

B.C. on the Move: Engagement Meeting Notes

NOVEMBER 4, 2014

10:00 AM

CHILLIWACK, BC

ATTENDEES/AFFILIATION	Mayor Bruce Banman, City of Abbotsford John Fortoloczy, District of Hope Jim Gordon, City of Abbotsford Adam Lougheed, Fraser Valley Regional District Wallace Mah, District of Kent Barclay Pitkethly, Fraser Valley Regional District Jake Rudolph, City of Abbotsford Rod Sanderson, City of Chilliwack Councillor Chuck Stam, City of Chilliwack Alison Stewart, Fraser Valley Regional District Mick Thiessen, District of Kent Mayor John van Laerhoven District of Kent
MOTI REPRESENTATIVES	Paula Cousins, District Manager, Transportation, Thompson Nicola District, Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MoTI) Mike Kelly, Operations Manager, MoTI
NOTE TAKER	Carrie Peacock, Kirk & Co. Consulting Ltd.
KEY THEMES:	
1)	Goods movement: Participants stressed the need for more efficient east-west connections for the movement of goods (along Highway 1, the Fraser River, or otherwise).
2)	Highways: Improvements to Highway 1 were requested (including expansions where warranted, improved use of passing lanes, restricting trucks to the right lane, and reducing speeding).
3)	Transit: Participants noted the importance of transit improvements (rail and bus), to help commuters travel to and from work.
4)	Cycling and pedestrian: Participants requested additional pedestrian and cyclist connections.
5)	Airport: Improved access to the Abbotsford Airport was encouraged to accommodate tourists and the movement of goods.
6)	Highways: Participants noted that in addition to Highway 1, another eastbound evacuation route should be available. It was also noted that another emergency access/egress route to and from Harrison is critically needed.
7)	Highways and side roads and Bridges: Participants expressed the need for infrastructure improvements to bridges (i.e. Fraser River Bridge and Agassiz Road Bridge), overpasses (i.e. in Hope), and roads (i.e. the Othello Corridor, and the pinch point where Highways 5 and 3 narrow into a branch east of Hope).
CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding for infrastructure improvements Significant traffic delays (caused by long trains, highway incidents where there are no alternate routes available)
MOVING FORWARD – STRATEGIES	
1)	Moving People and Goods Safely and Reliably
	The Mayor of Abbotsford noted that there is a need to move goods and people in a faster and more effective manner. The roads which run parallel to Highway 1 on the north and south side, are often at full capacity. Highway 1 should be expanded to 6 lanes from Vancouver to Hope (8 lanes – 4 each direction – would be even better). This is a key priority.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A participant noted that they had written to the Minister with comments supporting the need to free up traffic flows on Highway 1. A participant noted that recent changes have only moved the “pinch point” to 200th Street. The participant indicated that they had raised concerns previously with MOTI about Lickman Road and Vedder Bridge, and will continue to monitor those locations. A participant noted that congestion is choking the Lower Mainland; the region has even more traffic now from Deltaport. There are multiple traffic pinch points en route to Hope. A participant indicated that there are problems with the design of the Sumas interchange and 4-laning down to the US border. A participant noted that the Fraser Highway is an important corridor - there is a section through Abbotsford that needs to be upgraded. The Mayor of the District of Kent noted that whenever there are issues on Highway 1, Kent and other communities feel the impacts. Popkum stops working when people try to get off Highway 1 and take Highway 7 – this creates traffic concerns. A participant asked that Impacts of emergency closures on Highway 1 be considered. The participant noted that the RCMP in charge of accident scenes seem more focused on serving their own needs, and less on the public's needs. The participant suggested that a MOTI representative attend accident scenes. It was noted that the RCMP will sometimes close the highway for 24 hours, this should be reduced.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A participant noted that the Agassiz Road Bridge is again; It is unsafe with narrow sidewalks (lamp standards are on the sidewalk).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One participant noted a need to have bridges built to address issues in Kent, Harrison, and Abbotsford. There is a need to find a way to deliver projects soon, rather than waiting for more money with each budget year.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A participant indicated that issues with truck traffic through Agassiz need to be addressed. A bypass has been planned in the northeast corner of Agassiz. The feasibility of this was studied previously (1995). An interchange between Highway 7 West, and the south leg of Haig Highway has been suggested, which was estimated to cost \$20 million. Kent and MOTI discussed a bypass through the area and considered options for resolving traffic concerns.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A participant t noted that overpass maintenance is an issue – two need work in Hope.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A participant noted that seismic upgrades and widening of the Fraser River Bridge is needed at some point.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A participant noted that from an emergency preparedness perspective, the pinch point for Highways 5 and 3 are a concern. They narrow into one branch on the east side of Hope. There is only one bypass - Othello Road Corridor, which is currently in poor shape. The participant indicated they plan to work with the province on this. It's weight-restricted year round (no school buses or heavy traffic). The Othello could disintegrate with overuse.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A participant noted that emergency routes are a concern for them. There is only one access/egress route to Harrison. Logging trucks are going up Rockwell Drive - there needs to be an alternate route. The participant asked that MoTI consider punching through the road to Ruby Creek, to divert truck traffic out of Harrison. It was noted that MoTI needed to invest in an evacuation route, and push trucks and traffic the other way in the event of an emergency. Every day there are new stories about accidents that create bottlenecks. The Run of the River project is in Harrison – helicopters won't be used to evacuate the entire population in the event of an emergency. The Ministry should start working on this with Emergency Management BC.
<p>2) Growing the Economy</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Mayor of Abbotsford indicated that congestion on Highway 1 is impairing travel and the movement of goods. Vancouver is a major port. The amount of time wasted when goods can't reach their destination in a timely manner, is at an epic level.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A participant requested that MoTI Consider using the Fraser River more efficiently as a major transportation corridor.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A participant noted that railway overpasses should be on the Ministry's radar from an economic development perspective. Long trains are now coming through Abbotsford creating traffic delays, and delays for emergency service vehicles. The region needs to address rail traffic, to prevent the gridlock impacts on traffic and goods movement.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A participant noted that a free flow connection to move goods (particularly the east-west movement) is critical.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A participant noted that Surrey will soon exceed Vancouver in population, as business and industry get pushed out into the Fraser Valley, growth is predicted south of the Fraser and east of the Pitt. There needs to be options to Highway 1 that work. As it is now, accidents end up paralyzing the communities. There is understanding that because of the expected growth in the region, the region's transportation networks need to work better.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Mayor of the District of Kent noted that goods movement is critical, regardless of community size.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A participant indicated that there is a lot of aggregate produced in Abbotsford and noted that the region needs to embrace the movement of aggregate as it is important to the economy.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Mayor of Abbotsford noted that there is a need to better facilitate the movement of goods in and out of the region. If trains are forced to stop in some locations, it creates problems for traffic in the entire region. Travel around the airport is a major concern, as this is a major destination. Given expanded fresh trade opportunities, there needs to be investments and improvements made to truck routes throughout the region to get to Abbotsford and Vancouver airports. The airport will only get busier. Suggested improvements to 16th Avenue or other options for trade coming in and out of the region. The region has multiple points of entry for goods and services for BC and a lot of Canada, as a resource based economy our transportation network needs to support that.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A participant noted that an increase in traffic is anticipated with the expansion of Port Metro. A lot has been spent in Metro Vancouver building and supporting infrastructure to allow communities to function. In the next phase of the Gateway project, MoTI should consider municipal pressure points at crossings, so communities aren't waiting on trains to go through. Every 15 minutes trains are coming through. If that doubles, it will be problematic for rural communities, the general public and emergency vehicles.
<p>3) Connecting and Strengthening Communities</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Mayor of Abbotsford indicated that a rail system connecting Vancouver to Hope is needed for commuters. Predictions indicate that the new generation does not want cars.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A participant indicated that public transportation as a key issue for Hope. The city is working with BC Transit on bus and rail options on both sides of the river. The Fraser Valley is perfect for training back and forth and would be a good investment. Branches of a train system could link up with buses. Regional transit is the issue.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A participant indicated that Fraser Valley Express transit service from Chilliwack to Langley is scheduled to begin April 6 – both MOTI and BC Transit should be commended for this. The participant suggested that the HOV system be extended to help service this.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A participant noted that Portland is similar in many ways to the Fraser Valley. Portland has become the #1 bike-use city in North America. In Portland you can take a bike on transit during rush hour. There has been a missed opportunity in Metro Vancouver - they selected an elevated LRT, which is too narrow to accommodate bikes during rush hour. To expand our ability to use alternative transportation modes, an opportunity is needed to get out of the car. Wherever there was a stop in Portland, the neighbourhoods were revitalized.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A participant noted that the Abbotsford Airport is an anchor for economic development. The connection of Highway 1 to the airport is important to the province. Significant investments have been made in the airport (\$30 million), however it still lacks sufficient access.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A participant indicated that there is a need to improve transit to and from the Abbotsford Airport. Taking luggage on a city bus may not be permitted. This is an international airport. There are border crossings nearby, and some vital emergency and transportation corridors in the region.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Mayor of the District of Kent noted that investments to allow pedestrians and cyclists on the Fraser bridge should be made as part of the <i>Experience the Fraser</i> project.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A participant indicated that the <i>Experience the Fraser</i> project is something the region would like to see happen. The Okanagan has a bike network, which is good for tourism, and an option for slower travellers. The province has some granting available that could assist with cycling networks.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A participant indicated that it is a priority for a multi-purpose trail between Harrison and Agassiz. The trail has been on the books over 20 years, it should move forward because it would assist traffic movement and will help locals.
4) Maximizing Collaboration and Investment with Partners and Stakeholders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A participant indicated that federal and provincial grants are needed to improve transportation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A participant noted that the widening of the highway should attract federal dollars as part of the gateway. A report on Abbotsford's perspective has been compiled and submitted to MOTI. Highway 1 is not just a regional issue. It's provincial and broader.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A participant noted that there are issues with the Agricultural Land Commission and the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR), when attempts to widen the highways have been made in the past. The participant noted that they can't widen road right of ways in the ALR and that they end up needing to work around their own rules. The participant urged the region and ministry to stop the bureaucracy that costs time and money and causes frustration.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A participant noted that Crown Corporations have been challenging to work with – and their processes cause delays.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A participant noted that getting BC Hydro to move telephone poles has been a challenge. BC Hydro takes their time to make decisions or even respond, which hinders local improvement projects.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A participant indicated that partnerships with major private organizations could help build highways.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A participant noted that the FVRD's Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) identified high and medium transportation priorities. The ideas shared here will be considered when developing the next RGS.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A participant noted that it is important to consider partnerships on regionally significant projects. There are many common interests the region could support.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A participant noted that there have been good meetings with the local MOTI on a number of issues – regional issues are still a concern.
TOP THREE PRIORITIES FOR TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infrastructure improvements to enable the movement of goods and people into and out of the region.
ADDITIONAL COMMENTS/DISCUSSION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A participant indicated that the opportunity to discuss transportation issues is appreciated along with the assistance from Mike Kelly with the local MoTI office.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A participant noted that the Mayor of Hope apologizes for not being able to attend. Hope's interests generally align with the issues expressed here. Hope is getting good service from the local MOTI office.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A participant noted that the FVRD would appreciate receiving any reports member municipalities send to MOTI, so that they can be considered in the development of the next RGS.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A participant noted that municipalities' relationships with MOTI and BC Transit have improved significantly.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A participant indicated that a traffic study is currently underway at 16th Avenue
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A participant noted that it has been suggested that the Port Mann Bridge should have been situated closer to Agassiz. The Agassiz-Rosedale Bridge will have to be 4-laned down the road, soon. This would provide a choice between Hope and Chilliwack. Currently drivers can take the north side, when necessary only.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Mayor of the District of Kent noted that Woodside Mountain in Agassiz (towards Mission) gets impossible when there are issues around Hunter Creek (i.e. mudslides). An emergency evacuation route needs to be added to the area. If there is an incident on the Rockwell Drive route into Harrison, people are trapped. The emergency evacuation process is to helicopter or boat people out. A route through Harrison onto Highway 7 is needed. Rockwell Drive is a provincial road. It goes from Harrison to Sasquatch Park. The logging traffic on that road is having impacts. Without an option for logging trucks, they have to travel through the middle of Harrison, Kent and Agassiz. It's not even worth painting crosswalks or road lines, as the trucks rub them off particularly on tight corners.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A participant noted the city is inadequate with respect to emergency evacuations. In the event of an earthquake or tsunami – there is no way people will get out of the city.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A participant noted that data indicates that vehicles are speeding. We should encourage people to write to the MOTI, asking that manufacturers design cars for sale in Canada that are limited to a maximum speed.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A participant noted that people should get tickets for being in the fast lane, unless they're moving fast.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A participant noted that trucks should be restricted to the right lanes. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A participant noted that trucks should be restricted to the slow lane unless they are passing. In the northern US, highway repairs are focused on the slow lane, where there is heavy truck use. This reduces paving costs. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A participant noted that on the I5 in the US, trucks generally travel in the middle lane. When climbing a hill, trucks could be encouraged to stay in the far right lane. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A participant noted that in the US, lane splitting is permitted in some places (for motorcyclists). (Mayor van Laerhoven) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A participant noted that BC Transit and Chilliwack have worked closely together and have achieved 7,500 additional transit hours. The uptake has been phenomenal. Abbotsford and the District continue to work together on the Fraser Valley Express, intended to assist students, communities and shoppers and reduce stress on Highway 1. |