



HIGHWAY 17 JOINT PENINSULA STEERING COMMITTEE (Central Saanich, North Saanich, Sidney, Tsawout First Nation)

Minutes of the **HIGHWAY 17 JOINT PENINSULA STEERING COMMITTEE** Meeting
Thursday, October 22, 2009, at 2:00 p.m.
Central Saanich Council Chamber

PRESENT:

Central Saanich (host)	Mayor Jack Mar Councillor Terry Siklenka Thomas Kouk, Community-at-Large Representative Gary C. Nason, CAO Roland Rocheleau, Community-at-Large Representative
North Saanich	Mayor Alice Finall Councillor Peter Chandler Heather Gartshore, Community-at-Large Representative
Sidney	Mayor Larry Cross Councillor Steve Price
Saanich Peninsula Chamber of Commerce	John Treleaven
Tsawout	Chief Allan Claxton Councillor Tony Underwood Gary Jung, Director of Operations

GUESTS:

Ministry of Transportation	Jennifer Hardy Dave Edgar
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Call to Order

The Chair of the Steering Committee, Mr. Thomas Kouk, called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m. and requested all attendees to introduce themselves.

Minutes of the Steering Committee Meeting held on September 24, 2009

Councillor Peter Chandler from the District of North Saanich requested that the minutes of the September 24, 2009 meeting be amended to indicate in all instances that he is from the District of North Saanich and not from the Town of Sidney.

Councillor Chandler also requested that the minutes be amended to indicate that Mr. John Treleven is not representing the District of North Saanich, however is representing the Saanich Peninsula Chamber of Commerce.

It was moved and seconded that the minutes of the September 24, 2009 meeting of the Steering Committee were adopted as amended.

Update on Meeting with Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure at the Union of BC Municipalities Annual Convention – September 30, 2009

Mr. Nason provided the Steering Committee with a verbal report on the brief meeting which was held with the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, the Honorable Shirley Bond, at the Union of BC Municipalities Annual Convention which was held on September 30, 2009 in Vancouver.

Mr. Nason informed the Committee that the message communicated by the Minister was that her Ministry was appreciative of this Steering Committee initiative, and would greatly welcome input and recommendations from the Peninsula with respect to prioritized projects for the Highway 17 traffic corridor.

At the meeting the Minister did indicate that at the present time there are no further capital projects proposed for the Highway 17 traffic corridor after the completion of the McTavish interchange, however the timing was appropriate to commence the longer term capital planning process and input and recommendations from the steering committee would be welcomed in this regard.

The Minister expressed support for the participation of the Tsawout First Nation in this Steering Committee initiative, and welcomed their input to the process. Upon questioning, the Minister also advised that the Ministry does not have a firm policy with respect to capital funding contributions from municipalities to advance major highway infrastructure projects, however she acknowledged that such contributions may assist in advancing specific projects. Having said that, if the principal driver of a particular project is safety issues and considerations, capital funding contributions from other third parties may not necessarily be a prerequisite for advancing a particular project.

Overview by Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure on “Highway 17 Corridor Planning Strategy” Document

The Chair introduced Mr. Dave Edgar, Transportation Planning Engineer, Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, and advised that Mr. Edgar had been invited to attend the Steering Committee meeting to provide an overview of the Highway 17 Corridor Strategy document, update the Steering Committee on the current status of this particular file, and be available to answer questions from the Steering Committee.

Mr. Edgar circulated several materials pertinent to the Highway 17 traffic corridor and during the course of a lengthy discussion of this particular file, the following points were noted:

- It is important not to wait for capital dollars to become available for major projects on the Highway 17 corridor, rather it is advisable to start the planning and prioritization process at this time.
- It is important to take incremental steps towards advancing the various project options which are contemplated in the “Highway 17 Corridor Planning Strategy” document.
- One thing has changed since the release of the Planning Strategy document in 2007 that there is an increasing focus on transit.
- Even in advance of construction of some of the major projects, there are smaller things that can be done to improve the safety along the corridor without necessarily requiring significant investment of capital dollars.
- Director recommended that the Steering Committee seriously consider engaging a modest degree of external professional consulting assistance to assist in setting the priorities and assembling pertinent background technical information and data.
- In regards to the status of the McTavish Interchange project, Mr. Edgar circulated the latest improved design which now accommodates the provision in the future for rapid transit either through rapid buses or light rail transit. The improved design now included the provision for a larger Park and Ride facility.
- With respect to the overall traffic corridor generally, Mr. Edgar circulated “Ten Year Crash History 1999 - 2008” for the Pat Bay Highway and responded to questions with respect to the data.
- No definite trend has been established that safety is deteriorating along the corridor as any increase in the number of collisions must be considered in the context of the increase in traffic.
- In the past the Ministry has cost-shared with ICBC on some road projects, as ICBC likes to see a return on its investment through reduced crashes.
- The Beacon intersection (southbound) experiences a disproportionately high number of crashes which are primarily rear-enders involving vehicles travelling from the Swartz Bay ferry terminal.
- Over the course of the next few months the Ministry will be undertaking safety improvements at this location through a dynamic warning signage system which will involve the placement of a second sign. ICBC is contributing towards the cost of this improved signage system.
- In some cases ICBC will contribute up to 50% of the cost of a specific project which could include any type of project.

- The Ministry often looks at crash data over a 20 year period and in considering which particular projects should be advanced, the Ministry looks for a return of benefits for reduced crashes and how proposed improvements would result in that outcome.
- Clearly, if 20 year crash data is considered, the Sayward intersection is the most problematic intersections with respect to crashes and fatalities, with the McTavish, Haliburton and Beacon intersections being in a secondary category when crash statistics are considered with each of these three intersections being relatively equal in regards to crash data. The Island View intersection is probably a little lower in terms of priority based solely on crash data.
- In response to a question, Mr. Edgar advised that the Ministry does not compile average travel times statistics to travel from the Swartz Bay ferry terminal to Gateway Mall.
- The Ministry is currently being consulted by BC Transit in connection with its Rapid Transit project which is currently re-evaluating the whole transit network and in particular the feeder roads into the major transit corridors.
- In response to a question as to whether there is a particular crash threshold or benchmark that triggers the advancement of specific projects based on safety, Mr. Edgar advised that the Ministry compares provincial crash statistics and averages across the entire province, and comparisons are made on that basis in regards to the most problematic locations.
- Related improvements to the secondary road networks along the Highway 17 corridor will also need to be considered in conjunction with the advancement of any major intersection projects.
- Roundabouts are now actively being considered in all Ministry projects and it was noted that above approximately 1,100 vehicles per hour, the efficiency and traffic flow in the roundabout starts to break down.
- The total cost of the McTavish interchange will be approximately \$25 million, and the total cost were all major interchange projects to be implemented would exceed over \$140 million.
- Mr. Edgar recommended that the Steering Committee begin thinking about prioritizing these projects for when sufficient capital dollars and funding becomes available.
- An important thing to keep in mind is that if projects are implemented in the more southerly portions of the traffic corridor, these projects will be benefitting a proportionally greater number of people as traffic volumes decrease as motorists proceed north on the Peninsula.
- With respect to the Keating area, although issues with respect to access and egress off the Pat Bay Highway are challenging, this particular location has no significant history of collisions.
- In terms of the Ministry's primary considerations when evaluating the relative merits of competing major highway projects, the Ministry tends to look at issues with respect to safety, travel time savings, vehicle operating costs and economic/social/environmental impact (multiple count evaluation).
- Mr. Edgar advised that the Ministry in the past has given some thought as an interim measure to installing a "half-signal" at Keating which would serve to stop south bound traffic only at this location in order to permit vehicles travelling north to turn left onto Keating during particularly busy times when many vehicles are backed up in the stacking lane. As part of any such proposal the access onto East Saanich Road would be required to be shut down.

- If significant expansions of the Keating Industrial area resulting in a marketable increase in the number of businesses and new employees travelling to the area on a daily basis, the Ministry would consider the impacts of this in its prioritization of the Keating component of the corridor upgrading strategy.
- In the past the Ministry has given some thought to exploring with BC Ferries the potential for cost sharing of some of the proposed improvements to Highway 17.
- In response to a question regarding the merits of perhaps constructing a fewer number of interchanges but combined with significant upgraded collector roads, Mr. Edgar noted that there is some merit to pursuing a strategy such as that in lower volume areas. However, in those areas where volumes are too high such an approach may not be effective. In the Island View/Mount Newton area, for example, it could be potentially be possible to have one interchange or mini change combined with an upgraded collector road system, however this would definitely impact the local road network. However, such strategies are possible in lower volume traffic areas.
- Mr. Edgar once again reiterated the importance of being ready when the economic situation improves and more capital funding is available. He stressed the importance of having all potential players involved in the planning, for example in the Haliburton area, the Ministry, the District of Saanich, BC Transit and CRD Parks.
- Some of the steps that could be taken to advancing several of the project priorities involve a relatively low level of resources in terms of consulting assistance. It is important to be ready when major funding opportunities come along.
- Mr. Edgar recommended that the committee examine the further “work to do” items which are summarized for each of the major Highway 17 traffic corridor improvements, make it’s best attempts to prioritize these improvements, and consider communicating further with the Ministry in regards to assistance that could be procured to move things further along. Clearly, additional consulting resources will be required in many of these instances to further advance the planning process, however if a clear prioritization can be communicated to the Ministry this could assist in the Ministry commencing the necessary work in certain areas, recognizing that most of this work would be the Ministry’s responsibility. In the meantime, the Steering Committee may wish to consider some degree of its own consulting resources to assist in the preparation of its report and recommendations to the Ministry.
- In response to a question, a representative from the Tsawout First Nation advised that they are currently considering conceptual plans for some major development options on the Tsawout First Nation Reserve with a view to possible connections to the Highway 17 / Island View area. They will be desiring a connection to Island View for commercial development purposes, and are close to calling a meeting with the District of Central Saanich to discuss further. Tsawout noted that over 30 years ago land was taken from the First Nation for a potential overpass in the Mount Newton area, however that has never happened.

The Chair thanked the representatives from the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure for their attendance at the meeting and Mr. Edgar and Ms. Hardy vacated the Council Chambers.

Date / Time / Location of Next Meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Steering Committee would be held on Thursday, November 19, 2009 at the Sidney Municipal Hall at 2:00 pm, and that the purpose of the meeting would be to develop the work plan, timelines and next steps for the Steering Committee, including resource and logistical considerations and the process for public input opportunities to the committee.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:10 p.m.