



Building Momentum: Community Conversations Report

Spring/Summer 2024



Territorial Acknowledgement

Transportation Investment Corporation acknowledges the many First Nations whose lands are within and near where the Highway 99 Tunnel Program is located.

We thank these Nations for their past and ongoing contributions to the program to date and look forward to continuing to work with them in advancing project plans and the environmental review of the Fraser River Tunnel Project through the B.C. Environmental Assessment review process.




Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
About the Fraser River Tunnel Project	6
Engagement Overview	8
Engagement Materials	10
Events Summary	12
Findings	15
Transportation User Groups	17
Key Themes	18
Applying a GBA+ Lens to Community Engagement	24
Conclusion	25
Appendix A Survey	27



Executive Summary





Executive Summary

The Ministry of Transportation and Transit is committed to creating a safer, more efficient transportation network. The Highway 99 Tunnel Program includes the Fraser River Tunnel Project — a new toll-free, modernized eight-lane immersed tube tunnel to replace the existing George Massey Tunnel. Along with the tunnel replacement, the program includes transit and cycling improvements between Bridgeport Road and Highway 17, additional road works between Westminster Highway and Highway 17, and replacing the Steveston Highway interchange with a new five-lane structure that will connect to the future tunnel.

As part of an ongoing community relations program, the Highway 99 Tunnel Program team planned and implemented 12 engagement events between April and September 2024. Objectives for these engagements were to:

- **Increase awareness:** Provide information about the Highway 99 Tunnel Program scope of work, program timelines and current progress.
- **Engage new audiences:** Connect with audience groups who may have limited awareness of the program.
- **Ensure accurate information:** Answer questions and provide information about the program components or status of the Fraser River Tunnel Project and, where necessary, correct misinformation and better inform interested parties.

Event locations were selected to reach a broad cross-section of transportation users, including drivers, transit and active transportation users.

This report provides an overview of these events and summarizes the feedback from event interactions and surveys. The report includes insights on transportation patterns in terms of how people get around and areas of interest according to demographic characteristics such as gender, age and ethnic origin.



Across the 12 events, there were a total of 1,974 interactions and 1,099 completed surveys.



Key areas of interest across all interactions were predominantly related to the Fraser River Tunnel Project:



Project and construction schedule: Interest in the Fraser River Tunnel Project timeline, including when construction will begin and when the new tunnel will open. Project schedule was the most frequently raised and discussed topic across all events. Almost one out of every two survey respondents (44%) had schedule-related questions or feedback and wanted to learn about progress to date.



Construction process, design and scope: Curiosity about the tunnel fabrication and immersion process, including how the tunnel will be built and installed in the river. Almost one out of every five survey respondents (22%) had questions or feedback related to the construction process.



Crossing option: Interest in understanding the benefits of the selected immersed tube tunnel design as compared with a bridge alternative. Survey respondents expressed concern about the potential impact of a change in government leading up to the 2024 provincial election. Around 18% of respondents had questions or feedback related to the crossing option.



Multi-use path: Excitement and support for plans to include an active transportation connection for pedestrians, cyclists and other users to cross the tunnel and connect to Deas Island for the first time. Survey respondents enthusiastically support accessibility and safety for all users. Roughly 8% of respondents had questions or feedback related to the multi-use path.



Construction and environmental impacts: Desire to learn more about how construction activities might affect daily commutes, the economy, environment and overall quality of life. Survey respondents were also interested in the plans to manage construction impacts. Approximately 6% of respondents had questions or feedback related to construction and environmental impacts.





Who we met and learned from

Gender

51% male



43% female



5% no info



<1% non-binary



Ethnic background

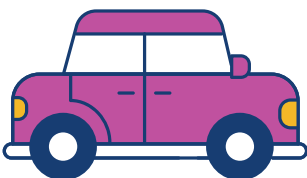


62%

self-identified as
ethnically diverse

How people travel

79%



26%



4%



Respondents could select more than one travel mode.

Top 5 key themes



1 Project and construction schedule (44%)

2 Construction process, design and scope (22%)

3 Crossing option (18%)

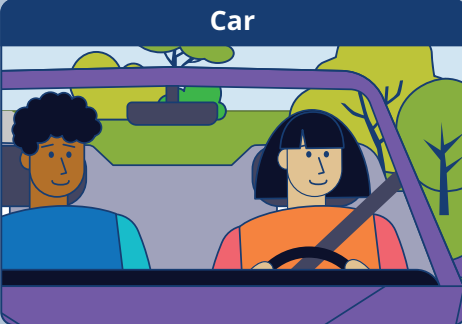
4 Multi-use path (8%)

5 Construction and environmental impacts (6%)



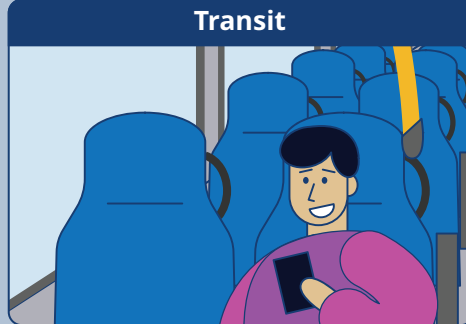
Our average traveller

Car



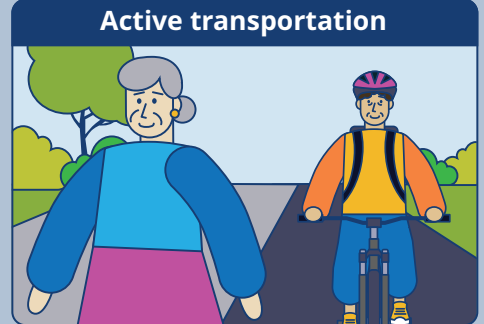
- Uses George Massey Tunnel and Steveston Interchange **regularly**
- Aged 35-44, both **male** and **female**
- Primarily **lives in** Delta or Richmond and more likely to **travel within** Richmond
- Most interested in **project construction schedule**

Transit



- Uses George Massey Tunnel regularly and Steveston Interchange **infrequently**
- Aged 20-34, more likely to identify as **male**
- Primarily **lives in** Delta or Surrey/White Rock and **travels to** Vancouver
- Most interested in **project construction schedule**

Active transportation



- Uses George Massey Tunnel and Steveston Interchange **infrequently**
- Aged 55+, both **male** and **female**
- Primarily **lives in** Delta or Vancouver and **travels to** a variety of locations; more likely to be retired
- Most interested in the **new multi-use path**, as well as project construction schedule and design/alignment

About the Fraser River Tunnel Project





About the Fraser River Tunnel Project

The Ministry of Transportation and Transit is replacing the existing George Massey Tunnel with a new, toll-free, eight-lane immersed tube tunnel. The Fraser River Tunnel Project includes replacing the Deas Slough Bridge and decommissioning the existing tunnel once the new immersed tube tunnel is in operation. Decommissioning involves keeping the existing tunnel in place and filling it with material.

The new immersed tube tunnel will have three vehicle lanes and a dedicated transit lane in each direction, with a separated multi-use path for cyclists and pedestrians that connects to active transportation routes on both sides of the Fraser River.

Project benefits include:

- **Improving travel reliability** through increasing lane capacity, adding shoulders and wider lanes and removing the inefficient counterflow system.
- **Enhancing transit** by adding transit-only lanes between Ladner Trunk Road and Westminster Highway to make bus trips faster, safer and more reliable, as well as support future bus rapid transit service.
- **Modernizing safety** by meeting current seismic standards and providing better access for emergency vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists.
- **Introducing active transportation** by including a dedicated path for pedestrians and cyclists for the first time, fully separated from vehicles inside the tunnel.



Map of the Fraser River Tunnel Project area



Engagement Overview





Engagement Overview

Between April 17 and September 7, 2024, the project team visited 12 locations across the cities of Richmond, Delta and Surrey. The project team engaged at various locations, including at community events, shopping centres and municipal government events. Members of the public received project information, asked questions and provided feedback through conversations with the project team and through a survey.

Objectives of the project team's community engagement efforts were to:

- **Increase awareness:** Provide information about the Highway 99 Tunnel Program scope of work, program timelines and current progress.
- **Engage new audiences:** Connect with audience groups who may have limited awareness of the program.
- **Build shared understanding:** Answer questions and provide information about the program components and status of the Fraser River Tunnel Project to, where necessary, correct misinformation and better inform interested parties.



Project team members at the Ironwood Plaza Save-On-Foods and at the Bridgeport SkyTrain station



Engagement Materials

Materials at the events focused on raising awareness and engaging the community with a mix of practical, informative and interactive project content. Items included multilingual brochures in six languages (English, French, Tagalog, Punjabi, simplified Chinese and traditional Chinese) detailing the components of the Highway 99 Tunnel Program and the construction stages for the new Fraser River Tunnel Project.

To help visitors visualize the future tunnel design, a 3D model of the tunnel's six elements was created. Each tunnel element connects end to end, and the elements have removable lids, which when opened, reveal the vehicle lanes and multi-use path inside. For added engagement, the model includes trivia questions to gamify the tunnel immersion process and encourage people to connect them together in the correct sequence.



Learning about the project through our construction brochure, 3D tunnel model and area maps



Other informational materials included display boards highlighting the program components and foldable maps to guide conversations about the geographic location and alignment of the project. Branded project logo stickers and activity booklets were handed out to children. These items helped create a positive impression while informing and involving the public on the project's progress.

An eleven-question survey was conducted on iPads, with staff posing the questions and the public providing responses in real-time.



Project engagement materials on display at Tsawwassen Mills (left) and the 3D model of the tunnel (right side)



Events Summary

Event locations were selected to meet people where they gather, such as near grocery stores, neighbourhood trails, transit hubs and at existing community events. The project team reached out to people who may not live or work near the project area but use the highways, nearby roads, trails or other transportation options. The events took place in two formats:

1. **Pop-ups:** An information booth at high-traffic locations to reach specific user groups, such as transit or active transportation users.
2. **Existing local events:** An information booth at local community events to connect with larger audiences and strengthen community ties with partner organizations.



Interacting with the public at Bridgeport SkyTrain Station (top left), Richmond Public Works Open House (top right), Ladner Exchange Park and Ride (bottom left) and Ironwood Plaza Save-On-Foods (bottom right)



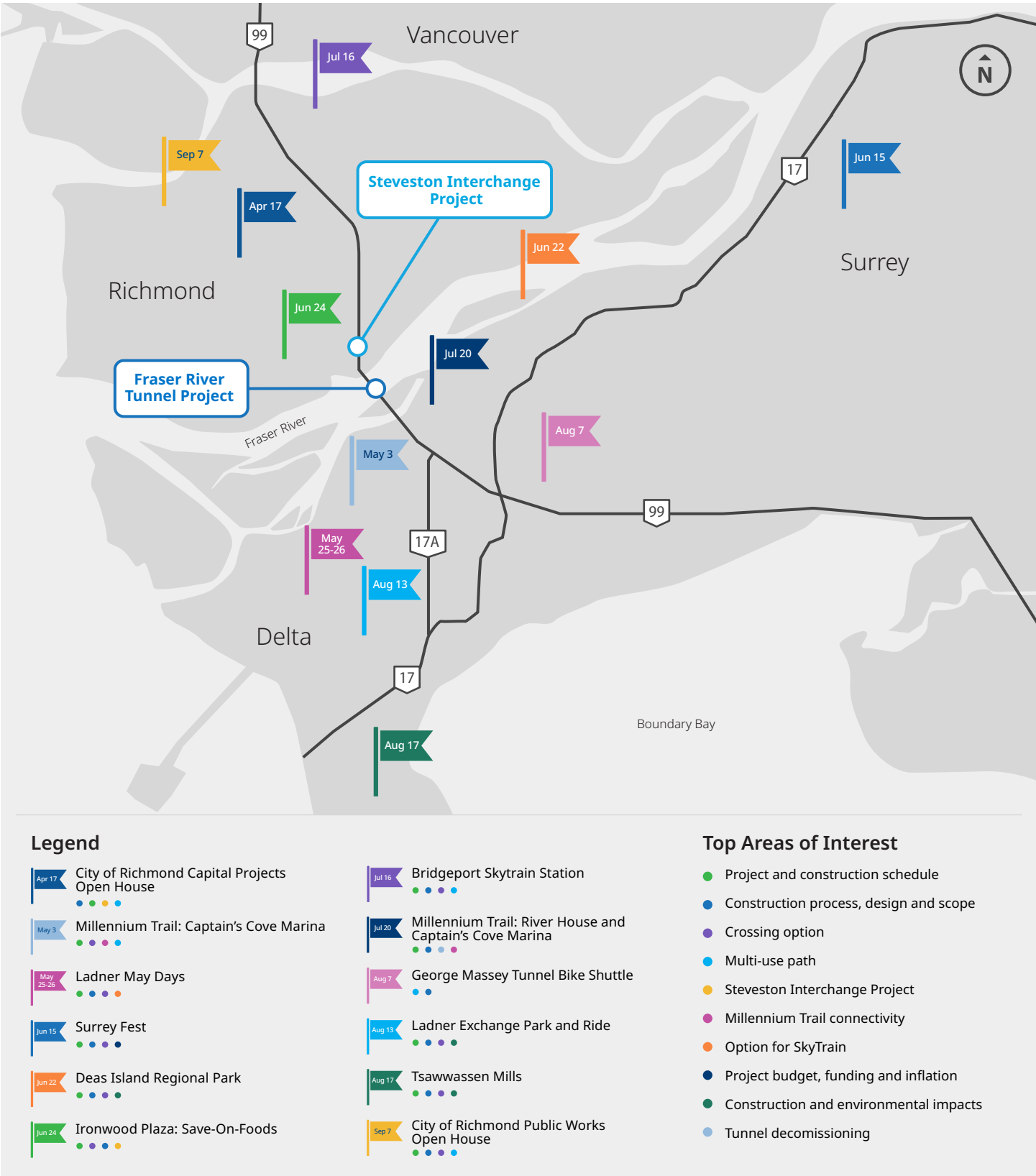
Throughout the events the team successfully reached a variety of target audiences, including the following:

- Local residents from Delta, Richmond, Surrey, White Rock, Tsawwassen, Langley and Steveston
- Residents that live in Hampton Cove or along River Road and Ferry Road (i.e., residents that live near the Fraser River Tunnel Project area)
- Transit users
- Deas Island Regional Park users
- Ferry users
- Recreational trail users (walkers, runners, cyclists and dog walkers)
- Commuter cyclists on long-distance routes
- Commuters using multiple modes of travel
- City of Richmond engineering, transportation and utilities staff
- Regional tourists who travel through the project area or use the existing tunnel

The top three key areas of interest across travel modes are the same. The top priority for all groups is knowing when construction will begin and when the new tunnel will be in operation. Many were also keen to understand the scope, design and alignment of the project, specifically how it will integrate with existing roadways. Some raised concerns about potential impacts on the project design due to changes in government. Additionally, there was significant interest in the multi-use path, with respondents seeking more information on its safety, accessibility and alignment with active transportation goals.



The following map includes a list of events, dates, locations and top four areas of interest.



Findings





Findings

This section highlights the key insights from the survey, capturing the perspectives and priorities of diverse participants. The findings are presented in three sections, organized as:

1. Mode of travel by transportation user groups
2. Key themes
3. Applying a GBA+ (Gender-Based Analysis Plus) lens to community engagement

Please refer to Appendix A to review detailed results from the survey questions.



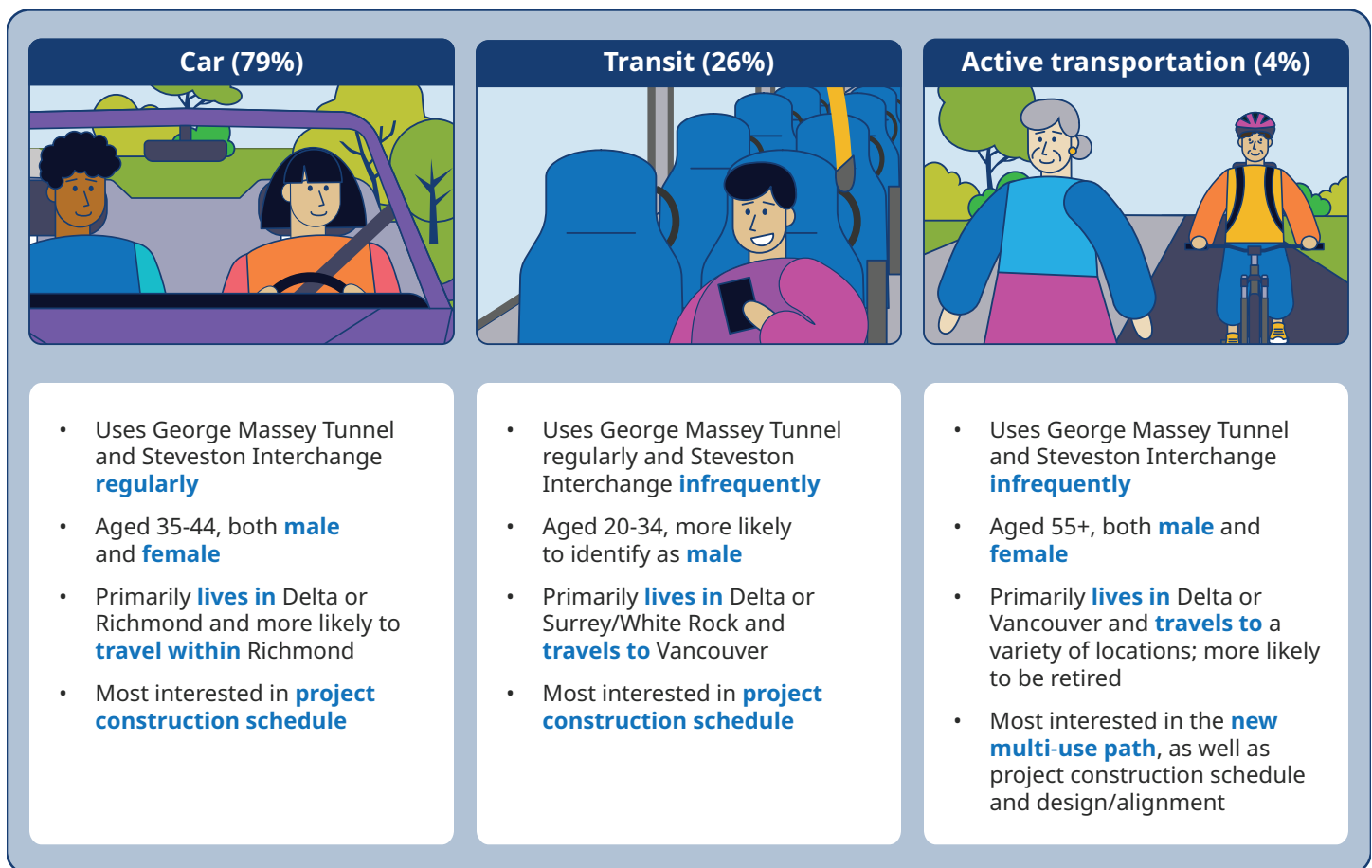
Interacting with attendees at the annual Surrey Fest



Transportation User Groups

The project team wanted to learn about the transportation modes of current and potential future tunnel users. Understanding user travel modes is important because it helps the project planning team understand and plan for the diverse needs of the community. By knowing more about how people may travel, whether by car, public transit, biking or walking, the project team can make informed decisions to meet the needs of all users. Understanding travel preferences can help anticipate future demand, highlight existing concerns about congestion or support future sustainability efforts by encouraging alternative modes of transportation.

We know people use different modes of transportation to get around. Our survey was designed so people could select more than one mode of travel*. Out of 1,101 survey responses, we learned that travellers are:



*Respondents selected more than one mode of travel. Total may exceed 100%.



Key Themes

Although the team discussed all components of the Highway 99 Tunnel Program, the public's primary interest was in the Fraser River Tunnel Project. The survey findings reveal several themes resonated across the survey participants and during conversations that took place with the project team. Below is a summary of the top five key themes highlighting the public's shared priorities, questions and concerns, and some context for what information is important to the community.

- 1 Project and construction schedule (44%)**
- 2 Construction process, design and scope (22%)**
- 3 Crossing option (18%)**
- 4 Multi-use path (8%)**
- 5 Construction and environmental impacts (6%)**



Key Theme 1: Project and construction schedule (44%)

Key considerations with this theme were:

- Interest in the project status
- Questions about the timeline for construction start and end
- Questions about construction status of the Steveston Interchange Project
- Appreciation for already-completed program components
- Concerns about construction delays
- Comments on the length of the Environmental Assessment process



Team members completing surveys on iPads



Key Theme 2: Construction process, design and scope (22%)

Key considerations with this theme were:

- Curiosity about the tunnel fabrication and immersion process
- Questions about construction phasing and what side of the Fraser River construction will begin on
- Questions about construction contractor and who will be involved in building the tunnel
- Concerns about traffic impacts during construction
- Concerns about travel time delays during construction
- Questions if the George Massey Tunnel will remain open while construction is underway
- Question about the construction timeline for the new Deas Slough bridge
- Questions about the types of equipment involved in the construction process (machinery, boating)
- Questions about the potential for a future overpass to be constructed at River Road; and question about whether the existing access into Ladner for vehicles exiting the George Massey Tunnel will remain
- Curiosity about plans to improve existing crossings between Richmond and Vancouver
- Comments that the new tunnel may temporarily alleviate traffic but could also lead to further congestion at the Knight Street and Oak Street bridge



Key Theme 3: Crossing option (18%)

Key considerations with this theme were:

- Support for the immersed tube tunnel as the selected infrastructure option
- Interest in the benefits of the immersed tube tunnel design over the bridge design
- Questions about the tunnel project compared to a bridge
- Concerns that a government change will cause delay to the project getting underway *(noting that all events took place before the 2024 provincial election)*



Discussing the immersed tube tunnel design at Surrey Fest 2024 and playing with the 3D model tunnel



Key Theme 4: Multi-use path (8%)

Key considerations with this theme were:

- Support the inclusion of an active transportation connection for pedestrians, cyclists, and other users to cross the tunnel
- Support for a new connection onto Deas Island
- Comments supporting accessible and safe design for all users
- Questions about the width or grade of the multi-use path
- Questions about lighting and ventilation for the multi-use path inside the tunnel
- Interest in ensuring Millennium Trail in Delta remains open during and after construction to minimize impacts to daily trail users
- Comments emphasizing the importance of Millennium Trail access to the community



Project team members engaging with Millennium Trail users near Captain's Cove Marina



Key Theme 5: Construction and environmental impacts (6%)

Key considerations with this theme were:

- Desire to understand how construction activities might affect daily commutes, the economy, environment and overall quality of life
- Questions about potential effects of construction on the environment
- Interest in plans to manage construction impacts



Project team members talking with cyclists



Applying a GBA+ Lens to Community Engagement

GBA+ (Gender-Based Analysis Plus) data informs transportation projects by ensuring that diverse perspectives and needs are considered throughout planning, design and implementation. By examining how different groups such as women, seniors and individuals from various cultural backgrounds interact with their transportation choices, GBA+ data helps the Fraser River Tunnel Project meet provincial regulatory requirements and guidelines set by the BC Environmental Assessment Office (EAO) as part of the project's application for an Environmental Assessment Certificate. Along with being good industry practice, GBA+ data helps plan for transportation projects that are accessible, fair and usable for all.

Survey results revealed alignment in key areas of interest across the GBA+ demographics, indicating predominantly shared priorities among diverse groups. Despite differences in gender, age, ethnic background and primary mode of travel, respondents consistently mentioned **project and construction schedule** as their primary interests. Secondary areas of interests varied between the construction process and conversations around the immersed tube tunnel as the crossing option. Additionally, active transportation users were keenly interested in plans for the new multi-use path. Overall, the results demonstrate widespread agreement that people are eager for construction to get underway and are keen to have more information about when and how construction will take place.



Conclusion





Conclusion

The 2024 Spring/Summer Community Engagement Program was designed to raise awareness amongst people who are or will be affected by the project during construction and over the long term. The pop-up events at high traffic locations and community events allowed the team to engage with individuals and groups who use the tunnel but may not live or work near the project area.

Feedback received from event attendees reinforces the benefits of providing expanded opportunities to hear from more diverse groups. The survey data highlights how demographics, including gender and ethnic groups, shape experiences with the project such as usage patterns and top areas of interest. These insights will enhance the team's engagement efforts across various communities and inform future outreach initiatives to better connect with the individuals and groups the project serves.



Completing surveys at Ladner Exchange and listening to community feedback at Tsawwassen Mills



Appendix A Survey





Appendix A Survey

In Spring 2024 survey questions were still in development. As a result, some questions were either not asked or not recorded during the first three events:

- **April 17: City of Richmond Capital Projects Open House**
- **May 3: Millenium Trail: Captain's Cove Marina**
- **May 25-26: Ladner May Days**

All questions in the survey were optional. Respondents could skip questions they preferred not to answer.

Travel mode

What do you usually use to travel to any place? Select all that apply.

(n=1,101)



Respondents could select more than one travel mode.

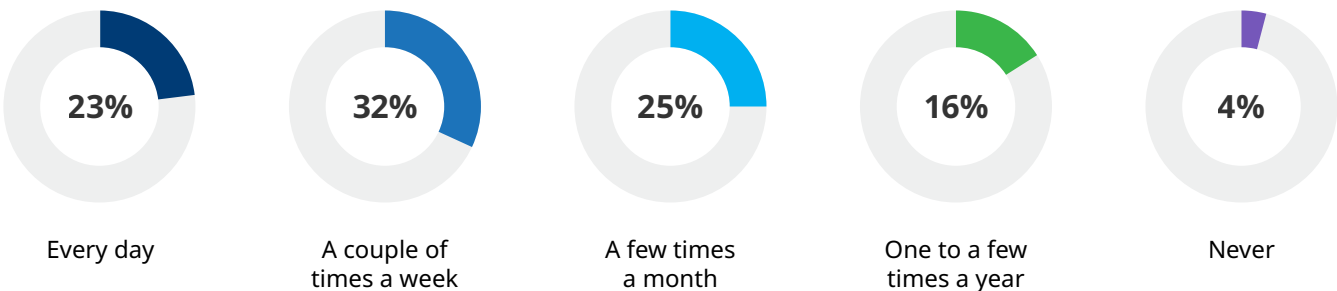


Frequency of Use

On average, how often do you use the George Massey Tunnel?

(n=1,089)

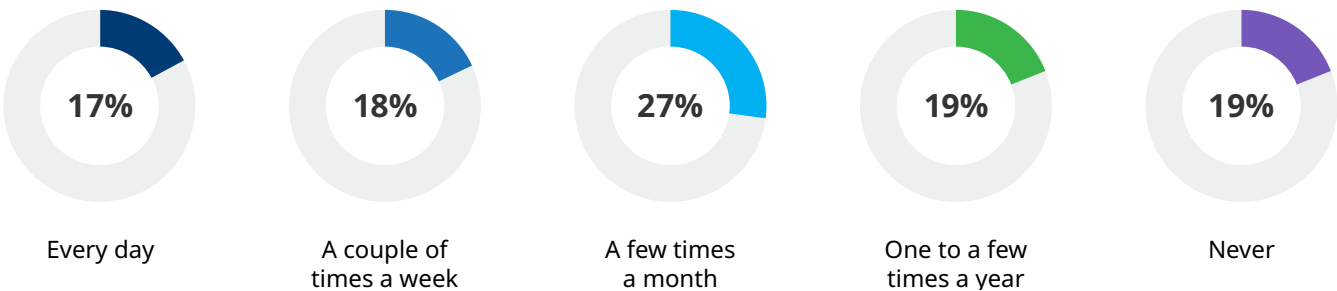
57% of survey respondents were frequent users of the existing George Massey Tunnel, travelling every day or a couple of times a week.



On average, how often do you use the Steveston Interchange?

(n=1,071)

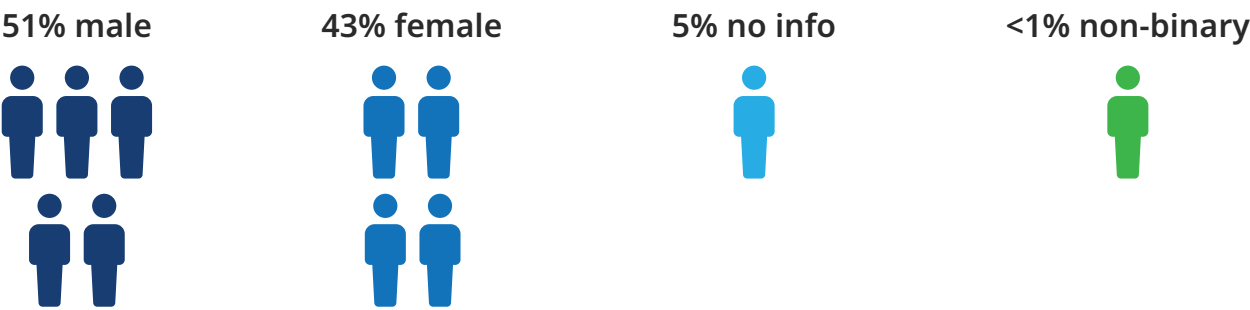
65% of survey respondents are infrequent users of the Steveston Interchange, travelling a few times a month or less.



Demographics

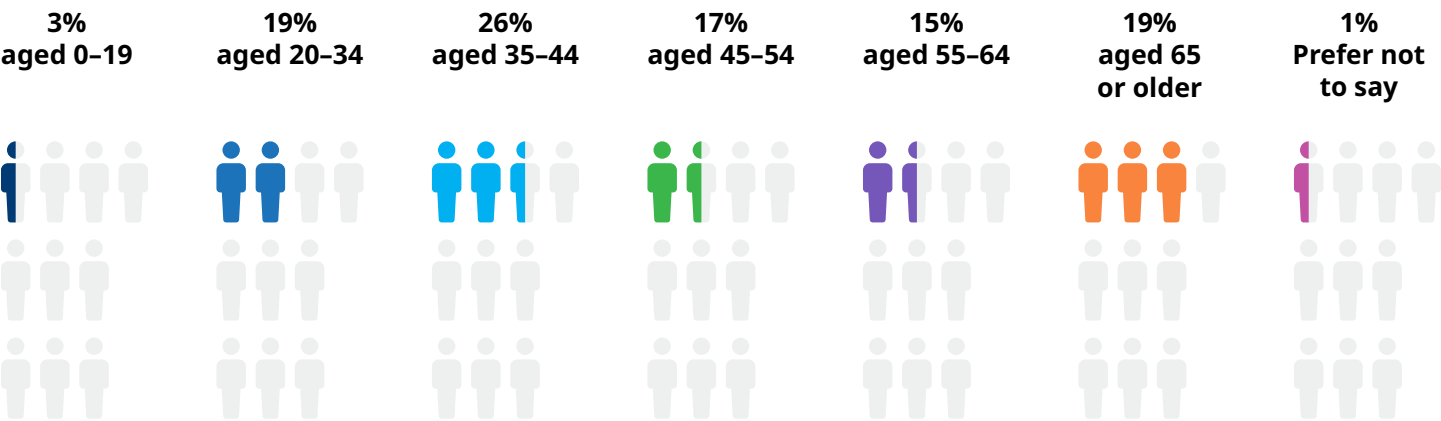
How do you identify?

(n=1,101)



Which category below includes your age?

(n=1,050)



What is your main ethnic origin or that of your ancestors (grandparents or older)?
Select the part of the world that represents your main ethnic origin from the list of options.

(n=1,151)

Residents and visitors come from many different backgrounds.



62% self-identified as ethnically diverse

Respondents were able to select more than one ethnic origin.

Ethnic Origin ¹	Percentage
Canadian	37%
East Asian (e.g., Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Taiwanese)	17%
British Isles (e.g., English, Scottish, Welsh, Irish)	16%
South Asian (e.g., Punjabi, Indian, Tamil, Pakistani, Bangladeshi)	14%

¹In recognition of the continued work on disaggregated data, the project team adopted the list of options for “ethnic origin” from the recently consulted and updated City of Vancouver Shape Your City ethnic origin categories. The Highway 99 Tunnel Project Team acknowledges that there is ongoing work stemming from the Anti-Racism Act, which requires government to create and support an anti-racism strategy that will identify and address racism in public policies, programs and services. More information on this can be found at <https://engage.gov.bc.ca/govtogetherbc/engagement/anti-racism-legislation/> and <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/british-columbians-our-governments/services-policies-for-government/gender-equity/fact-sheet-gba.pdf>



The following ethnic origins were also noted, by fewer than 5% of respondents:

- Additional Central and South American (e.g., Salvadorian, Panamanian, Argentinian, etc.)
- American
- Ashkenazi
- Brazilian
- Caribbean (e.g., Jamaican, Barbadian, Cuban)
- Central European (e.g., French, German, Polish)
- East African (e.g., Ethiopian, Sudanese, Kenyan, Somali)
- Eastern European (e.g., Russian, Ukrainian, Croatian)
- First Nations
- Guatemalan
- Metis
- Mexican
- Middle Eastern (e.g., Lebanese, Iranian, Syrian, Iraqi)
- Multiple Indigenous identities
- North African (e.g., Algerian, Egyptian, Libyan)
- Northern European (e.g., Swedish, Danish, Latvian)
- Oceania (e.g., Australian, New Zealander)
- Peruvian
- Southeast Asian (e.g., Filipino, Thai, Vietnamese)
- Southern African (e.g., Tanzanian, South African, Zimbabwean)
- Southern European (e.g., Greek, Italian, Spanish)
- West African (e.g., Ghanaian, Liberian, Senegalese)

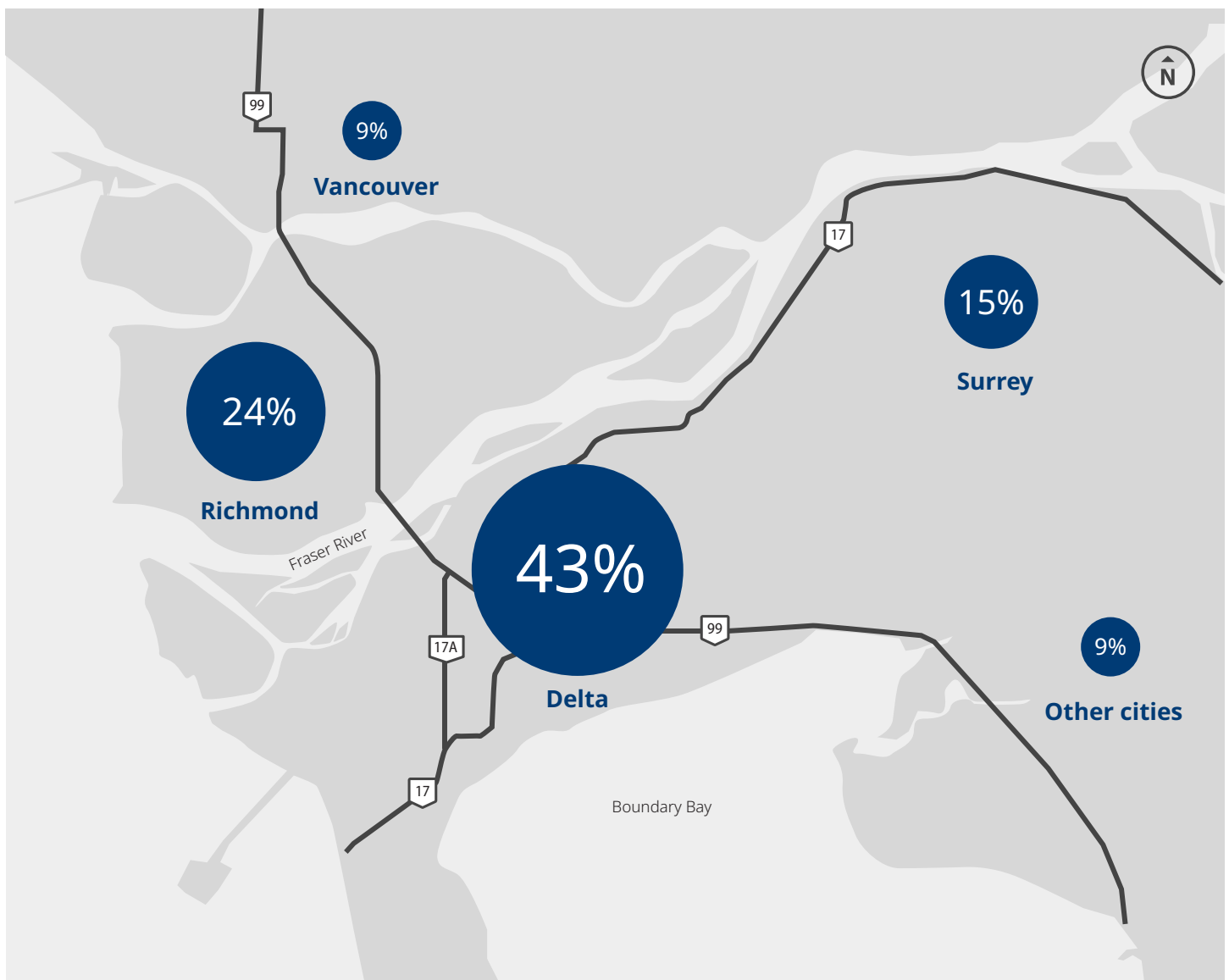


Geography

Which city do you live in?

(n=1,074)

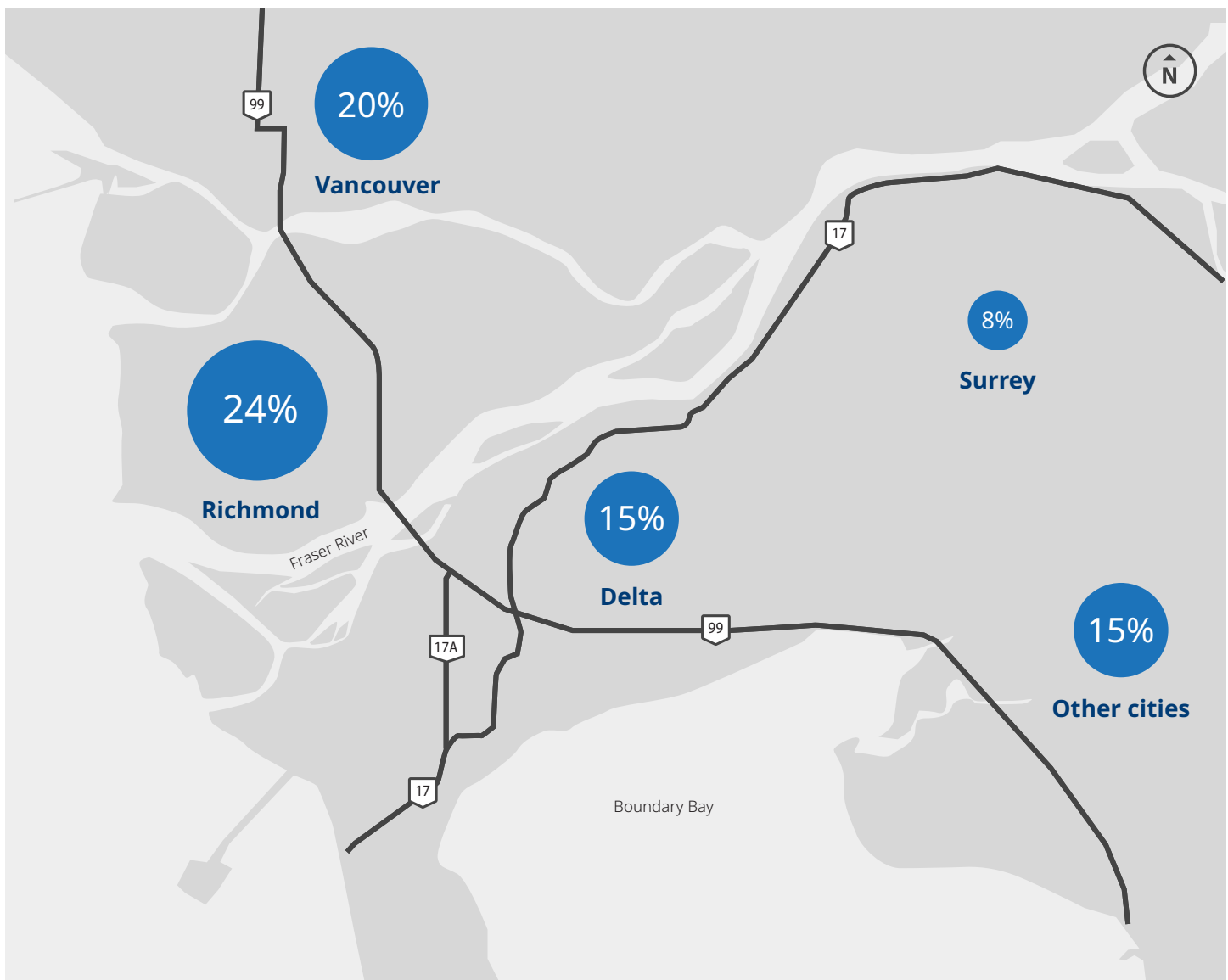
Event locations were primarily selected to reach people who travelled across Richmond and Delta. 43% of respondents live in Delta, 24% live in Richmond and 15% live in Surrey. Combined, these locations account for 82% of total survey respondents.



Which city do you work in?

(n=1,000)

When asked about place of work or study, Richmond was the most selected option with 24%, followed closely by Vancouver at 20% and Delta at 15%. Surrey has moderate representation at 8%. A total of 19% of survey respondents indicated they are “retired” or “not working”.



Communications

Would you like to sign up for the Highway 99 Tunnel Program newsletter to receive project updates?

(n=639)



Have you heard about the Highway 99 Tunnel Program Community Office located at 5180 Ladner Trunk Rd. Delta before?

(n=1,021)



Key Themes of Feedback Received

Do you have questions/feedback?

(n=640)

The main interest of all respondents is knowing when construction will start and when the new tunnel will open. They were also interested in the project's scope, design and how it will connect with existing roads.

There was also a lot of interest in the multi-use path, with people wanting more details about its safety, accessibility and how it links into the tunnel and broader pathway network.

Some respondents were worried about how changes in government could affect the project.

Of all survey respondents, 25% provided no additional feedback and 7% said were not aware of the Highway 99 Tunnel Program prior to speaking to the project team at the event.

- Project and construction schedule (44%)
- Construction process, design and scope (22%)
- Crossing option (18%)
- Multi-use path (8%)
- Construction and environmental impacts (6%)

Other topics of interest mentioned (less than 5% of respondents) include:

- Steveston Interchange Project
- Project budget, funding and inflation
- Decommissioning of the existing tunnel
- Richmond and Vancouver crossings (Oak Street and Knight Street bridges)
- Option for a Skytrain
- An overpass connecting River Road in Ladner
- Options for HOV
- Connectivity along Millennium Trail
- Height of the overpasses along Highway 99





**Highway 99
Tunnel Program**

highway99tunnel.ca

highway99tunnelprogram@gov.bc.ca