



TAYLOR BRIDGE CROSSING

Engagement Summary Report

Fall 2021 to Spring 2022



Ministry of
Transportation
and Infrastructure

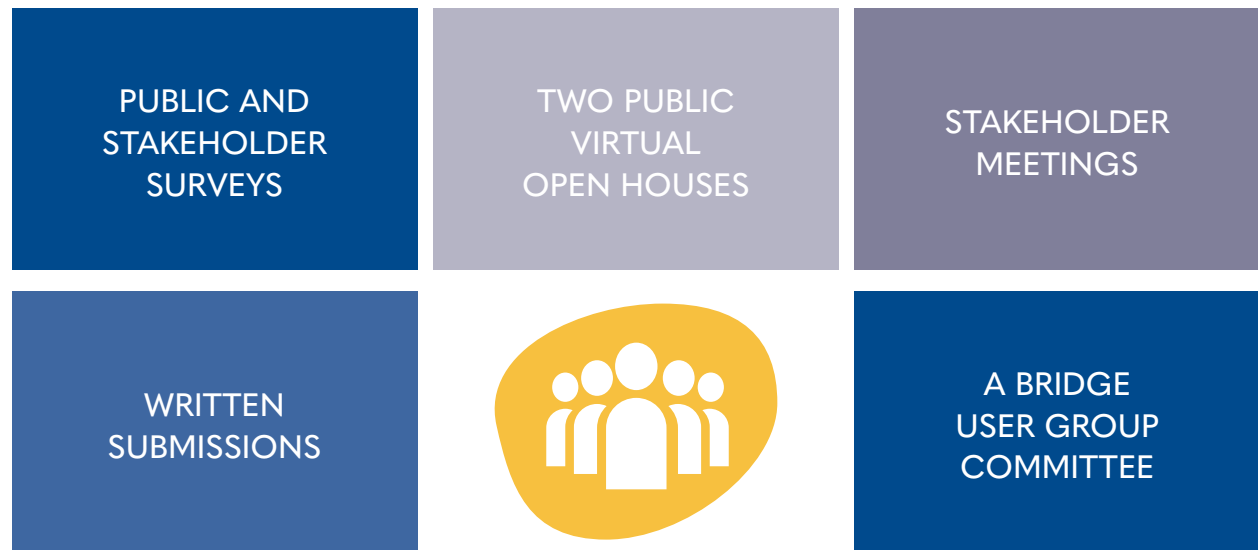


1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ENGAGEMENT

In October 2021, the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (Ministry) launched an initial public engagement process to understand the current challenges and future opportunities associated with the Taylor Bridge Crossing in Taylor, BC.

The Ministry engaged through:





SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK

- There are concerns over continuous traffic delays due to repairs and maintenance as it:
 - Results in economic losses for the region
 - Creates safety concerns in the event of an evacuation and for emergency vehicles
 - Impacts the livability of the region and access to recreation
- There is a desire for the new/updated bridge to better accommodate widths and weights to support industrial growth and use of the bridge.
- There is a need to improve safety for all transportation users, specifically improving opportunity for walking and cycling across the bridge.

The Ministry is also consulting directly with Treaty 8 land and rights holders. This consultation process is happening in parallel and not included in this summary.

2 OVERVIEW

ABOUT THE PROJECT

The Taylor Bridge is a two-lane, 712 metre long bridge that is a vital link for the North and South Peace regions and to the rest of British Columbia (BC). Situated along Highway 97 (the Alaska Highway), the Taylor Bridge connects Fort St. John to Dawson Creek and the rest of the province, via Taylor, BC. Of the approximately 7,500 vehicles that cross the bridge every day, 30% of this traffic is made up of commercial truck traffic, mainly for oil and gas, mining, forestry, and agriculture.

Opened in 1960, the Taylor Bridge is an aging structure that currently requires regular maintenance. This leads to frequent bridge closures, lengthy travel delays, and extensive detours for overweight industrial trucks and equipment. The Ministry is committed to planning a long-term solution that is safe and efficient for moving people, goods, and services.



3 ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

PURPOSE

As the Ministry works towards identifying and costing a long-term solution, there are several considerations that guide the decision making.



Input from Treaty 8 First Nations, key stakeholders and the public is one of many important factors that, along with technical, financial, and economic work, will be used to inform the business case for a long-term solution that will be considered through the provincial government.

ENGAGEMENT METHODS AND PARTICIPATION

Website: The Ministry launched a project website for the Taylor Bridge engagement via its govTogetherBC platform, providing website users with key background information and opportunities to share their input.

Community Survey: Between October 5th and November 15th, 2021, British Columbians were invited to complete an online survey about the Taylor Bridge Crossing. Its purpose was to invite individuals to share feedback on their transportation needs on the Highway 97 corridor, current concerns with the Taylor Bridge Crossing, and their recommendations for a future solution. In total, the Ministry received 807 survey forms.

Bridge User Group Online Workshop: The Ministry identified, through a public call for participants, a group of industry and local government stakeholders who have a significant social, economic, and/or environmental interest in the Taylor Bridge. Ten stakeholders were brought together as the Bridge User Group to provide detailed input from their organizations via an online workshop on October 5th, 2021.

Online Public Open Houses: In lieu of in-person public engagement activities, the Ministry held two Virtual Open Houses with the public over the Zoom meeting platform. They were held on October 13th and October 21st, 2021, with the purpose of directly sharing project information to attendees and gathering input using Zoom's polling and commenting features.

Stakeholder Meetings: The Ministry met virtually with key stakeholders representing emergency response organizations through two meetings held on November 2nd and November 4th, 2021. Additional preliminary stakeholder meetings and presentations took place with the BC Trucking Association and the Peace River Regional District.

Written Submissions: The Ministry invited individuals or organizations to submit written feedback between October 5th and Nov 15th, 2021.

Ongoing Stakeholder Meetings: The Ministry continues to meet with businesses, utility companies, and others to provide an opportunity for input through this planning process.

PURPOSE

The purpose of Phase 1 of the engagement process was to gather input and insights from the public and key stakeholders to identify the challenges of using the Taylor Bridge today and the needs for a long-term solution.

PARTICIPANTS

The following groups participated:

- BC Commercial Vehicle Safety Enforcement
- Fort St. John RCMP, BC Highway Patrol
- Fort St. John Fire Department
- Taylor Fire Department
- North Peace Search and Rescue
- Charlie Lake Fire Department
- Dawson Creek Resource Operations
- BC Emergency Health Services
- BC Trucking Association
- Peace River Regional District
- The District of Taylor
- BC Grain Producers Association
- Canfor
- Northern BC Trucking Association
- Dawson Road Maintenance
- Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers
- La Prairie Group (Heavy Haul Trucking)
- City of Fort St. John
- Tourmaline Oil Corporation
- Petronas
- Pembina
- Enbridge
- TELUS
- ROHL Global Networks
- BC Hydro

4 WHAT WE HEARD

Width of Lanes / Shoulders and the Weight of Vehicles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The bridge should accommodate the growing size of industrial equipment to support the economy • Intensive studies must be conducted for some oversized loads, and infrastructure should be designed with this in mind • There is support for a four lane bridge
Concerns with Traffic Disruptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequent bridge closures for maintenance affect timelines and costs for industries • There are limited opportunities for alternate detour routes, that increase travel time and costs • As a main evacuation route, traffic delays pose safety risks for community members during emergency situations • Delays impact emergency vehicle response times
Safety Concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The solution should factor in all weather conditions (ice, wind, rain) • The bridge is perceived to be unstable or unsafe due to the bridge deck material and the continuous need for maintenance • There are safety concerns with the South Taylor Hill and bridge approach
Active Transportation / Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connection to Peace Island Park and the boat launch is important for the community • There are safety concerns for active transportation users due to unprotected sidewalks • Lighting on the bridge should be improved for cyclists and pedestrians • The solution should consider community sustainability goals
Construction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure alternative travel routes are investigated in advance of any construction on the bridge • Allow enough time for emergency response planning before construction starts to ensure they can plan for closure and coordination with other areas

5 CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

The Ministry continues to develop technical options for a long-term solution for the Taylor Bridge Crossing. The technical team will be using the results of geotechnical and engineering studies, as well as input provided by the public, to inform the options development. During the next phase of engagement, planned for late spring and summer of 2022, the Ministry will once again engage with bridge users, community members and other stakeholders to gather input to support the development of a long-term solution. In addition, there will be ongoing engagement with the Treaty 8 First Nations.

