

B.C. on the Move: Engagement Meeting Notes

NOVEMBER 18, 2014

12:00

PEMBERTON

ATTENDEES/AFFILIATION	Val Litwin, Whistler Chamber of Commerce Karen Ross, Pemberton Chamber of Commerce
MOTI REPRESENTATIVES	Renée Mounteney, Deputy Director South Coast Region, Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MoTI) Graeme Schimpf, Operations Manager, Lower Mainland District, MoTI
NOTE TAKER	Christel Guenette, Kirk & Co. Consulting Ltd.
KEY THEMES (3-6)	
1)	Connecting communities: Participants stressed the importance of transit connecting all communities to allow employment opportunities for residents.
2)	Cycling: Participants noted improvements to shoulders for bikes and pedestrians would increase safety for all users.
3)	Transportation planning: Participants expressed the importance of removing barriers to tourism and increasing the number of visitors to the area (i.e. train stops, open skies air travel).
CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The participant from the Whistler Chamber of Commerce noted that high airport taxes and duties discourage tourists from flying into YVR when travelling to Whistler. The participant from the Pemberton Chamber of Commerce noted that lack of transit services in the community discourages people from moving to Pemberton or has caused residents to move away from the community. The participant from the Pemberton Chamber of Commerce noted that lack of transit services forces residents into their cars, creating areas of congestion along the Sea to Sky Highway.
MOVING FORWARD – STRATEGIES	
1)	Moving People and Goods Safely and Reliably
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The participant from the Pemberton Chamber of Commerce noted safety concerns for cyclists in the area. There are many events geared towards cycling as well as the day-to-day use of the roads. Construction of a bike lane or widening shoulders would improve safety for cyclists using the road. The participant from the Pemberton noted a commuter train between Whistler and Pemberton would allow residents to commute to Whistler for employment. The participant from the Pemberton noted that the new sign, “Welcome to Pemberton,” is at a location where many visitors like to stop and take pictures. Presently, there is no pullout there which creates a safety issue, as visitors often stop on the road.
2)	Growing the Economy
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The participant from the Whistler Chamber of Commerce noted that tourism is a driving force in the area. The participant noted that CNN has declared the Sea to Sky Gondola the greatest attraction on earth and suggested it is time to remove barriers to travel to encourage the increased flow of guests and workers. The participant from the Pemberton Chamber of Commerce noted that there is no train that stops in Pemberton. When events and festivals are hosted, 40,000-50,000 people come to the area. If a train would service Pemberton during events, it would keep people off the road and improve safety. The economic benefit of these events to the community is huge and is growing every year.
3)	Connecting and Strengthening Communities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The participant from the Whistler Chamber of Commerce noted that the current bus schedule does not allow workers including First Nation communities to gain employment in Whistler. Bus services need to be increased or specialized shuttles established to encourage residents from other communities to be employed. The participant from the Whistler Chamber of Commerce noted that Whistler would encourage more people living in Pemberton as it is more affordable than Whistler. It would provide people the opportunity to “live this life” and enjoy their lifestyle. Improved transit services would allow this to happen. The participant from the Pemberton Chamber of Commerce noted developers want to build in the area but are unwilling to commit until there are reliable transportation links between communities to ensure residents are able to access employment.
4)	Maximizing Collaboration and Investment with Partners and Stakeholders
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The participant from the Whistler Chamber of Commerce expressed concern regarding airport taxes and duties attached to flights. Whistler is a destination for many international visitors. With the difficulties flying into YVR, many travelers are choosing to fly into Seattle, which decreases the time spent in B.C. With the economy beginning to turn, it would be beneficial to remove barriers for tourists to be able to encourage them to visit more of BC. The participant from the Pemberton Chamber of Commerce noted the difficulties cyclists and pedestrians have in accessing bike trails in the area, which are a major tourism attraction. Cyclists and pedestrians must cross the CN Rail tracks in order to access these trails. The participant noted that CN Railway piled rocks across the trail with an excavator, which compromised the dike. Cyclists and pedestrians now access the trail further up and are on the tracks for a longer period of

time. Pemberton has tried to work with CN Rail to improve the situation but they have not been successful. The participant noted it would be helpful for assistance from MoTI to facilitate a discussion with CN Rail.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The participant from the Pemberton Chamber of Commerce noted that Innergex had created a pullout at Mile 8 for snowmobilers to access roads. Ms. Mounteney noted that MoTI attempts to support these projects by helping get the organization off the ground. 	
TOP THREE PRIORITIES FOR TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS	
Whistler Chamber of Commerce priorities:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Response times around highway closures are a priority. When the highway is closed, it would be beneficial to inform the communities in the corridor. This keeps visitors in the communities instead of sitting in lineups on the highway. This would increase the revenue to communities. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whistler is suffering from a labour deficit. A more robust transit services between communities would get people from Squamish and Pemberton working in Whistler. Whistler would prefer to draw from the Canadian labour pool instead of relying on foreign workers. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An open skies concept would open up the area to more tourists. With \$428 million annually in tax revenue, removing barriers to tourists would help to increase that revenue. 	
Pemberton Chamber of Commerce priorities:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving access to trails through the CN Railway tracks. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The local bridge does not allow adequate access for pedestrians to cross the bridge. Replacing the bridge would improve safety for residents. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuation of the shoulder widening between Whistler and Pemberton. With the increased usage, cyclists and pedestrians are currently unsafe while using the roads. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving transit between the communities is a priority. Residents of Pemberton that work in Whistler often hitchhike in order to travel to their jobs. Currently the bus runs twice a day and not during times feasible for residents to travel to work. 	
ADDITIONAL COMMENTS/DISCUSSION	
Whistler Chamber of Commerce:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The participant noted that tourism was omitted from the economic opportunities list and questioned whether this was done on purpose. Ms. Mounteney responded that the list of economic opportunities was not exhaustive and noted that tourism is very economically important for B.C. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The participant noted that improving transit between communities would enable residents from Squamish and Pemberton to work in Whistler, and would highlight to the federal government that B.C. is promoting job opportunities for Canadians. This also reduces the need for transient and foreign workers. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The participant questioned whether considering tourism's contribution to B.C.'s economy would provide a sense of urgency to the Minister in terms of addressing the need for transit opportunities between communities. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The participant noted the importance of reaching out to the community of Squamish. Squamish is a community in transition and would provide interesting insights. The participant noted the new Mayor of Squamish is focused on adventure tourism. 	
Pemberton Chamber of Commerce:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The participant noted that investments into communities' transportation systems need to be made first, enabling communities to grow. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The participant noted the number one priority is safety. 	