



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, January 21, 2010, at 2:00 p.m.
Sidney Council Chamber

PRESENT:

Central Saanich

Mayor Jack Mar
Councillor Terry Siklenka
Thomas Kouk, Chair
Gary C. Nason, CAO
Ruby Shea, Recording Secretary
Roland Rocheleau, Senior Engineering Technician

North Saanich (host)

Mayor Alice Finall
Councillor Peter Chandler
Bruce Williams, CAO
Patrick O'Reilly, Director of Infrastructure Services
Brian Simon, Engineering Technologist
Heather Gartshore, Community-at-Large Representative

Sidney

Mayor Larry Cross
Councillor Steve Price
Murray Clarke, CAO
Rob Hall, Director of Engineering & Works
John Treleaven, Community-at-Large Representative
(Also, Chair of the Saanich Peninsula Chamber of Commerce)

Tsawout

Councillor Tony Underwood
Gary Jung, Director of Operations
Nick May, Consultant (briefly)

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 November 19, 2009

It was moved and seconded that the minutes of the November 19, 2009 meeting of the Steering Committee be adopted as circulated.

- a) Discussion Flowing Out of Last Meeting: Nil
- b) Reference to Steering Committee on Municipal Websites:

All three municipalities confirmed that the Highway 17 Joint Peninsula Steering Committee information is posted to their respective websites.

Correspondence Forwarded to Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure Re: Pedestrian Safety Concerns – Intersection of Highway 17 and Beacon Avenue

Mr. Gary Nason noted there has been no response from the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MOT) at this time, with respect to the correspondence regarding Pedestrian Safety Concerns – Intersection of Highway 17 and Beacon Avenue.

Upcoming Meetings with:

- a) The Honourable Murray Coell, MLA – January 19, 2010

The three Mayors and representatives from the Tsawout First Nation, as well as several Staff members, attended the meeting with Mr. Coell on January 19, 2010 at the District of Central Saanich.

The Minister was apprised of the activities of the Steering Committee since the meeting at UBCM, and was aware of the aforementioned correspondence to MOT. Mr. Coell was provided a copy of the 2007 Highway 17 Corridor Strategy Report.

Mr. Coell showed interest in the progress of the Steering Committee and indicated that once the final report is completed he will convene a meeting with the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure and the Steering Committee. Mr. Coell encouraged the municipalities / First Nation to list both smaller and larger capital projects and rank them by priorities.

- b) The Honourable Gary Lunn, MP – January 25, 2010

The upcoming meeting with Minister Lunn was confirmed for January 25, 2010, at 9:00 a.m. in the Central Saanich Council Chamber.

Review and Discussion of Technical Data and Information Which Has Been Requested by the Steering Committee

Mr. Gary Nason advised that at the meeting of November 19, 2009, the Steering Committee requested that Staff pull together some data and safety information, and noted there were several copies of the documents which the Engineers from the four communities put together, available at the meeting for the members to examine,.

The Engineers overviewed the documents and responded to questions from the Committee.

A lengthy discussion occurred regarding the recent placement of a new sign, "Freeway Ends in 2km", for south bound traffic, in the vicinity of the Information Centre between the Swartz Bay Ferry Terminal and Beacon Avenue. Concern was expressed in respect to the timing of the erection of the sign and it was queried as to the meaning of the sign. It was suggested that the portion of Highway 17 from Swartz Bay is considered freeway up to the lighted intersection at Beacon Avenue. The sign timing clarification is that MOT may already have been working with ICBC before the Steering Committee commenced; it would not have been generated by the Steering Committee.

A request was made, that since not all drivers coming off the ferry are familiar with Highway 17, would it be reasonable for an announcement on road safety to be included with the regular BC Ferry public information announcements at the beginning or end of each sailing from Tsawwassen? After a brief discussion this request was deemed not realistic. The Committee did request, however, that Staff attempt to obtain clarification in regards to the rationale for the "Freeway Ends" signage which has recently been erected in the vicinity of the Tourist Information Centre.

The Committee proceeded to discuss the data / statistics from the Engineers and comments generated from the information in the reports were as follows:

- Safety concern regarding the side roads entering the highway;
- It was noted that the lighted intersections have most of the accidents, limiting access roads may be the wrong thing to do but rather remove the lights;
- There is less traffic at feeder roads;
- Will there be an increase in accidents if we eliminate feeder roads and send all traffic to lighted intersections;
- It was noted there are a lot of 'bad' drivers out there that don't know how to merge onto the highway;
- Roundabouts are safer for merging traffic;
- Many accidents are caused from bad driving skills, some drivers don't know how to properly merge onto the highway;
- It was suggested that the accident rate figures in the documents may not be entirely accurate;
- It was requested that the Saanich (Sayward intersection) accident information be removed from the data as this may be skewing some information;
- There is not a long enough turn lane at Keating, during high volumes this sometimes causes traffic to stop in the highway lane;
- What are the Steering Committee's bench marks / standards? Do we want a freeway from Swartz Bay to Victoria?

- In advance of the Keating turn-off perhaps signage should be erected cautioning north bound drivers of a possible traffic backup on the highway;
- Integrated Road Safety should be contacted for their input on the statistics;
- Would reducing the speed limits make a difference? Is this a viable option?
- People are going to avoid the speed limits in order to meet ferries / flights regardless of the speed limit;
- It was noted that North Saanich has reduced some speed limits and would be interested if this has reduced accidents;
- Signage / speed limit reduction may be a solution as there currently is no funding available for structural updates;
- Between 6:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. speed is not necessarily the issue. Look at how close the vehicles are to each other. Tailgating probably causes a lot of the accidents. Drivers need to be educated.

Committee Discussion / Commence Process to Begin Formulating Recommendations and Prioritizations to be Submitted to the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure

An extensive discussion ensued between the members of the Steering Committee with regard to commencing the process to begin formulating the Committee's recommendations and prioritizations for submission to MOT.

It was noted that MOT has commenced the McTavish interchange, and Beacon Avenue should perhaps be the next priority according to the statistics.

The Steering Committee will have to be diligent in backing up requests for upgrades as there are many municipalities around the Province competing for funding.

The Keating turnoff from the Highway has a potential for accidents and there is a priority to get the cars out of the high speed lane.

Reducing speed limits is part of a larger solution, what are the major infrastructure, structural and design deficiencies?

Ms. Heather Gartshore vacated the Council Chamber at 3:00 p.m.

It was noted that MOT has indicated that safety is the absolute first priority and economic development is second.

Mr. Nason read an excerpt from the Minutes of the Steering Committee meeting held on October 22, 2009, as follows:

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. Nason went on to point out that MOT uses twenty (20) years of crash data and comparisons are made provincially. The statistics came from MOT and there may not be a "traffic safety benchmark". He also noted that Minister Murray Coell advised to

keep the priorities simple, listing small and major projects, keeping access and egress issues in mind. Mr. Nason then suggested each jurisdiction come up with their respective top three small / large projects, based on the aforementioned "Ministry's primary considerations when evaluating the relative merits of competing major highway projects", and bring them to the next Steering Committee meeting. The Committee will then need to sit down and come up with a modest realistic list. The challenge will be to substantiate it with good data.

With traffic volumes increasing, it was queried if it was feasible to look at broadening the transit system. How can traffic volumes be decreased without major changes? In response it was noted that there is likely a twenty (20) year time horizon for any future light rail transit system, as it is too costly at this time.

It was noted that the data and statistics indicate diminishing traffic volumes as you go north, however as you travel north the incidents of traffic accidents are higher.

The Committee members were cautioned to be careful what they wish for. Be mindful that if side roads are eliminated traffic will bypass the small business communities. Also keep in mind that the jurisdictions will also have to pay for a portion of the upgrades. Will this be done through taxes, tolls, gas taxes or subsidy ferry traffic taxes?

Mr. John Treleaven vacated the Council Chamber at 3:26 p.m.

The Committee would like to invite Mr. Dave Edgar, Transportation Planning Engineer, Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, to attend the next Steering Committee meeting to clarify the information in the statistical data, and to provide input and feedback on the identified small / large priority projects which the Steering Committee is proposing to develop at its next meeting.

It was suggested that as each upgrade is completed the traffic flow will change and the data and statistics would therefore change as well and the current data would then be skewed.

Several Committee members suggested that roundabouts rather than full clover-leaves would be more beneficial and cost efficient.

The Tsawout First Nation suggested they are somewhat at a disadvantage as there is currently only one road in and out of their Reserve.

It was agreed that each jurisdiction would come back to the next meeting with a list of three small / large projects, keeping in mind what is in the best interests for the Peninsula rather than each individual jurisdiction. Mr. Dave Edgar from the MOT would be invited to attend the meeting.

Date / Time / Location of Next Meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Steering Committee would be held on Friday, February 19, 2010, at the Central Saanich Municipal Hall at 2:00 p.m.

Other Business

Two residents of Central Saanich were in attendance at the meeting and were invited to speak. They indicated they were in attendance at the meeting because they are interested in the Keating area. They currently live off of Keating (Tamany Drive and Bueno Vista Drive) and it takes 6-7 minutes to get out of their driveways. They are also concerned with the noise and what will happen as the traffic increasingly gets busier. What will the impact be on residents in the area?

Adjournment

On motion, the Highway 17 Joint Peninsula Steering Committee held on January 21, 2010, adjourned at 3:50 p.m.