



NATIONAL CAPITAL COMMISSION
COMMISSION DE LA CAPITALE NATIONALE

Round 1: Issues/Opportunities and Vision/Principles

NCC Long Term Integrated Interprovincial
Crossings Plan for the National Capital Region
A Strategic Plan for Interprovincial Crossings
and Sustainable Transportation for the National Capital Region

PUBLIC CONSULTATION REPORT
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SEPTEMBER 8, 2021

Canada

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Executive Summary

ES.I Project Description

The National Capital Commission (NCC) is leading the development of the Long-Term Integrated Interprovincial Crossings Plan (the Plan) in collaboration between its provincial and municipal partners. The Plan will provide recommendations for managing the movement of people and goods across the Ottawa River in the National Capital Region, from now to 2050.

Finding solutions for how people and goods travel more easily and efficiently across the Ottawa River is critical to the long-term wellbeing of the National Capital Region — environmentally, socially and economically. Many of the five interprovincial vehicular bridges are at or beyond their designed car-carrying capacity, leading to peak period congestion and delays. The population of the Ottawa-Gatineau area is expected to grow from approximately 1.3 million to 1.6 million people by 2031, increasing the demand for interprovincial travel.

The Plan is being developed in four phases:

- Phase 1 – Needs & Opportunities (Spring 2020);
- Phase 2 – Vision & Principles (Summer / Fall 2020);
- Phase 3 – Develop & Evaluate Future Scenarios (Fall 2020/ Winter 2020/2021); and
- Phase 4 – The Strategic Plan (Fall 2021).

This report provides an overview of the first public consultation process for this study, conducted as the study nears the completion of Phase 2.

ES.II Public engagement process

This first round of consultation was conducted virtually in both English and French and consisted of a public survey and stakeholder workshops conducted between October 14 and November 2, 2020. These engagement activities were hosted by the NCC on the NCC study website. The intent of the public consultation was to introduce the Strategic Plan and seek feedback on the following:

- Study vision;
- Pillars and guiding principles;
- Evaluation criteria;
- Transportation issues for resolution; and
- Potential measures (actions) to improve interprovincial transportation.

The consultation findings will help refine the policy directions and foundation for the study and will shape and inform subsequent phases of the Plan.

An email invitation for the online consultation was sent using Public Affairs distribution lists. Messages were also posted on the NCC's social media accounts (Facebook and Twitter), soliciting the participation of all interested members of the public. A paid digital advertising campaign was also launched on these same platforms throughout the duration of the survey.

Participants in the engagement activities included the following:

- **Online Survey:** A total of 1280 respondents replied to all six of the online survey questions about the Plan and an additional 426 responded to between one and five questions. Among these responses, there were a total of 2027 comments to free-form response questions, which were reviewed, sorted and grouped by similar messages where applicable. After splitting longer comments with multiple themes into separate comments, there were approximately 2,750 comments, which are summarized in this report and also sorted and listed in the Appendix.

Almost one-quarter of respondents were from Québec and almost three-quarters were from Ontario, similar to the interprovincial proportion of population in the National Capital Region. While there were survey responses from all age groups, responses tended toward older respondents in Ontario vs. Québec.

Males were more likely to respond the survey, with a ratio of 1.71 males to 1 female respondents. A total of 9.3% identified as visible minorities, 2.5% of respondents identified as Indigenous, and 7.1% identified as a person with a disability.

- **Stakeholder Workshops:** Eight stakeholders in total participated in the two workshops. These represented associations, interest groups, federal partners and a private business.

ES.III Public consultation highlights

The public and stakeholder feedback illustrates a breadth and detail of the responses to the vision, pillars and guiding principles, and the evaluation criteria. Some commonalities among the three sets of responses include the following:

- Two messages are prominent in the feedback relating to these policy directions:
 - Minimizing the impact of interprovincial travel, especially heavy truck travel, on neighbourhoods and communities; and
 - Environmental protection, comprising protection of the natural environment as well as reducing climate change impacts.
- The majority of survey respondents (71% to 75%) were comfortable with the vision, pillars and guiding principles and the evaluation criteria.
- The comments often were intended to seek clarification on, build on, or emphasize aspects of the presented material and were largely supportive of the policy directions outlined toward the development of the Plan (recognizing that a small number of respondents proposed postponing

development of the Plan until the long-term effects of the pandemic are clearer).

The numerous comments and suggestions provided about using clearer or simpler terms and language, streamlining overlapping policy items, including elements that seem to be missing, etc. must be considered toward further clarifying and solidifying this study foundation.

Priority issues and actions

The following priority issues and actions were made evident in both the online surveys and in the stakeholder meetings:

- Managing trucks in downtown Ottawa and Gatineau is a very important issue that the Plan needs to address.
- Related to trucking, minimizing impacts on neighbourhoods adjacent to the crossings was also frequently noted – especially the impact of a potential new eastern crossing on eastern Ottawa neighbourhoods such as Manor Park.
- There is a need to consider personal vehicles, in addition to the Plan’s emphasis on sustainable modes.
- Finally, many responses also stressed the need to look at interprovincial transportation more broadly, as an integrated system, considering the need to address traffic impacts on approaches (e.g. Island Park Drive), and the need to have integrated transit beyond the crossings themselves.

ES.IV Analysis of results

Online Survey

Survey responses are summarized below for each section.

- **Vision statement:** Overall, 74%of respondents indicated that they would not add to or change the vision, among the remaining 26%, the top respondent comments included:
 - Specify respect for (or minimizing impact to) neighbourhoods/ communities. (76 comments)
 - Action/change is needed sooner than 2050. (48 comments)
- **Pillars and principles:** Overall, 75%of respondents indicated that they would not add to or change the vision. Among the remaining 25%, the top respondent comments included:
 - Pillar 5: Quality of Life: Specify minimizing impacts (e.g. noise, pollution, traffic, health & safety) and protecting/ respecting quality of life/ needs of existing neighbourhoods/communities. (57 comments); and
 - Address inter-provincial trucking impacts to the downtown/ residential communities. (26)

- Pillar 3: Environment and Climate Change: Specify commitment to the protection of wildlife, natural habitat, wetlands/water, and nature reserves. (20 comments)
- **Evaluation criteria:** Overall, 71% of respondents indicated that they would not add to or change the vision. Among the remaining 29%, the top respondent comments included:
 - Pillar 5 Criteria: Quality of Life: Add consideration of impacts on local neighbourhoods. (74)
 - Pillar 3 Criteria: Environment and Climate Change: Add criterion on impacts on local environment/parks/ecosystems/habitats. (34)
 - Pillar 4: Economy: Trucks/traffic need a viable interprovincial highway-to-highway connection (outside of the downtown core). (18)
 - Pillar 1 Criteria: One Region: Communities outside of downtown also need to be well integrated. (17)
- **Transportation issues:** Among a list of potential interprovincial travel issues, “too many heavy trucks on and around the crossings” was selected most often at 39% overall. The issue of “car stuck in traffic”, which was most commonly selected among Québec-based respondents at 55% of respondents, but was chosen by only 32% of Ontario-based respondents. The third most common issue overall (36%) was the “lack of good travel options other than a personal vehicle”.
Suggested missing issues included the need for bridges/connections outside of downtown (22 comments), also the need for bridges/connections east of Ottawa specifically. (21 comments), or not enough bridges/connections in general (19 comments).
- **Potential transportation solutions:** The most frequently selected measures/actions were the use of the Prince of Wales bridge for walking and cycling (47%) followed by increased crossing capacity (46%), rapid transit across the Ottawa River (44% overall) and a more unified transit service between OC Transpo and STO (43%).
- **Additional feedback:** The top additional comments provided included the following:
 - Focus on interprovincial transit (LRT) that is part of a well-connected broader system. (71)
 - Do not build a bridge across Kettle Island. (49)
 - The issue of interprovincial truck traffic and its impacts to Ottawa downtown/residential neighbourhoods needs to be addressed. (39)
 - Use the Prince of Wales bridge for (rail) transit. (31)
 - It is important to consider other options to improve traffic besides building new crossings. (23)

- A new interprovincial crossing is urgently needed and should be started without further delay. (21)

Stakeholder workshops

Feedback from the two stakeholder workshops generally aligned very closely with key messages received from the online survey. These included the following:

- Concerns with impacts of interprovincial traffic on nearby neighbourhoods, especially interprovincial heavy trucks
- Crossing congestion;
- The need for better integrated transit and for transit to be part of the solution; and
- The need for quality cycling infrastructure including winter maintenance.

In addition, some respondents suggested that due to uncertainties about long-term impacts of COVID-19 on travel patterns, the NCC should consider postponing the development of the Plan.

ES.V Integration of results

The feedback received as part of this round of public engagement will help inform the subsequent steps of the Plan's development including developing and assessing alternative scenarios.

Based on input received, the project team will also examine the vision, pillars, guiding principles and evaluation criteria to look for opportunities to increase clarity, streamline the policy directions, and add overlooked elements.

ES.VI Next steps

The next steps in the Plan development process are to finalize and evaluate the alternative scenarios.

The next round of public and stakeholder engagement is tentatively scheduled for October 2021. During this round of engagement, the draft final plan will be presented.