

**REPORT TO THE PLANNING & PROTECTIVE SERVICES COMMITTEE  
MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, JULY 26, 2006**

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**SUBJECT****MALAHAT CORRIDOR STUDY****PURPOSE**

To provide comments to the Ministry of Transportation (MOT) on the Malahat Corridor Study from the perspective of the Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) and the TravelChoices Strategy.

**BACKGROUND**

MOT has engaged Stantec Consulting to undertake a technical analysis to develop and recommend a preferred future strategy for the Trans-Canada Highway segment between Goldstream Park (including the park) and the Malahat Summit up to the area near Mill Bay. The Ministry held a workshop with local government staff in Langford on Tuesday, June 13, 2006 attended by CRD and some municipal staff, as well as a number of public open houses. The Ministry has requested that local government forward written comments on the options presented by July 17, 2006. Attachment A outlines the Ministry's request for comments and the route options under consideration. The CRD has invited Ministry and Stantec staff to present the options to the Committee on July 26, 2006 (Attachment A).

The Malahat Corridor Study has been undertaken in response to three identified transportation issues: *capacity* (in particular the 2-lane sections); *safety* (frequency and severity of crashes); and, *reliability* (road closures due to crashes). On the three issues, the consultants have concluded that for capacity, there is generally a comfortable level of service with the exception of the Friday PM peak period northbound; that for safety, that the approximately 220 crashes per year, although significant, are at a rate below the provincial average; and, for reliability, even minor crashes lead to closures with 80% of closures exceeding 1 hour. The consultants conclude that reliability is the major transportation issue in the Malahat corridor. Options evaluated have costs ranging from under \$100 million for ferry, rail and transit options, between \$200 million and \$1.3 billion for highway options, to between \$700 million and \$1.2 billion for bridge options.

The CRD Board adopted the TravelChoices Long Term Transportation Strategy on April 13, 2005. MOT was a funding partner in the TravelChoices Strategy and Regional Planning, in consultation with MOT staff, prepared a draft CRD/MOT partnership agreement on TravelChoices implementation similar to the existing CRD/BC Transit agreement (Attachment B). This draft agreement, submitted to MOT for approval in December 2005, has not been executed. CRD staff will be meeting with MOT's Director of Highway Planning to discuss how to move the draft agreement forward to completion.

## **ALTERNATIVES**

1. That the Ministry of Transportation defer any decision on the Malahat Corridor Study options, until such time as the Ministry has: 1) executed a TravelChoices Strategy Implementation Agreement with the CRD; and, 2) undertaken and completed a South Island Transportation System Plan in partnership with the CRD and the Cowichan Valley Regional District consistent with regional district growth management objectives, that considers all travel modes, and takes into account travel demand management measures.
2. That staff evaluate the Malahat Corridor options for consistency with the vision and strategic objectives of the Regional Growth Strategy and TravelChoices and provide comments to the Ministry of Transportation from this perspective.
3. That the Select Committee on TravelChoices Implementation consider the Malahat Corridor Study options from the perspective of the TravelChoices Strategy, and to prepare a response to the Ministry of Transportation for the Board's consideration by September 30, 2006.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications of the proposed alternatives in 2006. Alternative one may require a level of CRD financial/staff participation that is unknown at this time.

## **GROWTH MANAGEMENT & TRANSPORTATION IMPLICATIONS**

A detailed evaluation of the options from the perspective of the RGS and TravelChoices has not been undertaken. In general however, options that provide additional general purpose travel capacity to the Cowichan Valley would tend to encourage urban growth north of the Malahat and induce increased single occupancy vehicle commuting to the CRD on the Trans-Canada Highway. Further, options identified have the potential to affect travel flows throughout the CRD and the Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD) and across the entire south Island highway and major road network.

## **SUMMARY/CONCLUSIONS**

An appropriate context for evaluation Malahat options would include the entire south Island transportation system and the growth management objectives of local governments in both the CRD and the CVRD. This is particularly important when one considers the scale of resources identified for some of the options (in the range of \$1 billion), where an appropriate study would seek to identify an optimal mix of transportation investments, service initiatives and demand management mechanisms that best achieve overall growth management and transportation goals for the south Island as a whole. Rather than disconnected, corridor specific studies that aim to predict future demand and identify increased highway supply options, a more comprehensive and integrated approach, that takes a system wide perspective including all

travel modes and demand management measures as well as supply measures, would provide a better context for discussion and decision-making on how best to manage regional growth and transportation.

**RECOMMENDATION**

That the Ministry of Transportation be requested to defer any decision on the Malahat Corridor Study options, until such time as the Ministry has: 1) executed a TravelChoices Strategy Implementation Agreement with the CRD; and, 2) undertaken and completed a South Island Transportation System Plan in partnership with the CRD and the Cowichan Valley Regional District consistent with regional district growth management objectives, that considers all travel modes, and takes into account travel demand management measures.

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Mark Hornell, MCIP  
Senior Manager - Regional Planning

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Robert Lapham, MCIP  
General Manager - Planning &  
Protective Services  
Concurrence

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Kelly Daniels, CAO  
Concurrence

**COMMENTS:**