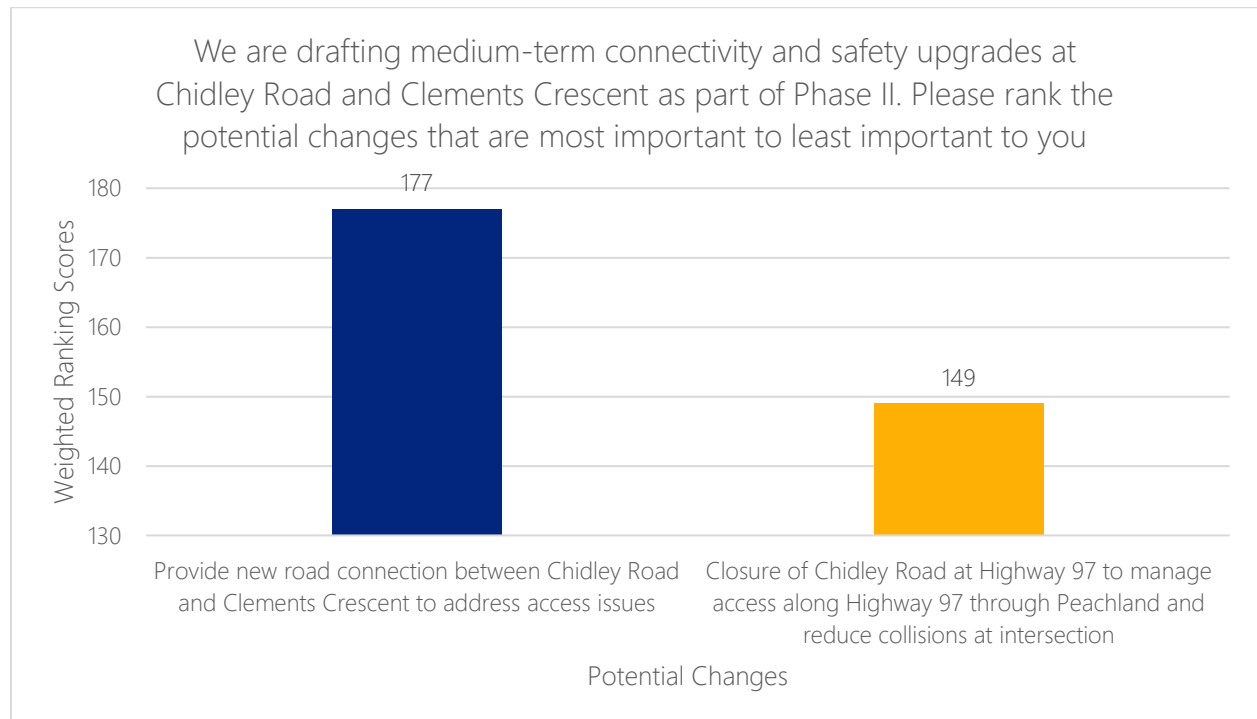


The graph above shows the order in which the options were ranked. A new pedestrian and cycling overpass was the option ranked as most important to respondents. On this ranking question, 108 respondents answered. Note that some respondents only ranked one of the options.

Safety Upgrades at Chidley Road and Clements Crescent Connector

Changes include:

- Closure of Chidley Road at Highway 97 to reduce conflicting intersection movements
- Provide new road connection between Chidley Road and Clements Crescent
- Consideration for Orchard and property impacts
- Potential for minor increase in traffic near Peachland Elementary School

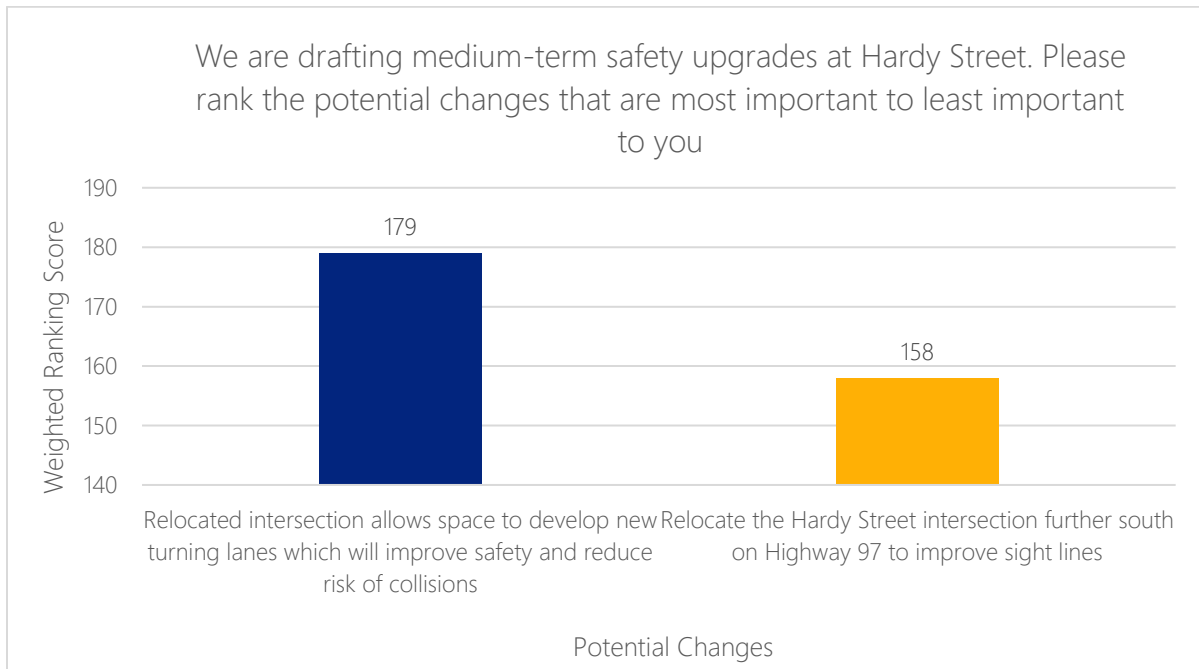


The graph above shows the order in which the options were ranked. A new road connection between Chidley Road and Clements Crescent was ranked as most important to respondents. The weighted scores are indicative that a new road connection is the clear preference. For this ranking question, 114 respondents answered. Note that some respondents only ranked one of the options.

Realign Hardy Street

Changes include:

- Relocate the Hardy Street intersection further south on Highway 97 to improve sight lines
- Relocated intersection allows space to develop new turning lanes which will improve safety and reduce risk of collisions



Between the two options, the higher-ranked option for realigning Hardy Street was a relocated intersection to allow space to develop new turning lanes. On this ranking question, 116 respondents answered. Note that some respondents only ranked one of the options.

Open-ended question

The final question on medium-term options was an open-ended question that asked respondents:

"Do you have any questions that our community guidebook or website did not address? If so, please list them. Questions we receive in the feedback forms will be compiled into a Frequently Asked Questions document that will be answered and posted on our project web page. If you have a specific question that requires discussion, please explain below and leave a phone number for the project manager to call you."

Out of about 70 responses, nine participants asked questions, mostly related to specific design clarifications and considerations (for example, on Hardy Street and Princeton Street).

Participants raised the following questions. Answers to these questions are encapsulated in the updated FAQ on the project [website](#).

Process/timing related questions

1. "Peachland development has been approved for well over 4,000 new residences. Has that new population increase been included in projections for traffic by 2030? Traffic growth will continue to increase at an escalating rate for the foreseeable future. What are your projected traffic flows for each of the next ten years?"
2. "Surveys have been going on for far too long and NOTHING HAS CHANGED! WHY?"
3. "If I had a poorly running car and not enough money to buy a new one, I would get the old one repaired and continue working to afford a better one. Would it not make sense to get Hwy 97 running smoothly so we can get through the next years? How can we make Peachland a safe transportation community so further lives will not be lost due to roads that are far outdated? 4 laning was proposed at least 35 years ago and it is time to get on with improvements."

Design clarifications

4. "Do we assume the option to close Chidley Road to access to Hwy 97 would be in conjunction with a new road out via Clements? The options seemed disjointed. The people on Chidley right now only have Hwy 97 as an option in or out. Right now it is a risky venture at the best of times."
5. "Divided highway on Drought Hill?"
6. "What about the speed limit from top of Drought Hill thru Peachland? People are travelling far above the limit...they are treating it like a freeway."
7. "Does Trepanier need a traffic light if it is changed to a Protected T?"
8. "Why not a light at Hardy Road? Would improve access to both park and beach in a safer manner. Also would allow residents to cross highway safely on foot to access Antler Beach and to turn left and right by car to access 97 to head either North or South."
9. "What are the proposed speed limits through the entire area? With the proposed changes are there any large walls that would be required and impact on private properties?"

Additionally, respondents commented on the following themes:

- **Process related comments:** Respondents questioned the length of time the study has taken and the amount of money spent on the process.
- **Safety and urgency:** Respondents commented on the urgent safety issues that should be a priority now, not in the long-term future.
- **Stated long-term preferences:** Though participants were asked about medium-term options, some stated their long-term preferences for or against a four-lane highway or bypass. Twenty-one respondents mentioned their preference for a bypass option, while 14 respondents mentioned their preference for a four-lane highway.
- **No benefit to short- or medium-term options:** Respondents commented that there is little to no benefit to the proposed short- or medium-term options
- **Traffic projections:** Some respondents questioned the traffic projections, stating the need for solutions now, given the high rate of congestion, especially over the summer months.

Discussion forum | Long-term option questions

As a key part of the study, the team gathered feedback on long-term safety improvement options through two online discussion questions, separate from the survey. The first question addressed long-term decision making and the second addressed route options. There were 89 total comments on Discussion 1 and 70 total comments on Discussion 2.

Discussion forum participants answered some short questions reflecting their demographics. Of the discussion forum participants, the majority (65%) were 60 years or older, and 86% were above 50. The remaining 14% of respondents were below 50. Additionally, 78% of survey respondents were from Peachland. The remaining 22% were from Kelowna, Penticton, West Kelowna and Lake Country (in that order).

Discussion 1: Long-term decision making



Question: Phase I of the Peachland Transportation Study confirmed that a four-lane corridor option will not be required until 2040. As part of the ministry's long-term decision making, we want to ensure we understand your community. Please tell us if we've missed any key considerations. Specifically, if you see any benefits or concerns with any of the long-term options that we have not captured yet.

There were 89 responses to this discussion question. Respondents expressed both their concerns and stated long-term option preferences (as opposed to benefits) in response to this question.

Concerns

** Concerns are listed in order of mentions, with the top mentioned concern listed first.*

1. Timing and Process

Timing of the proposed plans and the nature of the process were the highest concerns for respondents. Those two themes weaved through many of the discussion comments. For the most part, these comments addressed concerns with the timeline, stating that 2040 is too late to implement any of the proposed changes. Many people from the community feel that the current highway is already at capacity, especially in the summer months.

"Deferring any decision on this till 2040 is ridiculous. The computers may say that the capacity of the existing highway will not be reached until then but anyone driving the highway on a regular basis knows that the capacity of the highway has already been reached during summer times, especially weekends and rush hours."

There were also a number of comments criticizing the timeframe to implement changes, pointing out that bypass plans and discussions date back to the 1980s. A general sentiment of frustration emerged from these comments, pointing to a lack of decision-making and progress despite multiple plans being released over the years.

"This topic has been studied for years and recommendations have been made. Many professionals have agreed the bypass is the best option. It's time to rip that proverbial bandaid off and begin the bypass construction. It is truly the best solution for keeping this community safe. Enough studies already. This should be where the rubber meets the road, not yet another delay for more studies."

2. Traffic and Congestion

Congestion/traffic was one of the themes raised most often. It is the most pressing reason people cite as an impetus for improvements, either through the existing route or an alternative route. Within the topic of traffic and congestion, we have included comments that mention intersections, turning, congestion and traffic lights. People express dissatisfaction with long waits at turn signals and general congestion on the roads. Many comments expressed that the route is at capacity, and there needs to be a new route in place sooner rather than later.

"Four-laning in 2040 is ridiculous. Currently, I have waited for up to 12 minutes just to turn left off of Huston Road to Trepanier Road, both sides of the road bumper to bumper traffic. I have seen horrible accidents and too many near misses to count. A light would help make this easier, but at the cost of backing up traffic even further. often because of volume, it is backed up nearly to West Kelowna. And as soon as you get to the four-lane parts north or south of town, the traffic is instantly gone."

** Participants were able to like comments from others on the discussion board. This comment had eight likes in total, which is notably high. The majority of discussion comments had between zero and three likes.*

3. Safety

Safety was the third-highest mentioned concern, in relation to the need for long-term options. The community is most concerned with lowering speed limits, highlighting the need to limit the amount of lives lost due to dangerous conditions.

"Lives do matter and a lower speed limit through town should be incorporated. Losing someone because of high speed is one too many."

4. Environmental Strain

Under environmental strain, commenters raised issues about wildlife, weather conditions and concerns about the effects of climate change. The impact on the environment is a top priority for these individuals when discussing construction of new routes. A notable comment was about the need for an alternative route in the event of a fire forcing residents to evacuate (citing preference for a bypass). Another issue raised was the possible impact of four-laning the existing highway and the implications it might have for flooding risks.

Aside from climate change, people raised concerns about wildlife. While some people stated the importance of protecting wildlife from construction, others claimed that environmental impact was over-stated by the study. Despite differing opinions by a few respondents, the takeaway is that there is a desire to protect wildlife through options that would create separation between the highway and wildlife habitats.

"As we watch fires starting to take hold all around us, I can't help but think that the bypass would effectively create a nice fire guard around our community, providing a bit of protection and an additional/alternative route out of the community if there is ever a need to evacuate. It would also provide protection for animals becoming road kill, just like the Connector has successfully managed to keep wildlife safe from the highway for so many years."

5. Money

Some respondents brought up the cost of the project. People stated that it would be cheaper to address the problem now rather than later. Others stated that the project could be done in stages as the funds become available. There is also a discussion on the cost implications for the various proposed routes, and one comment expressed that there needs to be a clear weighting of costs for each plan.

"My other concern is that the Government will spend a whole bunch of money on short term enhancements, then say that there isn't any money left to do a bypass."

Stated Preferences

In addition to the concerns mentioned above, respondents mentioned their preferences regarding the existing or alternate route options. This diverse array of opinions reflects the division amongst residents.

Although there were a range of preferences, the desire for a bypass (alternate route) emerged as a top preference amongst discussion forum participants, with 46 comments stating a preference for an alternate route (or bypass) option. Of the comments in support of a bypass option, many mentioned their preference for a specific bypass option. Others communicated a sense of urgency to start construction, frustration about the long wait for a decision, and the need for an alternate route (or bypass) option in case of emergencies like fire.

"Now is a great time to build the bypass and put people to work. An alternate route is also helpful during an emergency or when the road is blocked."

There were seven comments that indicated that the bypass was not the most effective and timely improvement. These respondents expressed doubts about whether a bypass would actually help solve congestion problems in Peachland, and cited complaints related to the social impacts of a bypass option. The respondents who advocated against the alternate route pointed out business and social impacts as displayed by the quotes below:

"Bypassing businesses doesn't help our town and in reality, we have approximately 2 months of the year where it gets a little congested (summer). Instead of 10 minutes to get through Peachland it takes 13 minutes."

Those who advocated for the existing route (four-laning the existing highway), cited that they do not want the community to be separated with a bypass, as it would have an impact on the community. Those who advocated against the existing route (four-laning the existing highway) stated that the four-lane highway would impact tourism and affect the feel of their community. Additionally, some expressed the concern that years of construction on the existing route would cause further disruptions to the community, actually increasing congestion.

Missing Considerations

Aside from expressing general concerns and route preferences in response to Discussion Question 1, some people commented on missing considerations. Some general comments stated design errors in the proposed routes.

"The ministry somehow didn't include the absolutely required tie in to the existing 4-lane at Greata on their plans. I'd like to hear what they have to say about this and what they are doing to correct the error."

Another notable missing consideration mentioned by multiple people are socioeconomic factors and the lack of discussion on the impact a bypass would have on lower- and middle-income properties, with one comment referencing Princeton as an example. Another comment expressed that the social impacts of any proposed route should be weighted more seriously than cost, as it is imperative that any new route does not disrupt existing neighbourhoods.

"It seems that sociodemographic considerations have not been accounted for. Some of the routes in which the bypass proposes to run would impede low/middle-income properties and areas with high populations of children. For example, upper Princeton."

Land acquisition was mentioned a few times in the discussion responses. People mentioned the need for land acquisition to begin in the short-term to prepare for the construction of a new route.





Some other missing considerations and general suggestions mentioned include:

- lack of active transportation planning (i.e. protected bike lanes);
- commercial traffic flow;
- detailed cost breakdown for each route;
- a fully rendered, dimensioned large-scale drawing to understand full impacts of routes;
- use of overpasses rather than traffic lights; and
- a bridge from Penticton to Peachland.

Discussion 2: Route options

Alternate Route Options

The ministry studied each alternate route option using the Multiple Account Evaluation (MAE) process. MAE is a process used to identify key impacts and trade-offs when making large-scale infrastructure decisions.

	 Environment	 Social & Community	 Customer service	 Financial
AR-1: Far Most Westerly Route (Option 1 – Yellow)	Highest impacts	Lowest impacts	No travel time savings	Moderate cost
AR-2: Westerly and High Elevation Route (Option 2 – Blue)	High impacts	Low impacts	No travel time savings	Highest cost
AR-3: Central and High Elevation Route (Option 3 – Green)	High impacts	Low impacts	Small travel time savings in PM only	High cost
AR-4: Immediately West of Existing Development (Option 4 – Purple)	Lower impacts	Moderate impacts	Small travel time savings in PM only	Lower cost
AR-5: Lower Elevation Route (Option 5 – Orange)	Lowest impacts	Highest impacts	Greatest travel time savings	Lowest cost





The MAE assessed each alternate and existing route option on four key accounts and their associated criteria:

- **Customer service** considers estimated traffic volumes, safety, effects on travel times, and accommodation for pedestrians and cyclists.
- **Social & community** considers property, visual, noise, community impacts, and consistency with community plans where feasible.
- **Environmental** considers land and aquatic impacts, archaeological or historical impacts, and the impacts of greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Financial** considers capital costs, maintenance and rehabilitation costs, and property costs.

Existing Route Options

Technical evaluation of the existing highway produced a number of options for different segments along Highway 97 through Peachland. Those segment options were combined to create Segment Package Options. The ministry studied Segment Package Options using the MAE process.

Based on Phase I results, we know that all preferred route options have significant environmental, social and economic impacts. We also know that a long-term solution must balance these impacts with mobility and safety improvements. Below are the high-level results:

	 Environment	 Social & Community	 Customer service	 Financial
ER-A: Maintain At-Grade Intersections	Moderate impacts	High impacts	Smaller travel time savings	Moderate cost
ER-B: Create Grade Separation with Shorter Bypasses	Moderate impacts	High impacts	Small travel time savings	High cost
ER-C: Create Grade Separation with Larger Bypasses	Moderate impacts	Highest impacts	Small travel time savings	Highest cost

Question: Given all the material presented above and in the Peachland Transportation Study Community Guidebook, how would you balance these trade-offs? What issue do you think is the most important for Peachland and why?

There were a total of 70 responses to this discussion question. Respondents expressed their priorities in relation to trade-offs and concerns. Of the four trade-off categories, **social and community** impacts were mentioned the most throughout the discussion comments. **Environment** was the second most important issue raised. Respondents were not overly concerned with **customer service** or **financial impact**. Commenters regarded safety as one of the highest priorities for their community.

Trade-offs

Social and Community

Community impacts (including safety) were cited as the primary priority for the respondents with one comment stating that the integrity of the community must be maintained. Multiple

comments expressed a strong desire not to divide Peachland by selecting a bypass option further away from the community like AR-1. Connectivity and walkability were mentioned as factors which contribute to making Peachland a desirable place to live.

A few commenters stated that social and community impacts should be considered more heavily than environmental impacts. Multiple respondents proposed selecting AR-1 as the best option to mitigate social and community impacts. On the other hand, other respondents stressed that both environmental and social and community impacts should be weighted equally.

Ultimately, people's main concern was about dividing the community. They weigh the social and community impacts as highest priority.

"I feel the Social and Community account should be given the greatest weight factor. We, the residents, are the ones who will have to live with the decisions made 24/7. Our community and businesses will suffer if the wrong decisions are made."

Environment

Those who mentioned concerns about environmental impacts expressed the need to protect wildlife and maintain the wilderness that is left for future generations to enjoy.

The trade-off priorities for the environment are split with some people expressing the importance it has and others claiming that the impacts are overstated. Many commenters acknowledged that there will be some disruption to the environment in any new construction, and they place social and community impacts higher than environmental impacts. They also state that with proper mitigation strategies, the environmental impacts might not be as high as projected. The people who placed environmental impact as a high priority prefer AR-4 as the potential route, as it has the least environmental impact.

"I am saddened that you place so little importance on the environment and what little wilderness we have left. Do not our children deserve to inherit a World as good as the one we inherited (and are busy destroying)? None of the MOTI proposed solutions place any weight on the social, community or environmental impacts."

Financial

Financial impacts were not mentioned as much as community and social impacts or environmental impacts. The comments that did mention financial impacts, stressed that a "value for money" lens should be applied to decision making about which route is the best option. Other comments stated that the financial impacts are not fully explored in the study and as such, it is hard to balance trade-offs without the dollar amount available.

"Cost and customer service are important, with social and environment needing to be balanced with this. Although it would be great to minimize all impacts, it is more of a weighing of factors in each option against one another rather than 'this is most important at all costs' - I suggest more of a 'value for money' or 'value for each choice' approach."

Customer Service

Customer service did not have many comments and was grouped with other issues like social and community impact and financial impact.

Concerns

Congestion and Traffic

One of the most important issues raised throughout the comments was around congestion and traffic. Commenters were concerned about the impact of construction on the existing highway, and the possibility of worsening current traffic issues. The possibility of expanding the existing route was referred to as “chaotic”, given that there is no alternative route for people to use while construction occurs. This was one of the biggest reasons why people would like to see the construction of an alternate route.

People expressed dissatisfaction with long traffic times, especially in the summer months with increased provincial travel and tourism. Commenters pointed out that traffic in Peachland is bad because of provincial travel and an alternative route would alleviate the congestion caused by out-of-town travellers.

“One of the most important factors is to address the provincial traffic flow from the Lower Mainland to the Okanagan, and as such to create a north/south diversion before Peachland would remove most “provincial” traffic from Peachland thus leaving existing roads capable.”

Safety

Safety was the concern most often raised. The community is most concerned with lower speed limits and the need to reduce lives lost in dangerous areas. This indicates that the trade-off priority for people is to keep social and community impacts low when considering long-term options.

“How many lost lives and accidents is “safe enough” for you? Tell that to my mother in law who won’t drive Drought Hill at night or my children who we always call to make sure they made it home alright.”

Timing and Process

Timing of the proposed plans are a concern for respondents who say that 2040 is too late to implement any of the proposed changes. Many people from the community state that the current highway is already at capacity, especially in the summer months. They point out that the planning process would take time, so the project should start now with budget allocation and route selection.

There were also numerous comments criticizing the delay in enacting changes. Many people pointed out that bypass plans have been discussed for decades. There is a general sentiment of frustration from these comments, pointing to the lack of decision-making despite multiple plans and studies over the years.

"After massive expense and I don't recall how many public meetings and requests for public input on an issue that has been public since the mid-1980's, the best MOTI can do is declare "undecided". This is nothing short of irresponsible. There have been enough studies, meetings and requests for input that it has become clear that most Peachland residents want a bypass. Deal with it!"

Stated Preferences

In addition to the concerns mentioned above, respondents noted their general preferences regarding the existing or alternate route options. This diverse array of opinions reflects the division amongst residents.

Existing Route

The people who advocated for the existing route expressed that a bypass is unfavourable for the environment and the existing highway is the least-destructive option regarding property impacts.

"I think four-laning the current highway is better. It has enough room and only a few houses to be removed. Higher up the highway will have more snow, grades to deal with, it will run through food areas for animals and create a swath of destruction. What people can't seem to understand is that is a major with blasting and habitat destruction, truckers would have more difficult time and they cut through more house areas that will cut the town in half."

The people who are opposed to the idea of four-laning the existing route expressed that the widened highway would destroy their community. Heavy traffic and congestion was mentioned several times, and many comments pointed out that construction on their only route would aggravate the congestion issue and contribute to noise pollution. Another reason why people are against the existing route option is the safety issues which face the community. Dangerous accidents on the highway are a primary concern for many commenters, and they express that having the fast-moving traffic away from the heart of the community is preferable.

"Make a firm decision that the lower level road will NOT EVER be four lanes, proceed with safety upgrades that are needed, and allow the communities to develop in a person-centred way as they so desperately want."

Alternate Route

In this discussion forum, 38 comments out of 69 responses stated a clear preference for an alternate route. Again, safety was a focal point throughout the comments. One commenter referenced the possibility of landslides and fires, making an alternate route the safest and most logical option. A few people mentioned that with a bypass, the speed limits on the existing route could be lower to make it safer and keep the community peaceful. Proponents for the bypass also cited growth and development of the Okanagan region as a reason for their preference for an alternate route. These comments included mentions of tourism, business and job opportunities through the construction of a bypass.

"A bypass will help Peachland grow and most importantly, allow another access road. At present, there is only one road through the town which has been scary for residents with wildfires and high accidents. They become totally block off at times."

There were very few comments against the option of a bypass. Mainly, these comments claimed that the residents of Peachland will not be helped by an alternate route and that a bypass only serves commuters and provincial travellers.

"A bypass option does not benefit residents, we will continue to use the highway. We should not suffer because those driving through want a better journey. Make your decisions based on the lowest environmental impacts and social and community please."

Missing Considerations

Several comments spoke to various study or process flaws, with respondents questioning why Greata Ranch was left out in the planning. This was a commonly discussed criticism, along with general comments critiquing the study.

"Not recognising the need to connect to the highway at Greata Ranch is a significant and costly omission that seriously distorts the cost analysis."

Other missing considerations include active transport options and financial assessments.

Next steps

The Peachland Transportation Study will wrap up in 2021. The ministry thanks you for your ongoing interest, patience and participation throughout the course of the study.

Specific to the long-term options, your feedback highlighted several changes that have been incorporated into the comprehensive evaluation process. Examples include giving consideration to traffic impacts during construction, explicitly showing how the options tie into the existing four-lane segment at Greata Ranch, clarifying the meaning of the highway “reaching capacity” and explicitly capturing the potential risks of community member displacement due to property impacts.

As for the short- and medium-term options, your feedback highlighted the delays and safety challenges community members face with respect to reliably accessing the highway corridor, particularly during summer. This feedback validated several short- and medium-term options that were developed to address these particular safety and operational issues as previously identified in the Phase I study. In general, your feedback validated the locations for which the improvement options are proposed. Additional issues (e.g., Drought Hill and speed enforcement) were also noted as areas for further consideration by the ministry.

Your feedback has been vital to helping inform this process. This study will play an important role in the ministry seeking future funding opportunities.

