

Debunking Massey replacement myths

Since the Government of B.C. announced its intention to replace the George Massey Tunnel in September 2012, a number of myths have been perpetuated. The following are the top 10 that persist, and government's response to each.

Myth #10: The project is not needed.

- ▶ This is currently the worst traffic bottleneck in B.C.
- ▶ The project will save up to 30 minutes a day for rush hour commuters, reduce vehicle idling by one million hours, and remove 9,000 tonnes of greenhouse gas each year.
- ▶ Collisions will be reduced by an estimated 35 per cent.
- ▶ Dramatically improved safety in the event of an earthquake.

Myth #9: The ministry has not consulted with key stakeholders.

- ▶ Three full rounds of public engagement over three years with more than 3,000 participants.
- ▶ Publicly released over 3,600 pages of project information on our project website.
- ▶ More than 20 meetings each with Metro Vancouver and TransLink over the past three years to discuss various project aspects including traffic, land use, transit and air quality.
- ▶ More than 70 meetings each with Richmond and Delta over the past three years. Both municipalities have provided valuable comments that have shaped the project scope.

Myth #8: The project needs a federal environmental review.

- ▶ The Province has a very robust environmental assessment process similar to that of the federal government; it includes another 4-6 month review period during 2016.
- ▶ Federal government agencies are part of the provincial Environmental Assessment Office's technical working group on the project.
- ▶ The bridge will have no piers in the Fraser River and no additional dredging is planned once the tunnel is removed.

Myth #7: The project will not benefit the environment.

- ▶ Current congestion at the tunnel creates a million hours of idling a year. Keeping traffic moving will reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- ▶ A free-flowing bridge and dedicated transit lanes will encourage more people to use transit.
- ▶ Building a new bridge and removing the old tunnel creates opportunities for environmental and community improvements at Deas Island Regional Park and Deas Slough.
- ▶ The existing drainage system in the corridor will be improved, and habitat enhanced by replacing invasive plants with native species.

Myth #6: A new tunnel would be a better choice than a bridge.

- ▶ A number of options were the subject of stakeholder and public consultation.
- ▶ Extensive technical analysis confirmed that a new bridge is the best option.
- ▶ Building a tunnel to the same seismic standards as a bridge is a much more costly, complex and environmentally invasive process, involving river-bottom dredging and bringing in layers of sand, gravel and loose stone to reinforce the earth onshore and in the Fraser River below the water.
- ▶ Compared to a new tunnel, a bridge is safer, has less impact on agriculture, is less expensive to construct to modern seismic standards, and will have less of an environmental impact.

Myth #5: We don't need a 10-lane bridge. Eight lanes are enough.

- ▶ An eight-lane bridge – or an eight-lane tunnel, for that matter – would see rush hour congestion on opening day.
- ▶ We need dedicated transit lanes and a lane each way for slow moving trucks and cars to be able to merge, enter and exit interchanges like at Steveston Highway.

Myth #4: This project is being driven by Port Metro Vancouver.

- ▶ The new bridge is being built to address the worst traffic bottleneck in the province.
- ▶ Removing the tunnel will not significantly change the size of ships that are able to use the channel for a number of reasons.
- ▶ For example, the new bridge will be the same height above the water as the Alex Fraser Bridge, so it won't change the height of vessels using the river.
- ▶ Other pipeline crossings, the width of the river, and depth of the river at its mouth are bigger impediments to the expansion of shipping than the existing tunnel.

Myth #3: The project will just move the bottleneck to the Oak Street Bridge.

- ▶ A new bridge doesn't automatically mean additional traffic at the Oak and 70th intersection.
- ▶ 60 per cent of northbound morning traffic through the George Massey Tunnel stops in Richmond. That pattern is expected to continue.
- ▶ The new bridge will include more transit and cycling options and better connections to existing transit services, making alternative transportation more appealing.

Myth #2: The project will negatively impact farmland in Richmond and Delta.

- ▶ The Province has committed to no net loss of agricultural land and is working with farmers to achieve a net gain in quality farmland in Richmond and Delta.
- ▶ Farmers will also benefit from reduced congestion, improved travel times and improved access between farms on both sides of Highway 99.
- ▶ Richmond farmers are looking forward to the improved drainage and the reliability of the route in getting their products to market.

Myth #1: Building more roadway lanes will lead to more congestion.

- ▶ Experience here and around the world shows that upgrades to existing corridors do not create new demand – especially when effective land use plans such as B.C.'s Agricultural Land Reserve and Metro Vancouver's Regional Growth Strategy are in place.
- ▶ As communities grow, the need for travel grows. This includes travel for goods and services, much of which can't be done on transit.
- ▶ Transit improvements built into this project will help improve travel time and reliability for Highway 99 Rapid Bus service and pave the way for future light rail transit as demand grows.