

HIGHWAY 3 – SENTINEL TO PINCHER STATION FUNCTIONAL PLANNING STUDY – UPGRADING AND TWINNING PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE #1 - JUNE 27, 2017 FEEDBACK SUMMARY

Alberta Transportation contracted ISL Engineering and Land Services to conduct a Functional Planning Study for the upgrading and twinning of Highway 3 between Sentinel and Pincher Station. A public open house was held on Tuesday, June 27, 2017 from 4 to 8 p.m. at the Bellevue MDM Community Centre.

Participants were asked to review information and background about the project. They were also provided details about transportation, environmental, social and economic considerations for the project and were asked to provide feedback about the priority areas and evaluation considerations for the plan and about the project in general.

Approximately 400 people attended the session.

Part 1: About the Project

Evaluation Considerations Feedback Summary



*Results reflect the total count for each evaluation consideration from respondents at the open house, completed feedback forms and from online submissions.

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Safety for vehicles, pedestrians and wildlife

Summary of comments:

- Respondents felt that it is important to have safe areas for wildlife and pedestrians to cross the highway (culverts, wildlife over/under passes, etc.). In addition, respondents suggested adding pathways along the highway for pedestrians and cyclists and including fencing along the highway to reduce the potential for wildlife collisions along the corridor.
- Respondents indicated concerns about vehicle safety during the winter along the bypass route due to the lack of sun exposure, increased winds across the road and the increased chances for wildlife collisions given that there will be more wildlife in the area as it is further away from the town centres.

Vehicle access to and between communities

Summary of comments:

- Respondents felt that access to, from and between communities is necessary for residents and that changes to the highway need to ensure that accesses to the amenities in the area are maintained or enhanced.
- Respondents were concerned that a bypass route without adequate access (easy to use interchanges or flyovers) will encourage travelers to pass the entire area without stopping and could have negative impacts to local businesses in the Crowsnest Pass area.

Wetland conservation

Summary of comments:

- Respondents felt that salt and sand from the roadway run-off may negatively impact the wetlands.
- They also felt that the wetlands should be avoided to prevent fragmentation or other impacts by the potential roadway.

Conserving fisheries habitat

Summary of comments:

- Respondents expressed concerns about run-off issues into the river and wetlands during construction.
- Respondents felt that that the potential alignment crossing several waterbodies/watersheds could negatively impact the environment.
- Respondents felt that Rock Creek and Crowsnest River are important habitats for trout and other fish and should be protected.

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Direct impacts to property due to highway upgrades

Summary of comments:

- Respondents expressed concerns that upgrading the highway could result in noise, visual, air, wildlife, environmental and economic impacts that could negatively affect the livelihood and quality of life for the area and of its residents. Concern was also raised about the importance of making efforts to minimize these potential impacts.
- Respondents indicated that they would like to see fair compensation for the properties impacted by the upgrades to the highway and also felt that a long-term business strategy is necessary for the communities along the existing roadway.
- Respondents expressed curiosity about how the upgrades to the highway could impact property values in the communities throughout the study area.

Emergency access to and from communities

Summary of comments:

- Respondents felt that emergency access to and from communities is important and that there is room for improvement in the area, particularly around Frank.
- Respondents felt that fast and efficient emergency access in the area should be a priority given the potential for increases in collisions during the winter months. They also raised concern that the proposed route may create slower response times for first responders.

Access to existing and future recreation areas

Summary of comments:

- Respondents felt that tourism is an integral component to the economic health, identity and social well-being of the Crowsnest Pass region and suggested it is important to maintain or enhance access to existing recreational areas due to the expected increase in visitors with enhancements being made to surrounding recreational areas.
- Respondents made specific mention that it is important to protect and enhance access to the York Creek Trail Network, as it is popular in the community and draws a large number of visitors to the area.
- Respondents indicated concern that twinning the highway and adding a bypass could discourage tourists from visiting restrict access to major staging areas and negatively impact existing bike trails in the area surrounding the bypass.

Traffic noise and air quality

Summary of comments:

- Respondents expressed concern about the potential for increased traffic noise if the speed limit of the roadway increases.
- Some respondents suggested that noise barriers or soil berms should be implemented to help reduce noise impacts for residents.
- Some respondents felt that air quality could worsen, in particular from dust during construction.

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Connections between communities for people who walk and bike

Summary of comments:

- Respondents felt that it is important to maintain and enhance the existing trails and pathways that connect communities to improve recreation opportunities and safety.
- Some expressed concerns that the potential twinning of the highway would negatively impact connectivity between communities for people who walk and bike.

Reducing congestion on the highway

Summary of comments:

- Respondents were mixed on whether reducing congestion on the highway is important or not because there are only a few times when congestion is bad (e.g. long weekends).
- Some respondents felt that congestion could be reduced by adding turning lanes or passing lanes.

Historical and cultural resources

Summary of comments:

- Respondents shared that there are multiple archaeological, historic and cultural resources in the area that need to be protected.
- Some respondents felt that impacts to historic and cultural resources could have negative economic impacts and that tourism opportunities to enhance the economy are important.

Construction and operating costs

Summary of comments:

- Respondents indicated that the bypass south of Coleman will be on the north side of the mountain which will likely require more maintenance in the winter months for snow / ice removal and the road will be more treacherous to drive with the lack of sun in the winter months.
- Respondents expressed that they would like to see the construction start sooner than later because costs to complete the upgrades will continue to grow over time.

Conserve developable land

Summary of comments:

- Some respondents expressed concern about reducing the amount of developable land as there are currently environmental constraints on developable land in the area.
- Others shared that it is important to conserve developable land to be used for attracting new development to enhance the economy.

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Goods movement to the area and BC interior

Summary of comments:

- Respondents indicated that it is important for transport trucks to move through the area in a manner that increases safety for local residents, and the bypass is a good option for improving safety in the communities along the existing road. However, respondents raised concerns that BC has no plans to twin the highway west of the Alberta / BC border and that a bypass will provide little benefit if the highway goes back to an undivided two-lane road.

Others

Summary of comments:

- Respondents expressed concern about the economic impact on property values and local businesses. Respondents suggested that regulations be considered to prohibit services along the bypass route in order to encourage travellers to continue to stop in the communities for their needs (gas, food, etc.).
- Respondents also indicated that preserving protected species, wildlife habitat, tourism and heritage conservation are all important to consider in the study.
- Respondents felt that construction should begin sooner than later and that consultation should include design options and one-on-one conversations with landowners and businesses directly impacted by changes to happen along the highway and bypass routes.

Additional concerns or thoughts the project team should consider:

- Respondents would like to see designs that demonstrate benefits and opportunities of the upgrades for the local communities, encourage tourism in the Crowsnest Pass and attract visitors to the area.
- Respondents expressed interest in whose responsibility the maintenance cost of the highway and the bypass will be (municipal or provincial?) and how winter road safety will be considered in the design of the new bypass route.
- Respondents expressed concern about the construction impact and requested more information about the construction schedule and how it could affect current traffic patterns and congestion.
- The economic impact to business owners and property values is also of significant importance to most respondents.
- Respondents feel that the highway should also be upgraded beyond the Alberta/BC border in order for the benefits to outweigh the impacts that the Crowsnest Pass area could encounter with the changes to Highway 3.
- Respondents expressed concern about increased noise in the area, visual and aesthetic impacts to the corridor, and have requested more information on fair property value assessment and land acquisition.
- Respondents want to see designs that maintain or enhance connectivity between communities.

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Comments or concerns that you would like to share regarding the project:

- Some respondents felt that the upgrades to the highway are long overdue and are concerned that this project is still in a study phase. Several respondents would like to see upgrades to the highway to take place immediately.
- Some respondents requested more advanced notification of public events for this project and suggested perhaps advertising the open houses on the local Shaw channel and further presenting the information on there as well.
- Respondents felt that increasing passing lanes and turning lanes and lowering the speed limit to 50 and 90 km/hour (like in National Parks) throughout the study area will be sufficient to improve safety and traffic flow, maintain the 'scenic route' throughout the area and provide better access to communities, recreational areas and cultural and historical resources.

Summary feedback from the “Tell Us More” display boards:

Environment / Wildlife

- Respondents expressed the importance of protecting the lakes, rivers and wetlands throughout the study area and noted to consider John Pomeroy's hydrology work in drainage assessment.
- Respondents felt that it is necessary to protect the wildlife in the corridor by implementing various methods of wildlife crossings, such as fencing, overpasses, underpasses and culverts. Respondents made particular note of several wildlife crossings that are important to them:
 - Rock Creek
 - The Gap at Frank
 - Migration areas around Bellevue
 - Mountain Sheep in Blairmore between the cemetery and river crossing at Blairmore exit bridge
 - Bears off bluff NE to SE of Blairmore by Sulfur Springs

Stakeholder, Public and First Nations Engagement

- Respondents expressed the importance of one-on-one conversations with impacted landowners and business owners.
- Respondents commented that some of the boards were a bit confusing about details regarding freeway classification about Highway 3.

Traffic / Safety

- Respondents felt that the highway should include more passing lanes, more turning lanes and wide shoulders or pathways for people who bike to provide safer movements for all users of the road and help to improve traffic flow through the Crowsnest Pass area.
- Respondents indicated that it is important to them that upgrades to the highway consider removing the high volumes of truck traffic from the surrounding communities and to also consider the noise impacts to the surrounding areas and properties.
- Respondents suggested that signage is important to advertise local businesses, access to tourism and destination opportunities, safety, and directions to surrounding communities.

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Property / Business

- Respondents expressed concern about the impact of the highway twinning, upgrading and bypass on properties, property values, traffic, access, noise, wildlife, wetlands, communities, businesses and the local economy.
- Respondents expressed that they would like to know more about the highway twinning, upgrading and bypass alignment and footprint to better understand the potential impacts on properties, property values, noise, traffic, access, wildlife, wetlands, communities, businesses and the local economy.

Access / Community Connectivity

- Respondents expressed concern about reduced access along highway due to twinning and directing traffic to interchanges for access.
- Respondents felt that it was important to maintain access to, from and between communities and businesses along Highway 3.
- Respondents felt that it is important to maintain access for pedestrians and cyclists to access communities and businesses along Highway 3.

Tourism / Recreation / Historical and Cultural Sites

- Respondents expressed the importance of protecting historical and cultural sites and tourism destinations throughout the Crowsnest Pass.
- Respondents suggested maintaining or improving access to staging areas, tourism opportunities and hiking and biking trails.

Bypass

- Respondents indicated concern about the need for the bypass in general as well as its location and potential impact on businesses, the local economy, properties, wetlands, wildlife and area communities.

Cost / Timeline

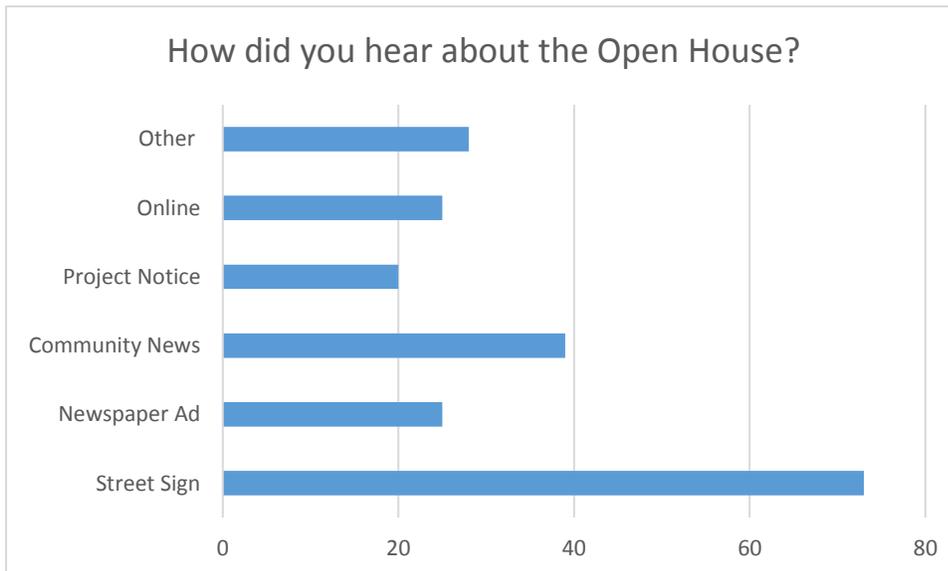
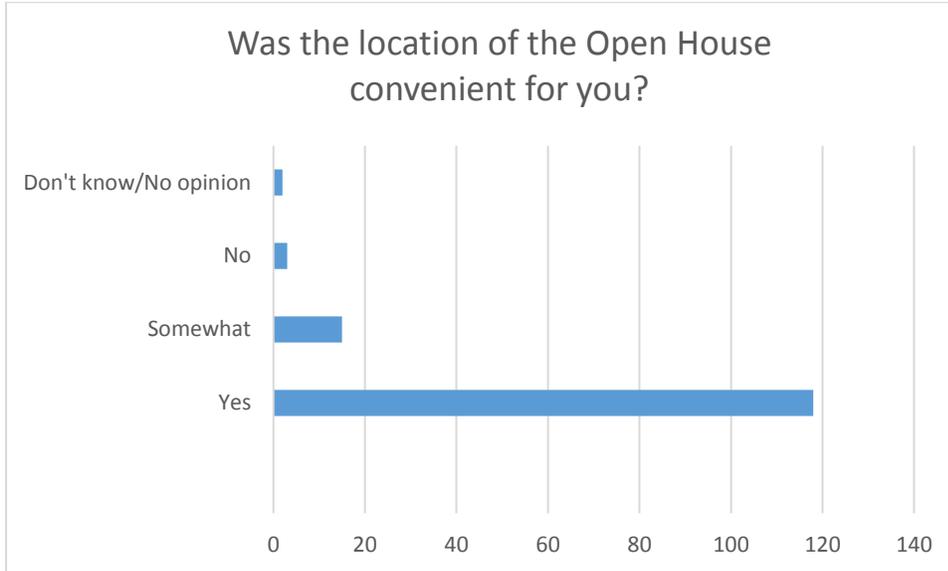
- Respondents indicated that they would like to be provided more details about the cost of construction (including a cost comparison to expanding existing road verses building a bypass) and the timeline for when the upgrades will start to be implemented.
- Respondents expressed concern about who is responsible for the maintenance and servicing of the highway once the bypass has been built.

Overall Project

- Respondents expressed that they would like to see the upgrades to the highway begin in the near future as they are important to improve traffic flow and safety on the road and in the surrounding communities.
- Respondents expressed concern about the impacts to noise, air quality, water management, access, wildlife, schedule, property value, businesses and ground disturbance in the area that may result in the upgrading of the highway.

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Part 2: About the Open House



Note: respondents who selected other indicated that they heard about the open house from others, social media, radio or online.

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What did you like about today's open house and activities?

- Respondents indicated that they liked the open house format and the information provided on display boards as well as from the project team at the event. Most respondents appreciated the information provided on the displays and by the project team and found it to be informative and useful.
- Respondents indicated that they liked the opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback at the event to the project team and via the feedback form.
- Respondents liked that there were two sets of display boards, information at the tables and a large space to view the information and talk to the project team.
- However respondents indicated that they wanted to receive more detailed information on displays and from the project team as well as maps of the proposed twinning, upgrades and bypass and how considerations (e.g. wildlife, environmental, economic, access, social, property, businesses, etc.) would be addressed.
- Respondents also indicated that there weren't enough project team members available, especially to provide more detailed information about the proposed twinning, upgrades and bypass and how considerations (e.g. wildlife, environmental, economic, access, social, property, businesses, etc.) would be addressed.

Was there anything that you didn't like about today's open house and activities?

- Respondents indicated that they would have liked to receive new and more detailed information about the proposed highway twinning, upgrades and bypass route as well as how the considerations (e.g. wildlife, environmental, economic, access, social, property, businesses, etc.) would be addressed.
- Respondents indicated that they would have liked to see more detailed maps, especially of the proposed bypass route.
- Some respondents indicated that they would have like to receive an information handout.
- Some respondents indicated that due to the high number of attendees at the event that it was challenging to talk to the project team about the project and ask questions.

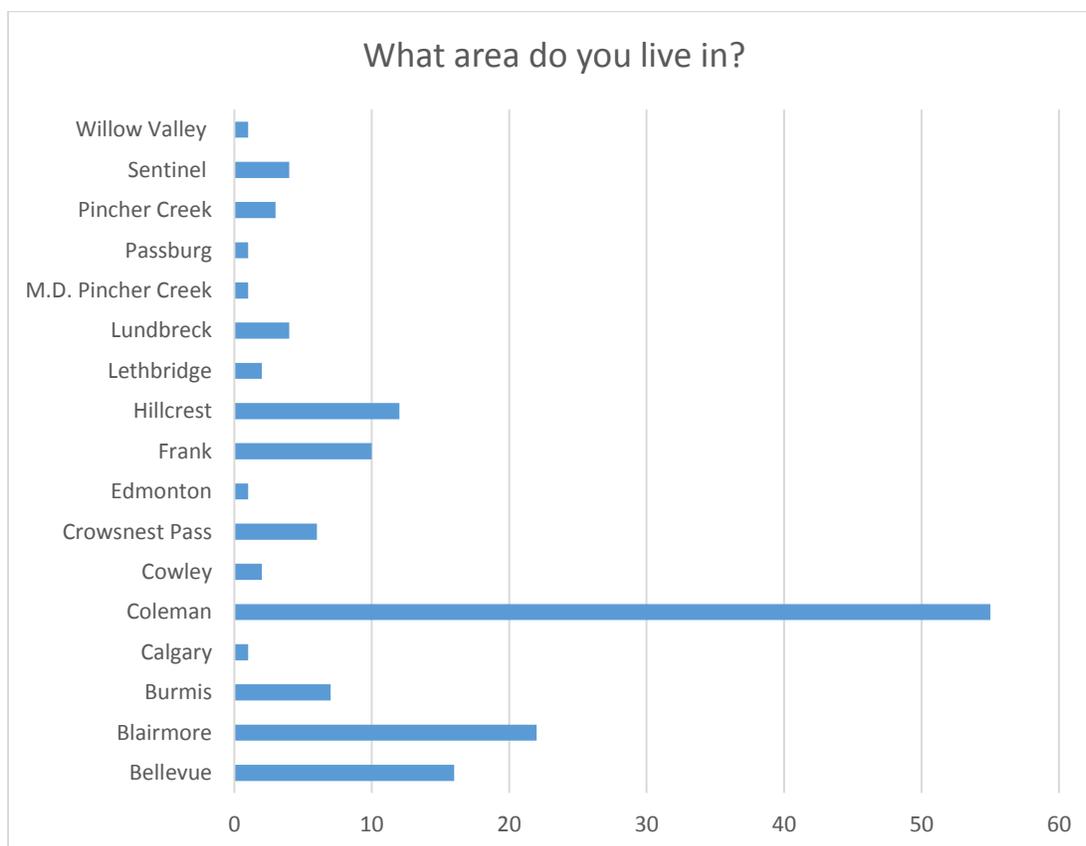
Is there anything we could do to make future meetings better?

- Respondents indicated that having more project team members available as well as more detailed maps and displays to provide information and answer questions about the project would help improve future meetings. Specifically, respondents wanted more details about the proposed highway upgrades, twinning and bypass, schedule, property/business/access impacts and how considerations would be addressed.
- Respondents indicated that more notice of sessions, handouts, more than just one open house per phase, stakeholder and landowner meetings, a presentation and Town Hall style event should be considered for future sessions.

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Do you have any further comments about the open house format, the information and content that was provided or the staff in attendance at the event?

- Respondents indicated that they would like to see more information about the project and larger/more detailed maps and have more staff available to provide information and respond to questions at future sessions. Specifically, respondents wanted more details about the proposed highway upgrades, twinning and bypass and how considerations would be addressed.
- Some respondents wanted more open houses with information provided in advance of sessions while others wanted less consultation and more focus on developing a plan for the area.



Note: some respondents indicated more than one area in which they live.