



City of Delta
COUNCIL REPORT
Regular Meeting

To: **Council**

From: **Corporate Services Department**

Date: **June 5, 2025**

Fraser River Tunnel Project: Environmental Assessment Update

The following report has been reviewed and endorsed by the City Manager's Office.

▪ **RECOMMENDATION:**

THAT the detailed comments in Attachment B be provided to the BC Environmental Assessment Office by the June 25 comment deadline.

▪ **PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the Environmental Assessment process for the Fraser River Tunnel Project and summarize key comments and items of importance for Delta.

▪ **BACKGROUND:**

The City of Delta has long advocated for a new crossing of the Fraser River to replace the aging George Massey Tunnel to address significant traffic and safety concerns. In August 2021, the Province announced the replacement of the George Massey Tunnel with a new eight-lane immersed tube tunnel and new eight-lane Deas Slough Bridge. The new tunnel will include three general-purpose lanes and a dedicated transit lane in each direction, and a multi-use pathway for cyclists and pedestrians. The Province selected a Design-Build Contractor for the project on July 23, 2024. Project construction is planned to commence in 2026 and intended to be open to traffic in 2030, subject to receipt of an Environmental Assessment Certificate and associated regulatory permits. Following the opening of the new tunnel, the existing tunnel will be closed; this is currently planned by the end of 2032.

The Fraser River Tunnel project is subject to a provincial Environmental Assessment process. Staff have been participating in the process as members of the Technical Advisory Committee. Feedback to date from the public and local governments has informed the development of the Application.

▪ **DISCUSSION:**

The Environmental Assessment for the Fraser River Tunnel Project is currently at the Application phase (see Attachment A). Comments on the Application are due to the

Environmental Assessment Office by June 25, 2025. The 30-day public comment period is running from May 22 to June 23, 2025. Public open houses were held on June 4 and 5 in Delta and Richmond; staff were in attendance at the Delta open house. The Proponent also held an information session with the business community on June 10 and a pop-up session at the Deas Rowing Club is upcoming on June 28.

The Fraser River Tunnel Project has been designated a provincial priority, and the review of this project is to be expedited by:

- Drafting a regulation under S. 77 of the Environmental Assessment Act
- Exploring synchronous permitting
- Shortening timeline to issue Notice to 120 days.

Attachment B details the City of Delta's comments on the Application that are recommended to be submitted to the Environmental Assessment Office. In general, the City is supportive of the new tunnel concept and is encouraging the Province to expedite the project in order to minimize impacts to residents from the construction period. It is also acknowledged there will be significant benefits to Delta that will come from reducing congestion and travel times across the Fraser River and the associated improvements for active transportation in this corridor. The key points relevant to the City related to mitigating impacts from the project are summarized below.

Noise and Vibration

The Application indicates that nearby residences can expect significant changes in noise levels during construction. Construction activities, particularly pile driving, might exceed guideline threshold limits at these residences.

A 3 dB change is not perceptible to the human ear; an increase of 4-5 dB is considered noticeable, while an increase of 10 dB is considered twice as loud as before. The Project modeling indicates a maximum increase in noise of 8-12 dB during construction at nearby residences in Hampton Cove, River Woods and River House, with the highest change in noise in the second year of construction. Mitigation measures (see below) are expected to reduce these noise levels, but it is unclear by how much because the specific mitigation measures for construction have not been finalized yet. The increase in noise at these residences during operation of the new highway alignment, in comparison to current highway noise, is anticipated to be 2-4 dB. Given that there is already noise in this area from the existing highway, the Ministry of Transportation and Transit's threshold for mitigation is less than it would be for a new highway in an area not already influenced by highway noise.

Noise and vibration from construction activities will be addressed in a noise mitigation strategy and a communication protocol will be established. Most Project construction activities will generally occur within a 10-hour period during the daytime, with limited activities occurring during the nighttime. Pile driving is expected to occur over two five-month periods in the first two years of construction. Vibratory pile-driving will be prioritized over impact pile driving where possible to reduce noise levels. Mobile construction equipment will be fitted with silencers. The use of noise walls is a proposed mitigation strategy that is expected to lower noise levels at nearby residences during

Project operation. Staff have requested an opportunity to review and provide input on the noise mitigation strategy.

There is no reference in the Application to property value impacts of noise from construction or operation of the new tunnel. Staff anticipate a significant impact on property values in the River Woods neighbourhood during the construction period and beyond, with the highway being closer than it is currently and the long construction period they will have to endure. In the City's comments to the Environmental Assessment Office, staff have reiterated the City's previous request for the Province to offer purchase of River Woods homes in compensation for the construction and future operational noise impacts.

Millennium Trail

The City has advocated for keeping the Millennium Trail open during construction. In the Application, the Province has indicated that the Millennium Trail underpass that crosses the existing Highway 99 right-of-way will be inaccessible during Project construction. The Province has committed to providing a Millennium Trail detour to maintain access during construction. No details are provided in the Application on the proposed detour route. Staff will submit a request to the Environmental Assessment Office that the Revised Application include a map delineating the proposed detour route for the Millennium Trail, and City's comments include a request that the detour be located within the project footprint and in close proximity to the current trail alignment.

Fraser River Salt Wedge

The Application notes that the Project does not introduce a physical mechanism capable of causing a detectable change in the dynamics of the salt wedge. The primary reasons for this are: 1) the protrusion of the new tunnel above the riverbed will be similar to the existing tunnel and will therefore not reduce or enhance the physical barrier to movement of saline water along the riverbed, and 2) although potential changes to flow patterns and velocities may result in localized deviations in salinity levels at discrete points in time, the primary driver of the salt wedge dynamics – the tides – remain unchanged. Therefore, macro-scale changes to the salt wedge dynamics are not a likely Project effect. The modeling predicted no meaningful changes to salinity levels relative to existing conditions at the Tasker irrigation intake or the tunnel corridor area.

River Road Overpass

The Application's Reference Concept does not include the River Road Overpass that the City of Delta is strongly advocating for. As such, the City of Delta continues to advocate for a River Road Overpass.

Next Steps

Upon receiving compiled comments from the Environmental Assessment Office, the Transportation Investment Corporation (on behalf of the Ministry of Transportation and

Transit, the proponent) will review and provide responses to the comments. The Technical Advisory Committee will then review those responses with the Environmental Assessment Office. Once the review is complete, the Environmental Assessment Office will issue a Notice Regarding Application Review to the proponent in September 2025, which will inform the proponent's development of a Revised Application. The timeline to revise the Application is at the proponent's discretion. Assuming that the Environmental Assessment Certificate is issued in 2026, construction is anticipated to begin next year.

Implications:

Financial Implications –There are no financial implications.

▪ **CONCLUSION:**

The Environmental Assessment for the Fraser River Tunnel Project is currently in the Application phase and this report outlines comments that are recommended to be submitted on behalf of the City of Delta. Staff will continue to participate in the Technical Advisory Committee to advocate for the City of Delta's interests in relation to this project.



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SH/ls

This report has been prepared in consultation with the following listed department.

Concurring Department		
Department	Name	Signature
Engineering	Rosaline Choy for Steven Lan	RC

▪ **ATTACHMENTS:**

- A. Environmental Assessment Process Diagram
- B. Staff Comments to the BC Environmental Assessment Office