

1.0 PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Bow Corridor Regional Transportation Strategy was commissioned by four governments in the region – Parks Canada, MD of Bighorn, Town of Banff and Town of Canmore.

The objective of the project is to absorb or manage destination and through traffic without significantly impacting ecological integrity. The Strategy will develop a justified and reasoned list of transportation solutions for the region that can be practically implemented.

The Study Area extends from Lake Louise eastward along the TransCanada Highway (TCH) to the junction of Highway 68, taking in the three communities of Lake Louise, Banff and Canmore and including lands up to the trailheads on either side of the TCH.



The project is being undertaken in four steps, as follows:



The first step, Issues Scan and Vision Statement, has now been completed.

2.0 ISSUES SCAN

An Issues Scan was constructed based on a review of earlier studies. Over 107 documents were reviewed.

Based on this review, many transportation challenges facing the Bow Corridor were identified and categorized into four main subject areas:

1. Human Use
2. Ecology
3. Infrastructure; and
4. Socio-political Considerations.

3.0 ISSUES: SUBJECT AREAS

Within each subject area, a number of issues have been identified, and several factors to be taken into consideration have been listed. The factors represent previously recorded facts, comments or opinions and are intended to provide additional texture to each issue.

The issues scan does not purport to prioritize issues, nor does it attempt to assign any particular weight to any of the factors. It also does not pretend to generate an exhaustive list of potential options for the Regional Transportation Strategy. These tasks will all be undertaken in later stages of the project.

3.1 Human Use

Human Use Issues were further divided into three categories: visitor demand; local demand and commercial and other (through) traffic demand.

Issue #1: Visitor Demand

Research Questions: Who are they?

What are their activities within the Corridor today, and when do peak periods of activity occur?

What will their activities be in 2020, and in which season(s) will peak periods of activity occur?

How do we best meet or manage visitor needs in the short-, medium- and long-term?

Factors to be taken into consideration include the number and origin of visitors; where they obtain their information; mode of transport to travel to and within the Corridor; what activities they participate in; and the economic benefits they bring.

Issue #2: Local Demand

Research Questions: Who lives and works within the Corridor?

What regional transportation choices are being made within the Corridor today?

What are the projections for 2020, and will they represent a significant portion of TCH traffic?

How do we best meet or manage regional traffic needs for local residents and workers in the short-, medium- and long-term?

Factors to be taken into consideration include population level; commuting residents; local economic patterns; and mode of transport to travel to and within the Corridor.

Issue #3: Commercial and Other (Through) Traffic Demand

Research Questions: What commercial goods traffic occurs within or travels through the Corridor today?
What kind of commercial goods traffic will occur within or travel through the Corridor in 2020?
How do we best meet or manage commercial goods traffic needs in the short-, medium- and long-term?
What other kinds of traffic travel through the Corridor today? Projections for 2020?
How do we best meet or manage other (through) traffic needs in the short-, medium- and long-term?

Factors to be taken into consideration include economic (the TCH and CPR are important goods transport links); volume travelling through the Corridor; and visitor travel to and from other destinations such as the Columbia Valley.

3.2 Ecology

Three categories of ecological issue were addressed: wildlife; landscape and climate change/air.

Issue #4: Wildlife

Research Questions: What are the species or wildlife groups of particular concern?
What are the significant wildlife movement corridors and habitat areas in the area?
What are the consequences of mitigation choices across a range of options?

Factors to be taken into consideration include a number of specific items: species of concern; corridors and habitat areas affecting transportation design options; mortality (wildlife corridors intersect with human transportation corridors); mitigation options; specific issues (such as Skiing Louise summertime operation) and planning and management approaches.

Issue #5 Landscape

Research Question: What are the significant biophysical/ecological systems in the study area?

Factors to be taken into consideration include: fragmentation; vegetation; contamination; regional transportation modes; competition for biophysical resources and channelization of water courses.

Issue #6 Climate Change/Air

Research Questions: Which transportation technologies offer reduced greenhouse gas emissions?
What is the quality of air in the study area?

Factors to be taken into consideration include: emission reduction options and feasibility; eMission Banff; particulates; monitoring programs; and increased momentum for change due to international agreements such as the Kyoto Protocol.

3.3 Infrastructure

Five categories of infrastructure issue were identified: TransCanada Highway/ Feeder System; arterial roadway network; Canadian Pacific Railway; communities; and recreational / scenic sites.

Issue #7: TransCanada Highway / Feeders System

Issue #8: Arterial Roadway Network

Issue #9: Canadian Pacific Railway

Issue #10: Communities

Issue #11: Recreational / Scenic Sites

Research Question: What infrastructure pressures are being experienced today?

Factors to be taken into consideration include a number of specific examples such as park'n'ride sites (currently, there are no intercept parking lots for bus shuttle services); traffic congestion and highway safety on the TCH west of Castle Junction; and passenger traffic (currently, service between Calgary, Canmore and Banff either does not exist or does not offer sufficient convenience to attract regular business).

3.4 Socio-political Considerations

Socio-political considerations address the subject of whether the traveling public will accept various regulatory options designed to modify transportation patterns within the Corridor.

Issue #12: Receptivity to Restrictive Regulations

Tolerance for restrictive transportation regulations, user fees and demand management measures may vary depending on whether the traveler is a regular or one-time visitor.

Issue #13:

Research Question: What, if any, transportation pricing options are desirable?

Factors to be taken into consideration include...

Issue #14: Balance between Demand Management, Ecology and Local Economies

An appropriate balance needs to be struck between measures introduced to manage visitor and other traffic demands, to protect and enhance the ecology, and to foster healthy economies in local communities.

Issue #15: Rebalancing Transportation Modes

An appropriate balance needs to be struck between public and private road and rail transportation options, facilitating intermodal synergies wherever possible.

4.0 WORKING VISION STATEMENT

Stemming from the 15 issues identified in the Issues Scan, a *working* vision statement has been drafted to provide provisional context for the evolving Strategy.

Throughout the Bow Corridor, public and private transportation facilities, services and practices as they relate to motorized vehicles support the safe and efficient movement of people, wildlife and goods in a manner that enhances ecological integrity and the quality of life for visitors, residents, businesses and travelers in the region.

Further input from both the Technical Committee and the community will be sought throughout the project in order to refine the vision statement.

5.0 NEXT STEPS

The next step in the project is to conduct a Situation Analysis.

Information compiled for the Situation Analysis will be combined with GIS mapping and analysis to give context to the complex issues in developing the Strategy.

Two Open Houses will be held this fall – the first in Canmore on November 27, 2003 and the second in Banff on November 28th and 29th. Feedback from these events will help build a strong foundation for exploring Best Practices and Alternatives (Step 3 of the Bow Corridor Regional Transportation Strategy).