

Central Okanagan Multi-Modal Corridor

Frequently Asked Questions



Q: Who benefits from this road?

A: The many motorists traveling in the Kelowna area, including commuters, transporters and tourists who currently experience travel delay especially during the a.m. and p.m. travel peak periods. The study of the corridor will focus on both the interim and long range planning requirements identifying facilities and infrastructure to accommodate all modes of transportation. The corridor is envisioned to support present and future growth while servicing existing development areas throughout the Region.

Q: Will this study take into consideration planning for a 2nd bridge crossing?

A: This study is focused on developing a new transportation link between Gordon Drive and the north end of the City. This work will take into consideration future strategic options, including a connection to a future 2nd crossing of Okanagan Lake.

Q: Will this new bypass road eventually replace existing Highway 97?

A: The new bypass road is being developed as a municipal roadway under the jurisdiction of the City of Kelowna. There have been no specific commitments that this route will become the jurisdiction of other transportation agencies in the future.

Q: Where does this corridor connect back to Highway 97?

A: This corridor is expected to connect back to Highway 97 in the vicinity of UBCO and the Kelowna International Airport. Details of such a connection and related transportation system elements are to be determined.

Q: Why is this study being undertaken?

A: Previous phases were identified either as the Central Okanagan Bypass (COB) or the North End Connector (NEC) that have been under consideration in various planning stages for close to 30 years and was always envisioned as high capacity free flowing standard of road. Documented in the Official 2020 Community Plan (OCP) portions of the COMC or COB are required within a specified timeframe extending from Clement Avenue to McCurdy Road. UBCO and the Kelowna Airport expansion plans along with their regional significance and recent development initiatives are creating new demands and pressures on the transportation system that were not envisioned when the current OCP was adopted.

Q: What roadways will connect to the corridor?

A: The following roads are being reviewed as possible connections to the corridor. They are Gordon Road, Spall Road, Highway 33, McCurdy Road, Sexsmith Road and Hollywood Road. The configuration of each will be determined based on providing the greatest benefit to the overall system where the corridor itself is being planned as a controlled access roadway with provisions for future grade separated interchanges.

Q: How will environmental concerns be addressed?

A: The City has retained an Environmental Consultant to complete an assessment of the study area. The investigation includes reviewing previously studies and possible sites of concern throughout the entire length of the corridor. The approach the project will undertake consists of a 3M rule in moving forward with this planning initiative and that is to, Miss, Minimize and as a last resort to Mitigate.

Q: How will traffic noise be mitigated?

A: The Engineering Consultant has been requested to prepare a noise contour plan identifying anticipated levels of noise generated from traffic on the roadway based on projected traffic volumes.

Q: Why can't I have direct access to this road?

A: The intent of the corridor is to move traffic unimpeded from one sector of the City to another. Typically, permitting turning movements and direct access to adjacent developments at alternate locations than those specified begin to degrade the function and deplete the capacity of a roadway built to this standard. It would be in the best interest to create a corridor that could ultimately become a future bypass road.

Q: How far north does the study area go?

A: The northerly study limit extends to the vicinity of the Kelowna International Airport where a proposed interchange is being planned.

Q: What is the Ministry of Transportation role on this project?

A: BC MoT is participating on the planning component at a technical level providing expertise on many of the issues to be considered on a project of this size with interest specific to future implications that it may have on the regional transportation highway network.

Q: Will this study look at existing Highway 97 and potential improvements instead of planning to build a new bypass road?

A: This study will look at potential travel time benefits associated with the addition of a new corridor in the transportation network and provisions for alternate modes of transportation. The study will also quantify changes in current travel behavior and future traffic distribution.

Q: What is the timing of construction and from where to where?

A: Current transportation improvement programming envisions the extension of the COMC from Spall Rd. to Highway 33 starting as early as 2008 with another extension out to McCurdy Rd. possibly within the next 10 years. To obtain maximum benefit of a multi-modal corridor it is desirable to construct sooner than later to sustain interest at the most senior levels of government.

Q: How much will it cost?

A: Current estimates are very preliminary with the intent to refine these estimates as the study progresses and as the project team gain a better understanding of all the engineering requirements and solutions. Identification and resolution of the many of the planning considerations, issues and concerns along the corridor need to be determined enabling staff to prepare more accurate costs.

Q: How is land valued and acquired?

A: Current land owners whom may be potentially impacted will be contacted and kept informed throughout the planning process. Important to note that land identified for ultimate stage infrastructure improvements may not be required in the immediate future however preserved for implementation at a later date. Land values are typically assessed at fair market value and negotiated on a fair and equitable basis with expropriation only as a last resort.

Q: How many lanes are being considered?

A: The number of traffic lanes will be based on providing sufficient capacity to meet future travel demands. Travel forecasting methodology considers future land use patterns in the City and Region. More emphasis placed on developing sustainable transportation systems that make best use of the existing transportation infrastructure and defer, or minimize the high cost of new future infrastructure. This is accomplished by efficiencies in land use plans and integrating all modes of transportation thereby reducing the impact on both the natural environment and communities by accommodating alternate mode choices of travel.

Q: Why is this study different than previous studies?

A: This transportation planning study has gained interest from senior levels of government. Transport Canada has agreed to make a financial contribution towards the cost of conducting this corridor planning study under the National System Integration Component of the Strategic Highway Infrastructure Program. BC Ministry of Transportation has also contributed with interest in promoting and protecting regional and provincial movement of goods and services.

This planning initiative is targeted towards reducing environmental impact by reducing harmful green house gas emissions by improving mobility, efficiency and productivity within urban areas and by incorporating alternate transportation modes and choices.

Q: What is the connectivity to the Rails with Trails?

A: A study was commissioned by the City in 2001 to determine the feasibility of a cycle and pedestrian trail within the current railway corridor. City Council has endorsed this study based on overwhelming community support. Preliminary work to date has envisioned an alignment for COMC that will for the most part also follow the rail corridor in an attempt to minimize segregating land parcels. The Rails with Trails project plan compliments and supports the multi-modal concept for this potential future transportation corridor.

Q: What is the plan for BRT?

A: Current levels of transit service are about to get even better. Bus Rapid Transit or BRT is planned for in 2007 within the region providing frequent, rapid and reliable limited stop transit service. Linking major town centres and institutions with enhanced transit service will promote and encourage more ridership. Current levels of congestion on proposed BRT routes hinder future opportunities to expand or improve the transit system to its full potential where a future multi-modal corridor would provide vast opportunities for the system to expand and operate more efficiently and also serve to relieve some of the congested routes, including Highway 97.

Q: Are HOV lanes being considered?

A: In order to implement High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes the corridor must be continuous and at minimum six lanes in order for the concept to work. The ultimate plan may warrant six lanes however the study will focus more on providing alternate forms of transportation versus providing a mass of asphalt and further adversely impacting adjacent environmentally sensitive areas.

Q: Is there not an alternative alignment through Glenmore that would be less intrusive on the environment?

A: Previous studies dating back to the late 60's by the Province had identified a potential roadway alignment. Current regulatory requirements enforced by the respective agencies would suggest that this alignment not be considered based on the adverse effects that it would have on both, existing land use and the environment. This study will follow the recommended route and will only deviate where engineering controls and environmental criteria warrant.