



Connecting Our Region

Our first region-wide transportation plan



Draft Regional Transportation Plan Engagement summary

November 2020



Introduction

The Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) identifies transportation projects and priorities that will help build and maintain a healthy, thriving and connected future for the Central Okanagan.

The plan is designed to help improve the movement of people and goods and create a region where more people can choose sustainable and affordable transportation options. It establishes a framework for priorities over the next 20 years so that Central Okanagan governments can plan and seek funding as a unified region.

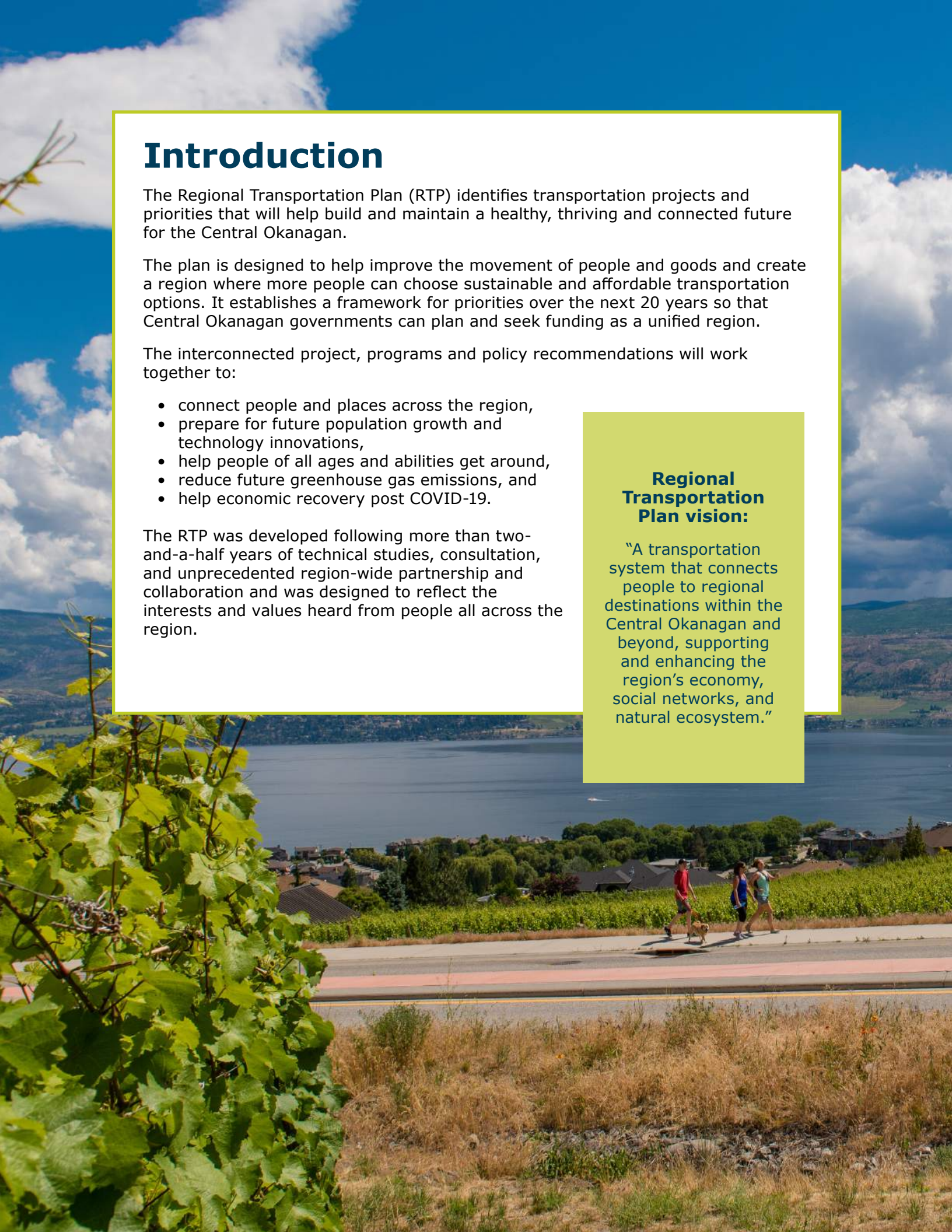
The interconnected project, programs and policy recommendations will work together to:

- connect people and places across the region,
- prepare for future population growth and technology innovations,
- help people of all ages and abilities get around,
- reduce future greenhouse gas emissions, and
- help economic recovery post COVID-19.

The RTP was developed following more than two-and-a-half years of technical studies, consultation, and unprecedented region-wide partnership and collaboration and was designed to reflect the interests and values heard from people all across the region.

Regional Transportation Plan vision:

"A transportation system that connects people to regional destinations within the Central Okanagan and beyond, supporting and enhancing the region's economy, social networks, and natural ecosystem."



Engaging with people across the region

Consultation over the course of developing the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) has included engagement with stakeholders and residents across the Central Okanagan.

Consultation has included three online questionnaires, pop-up open houses across the region, the “Let’s Talk Transportation” event, stakeholder interviews, meetings with staff at municipalities across the region, and numerous presentations to elected officials at key milestones.

The RTP was developed in partnership with the City of Kelowna, City of West Kelowna, District of Lake Country, District of Peachland, Westbank First Nation and the Regional District of Central Okanagan,

in collaboration with the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure and BC Transit.

The plan was also developed based on public input into what’s important, and so the Regional Transportation Plan sets the direction for Central Okanagan governments to work together to:

- move people and goods more efficiently,
- achieve fast and reliable transit,
- create a safe and convenient region-wide bicycling and trails network, and
- incorporate new mobility options.



April-May 2018:

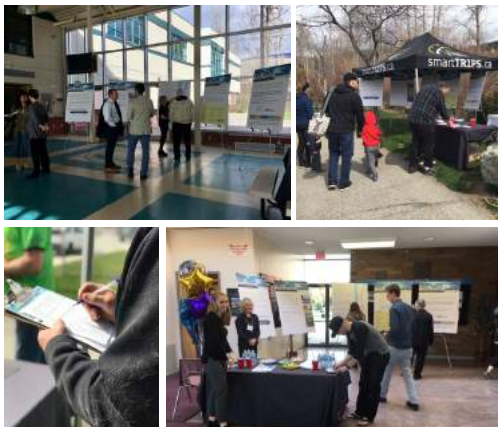
250+ people attended four pop-up open houses

633 completed a survey to help identify the RTP’s vision & goals

April 24, 2019: 90 people participated in the Let’s Talk Transportation event at UBC Okanagan

Spring/summer 2019: 577 people shared their thoughts on potential transportation solutions

August 2020: Draft plan presented to public for feedback



Engagement on the draft plan

In the summer of 2020, the project team publicly released the draft Regional Transportation Plan. After presenting the draft plan to the regional councils for feedback, the project team then sought public input on the draft plan.

This engagement summary provides the highlights of what we heard during this last phase of public consultation. Information collected from the public was used to help inform development of the final Regional Transportation Plan.

Engagement method

Due to COVID-19, engagement activities were hosted in a digital format to align with advice from our Provincial Medical Health Officer. Feedback on the draft Regional Transportation Plan was sought via a virtual open house, online questionnaire, and live video consultation panels.

Virtual open house & questionnaire

In total, 322 people participated in the virtual open house and questionnaire, which was available online from August 4 to 23, and shared their thoughts and opinions.

Respondents reviewed the draft Regional Transportation Plan and provided open-ended comments on the overall direction

and each of the following key themes:

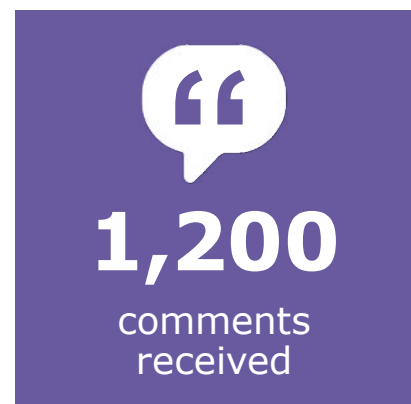
- Moving people & goods more efficiently
- Achieving fast & reliable transit
- Creating a safe & convenient region-wide bike & trail network
- Incorporating new mobility options

Please note that questionnaires of this nature are a mechanism for people to share their interests and opinions. Results are qualitative, not statistically significant, and are not meant to represent the views of all residents.

Live video consultation panels

To broaden the engagement, staff hosted two live video consultation panel discussions on August 19 and 20. Residents were invited to register in advance, and while 24 people registered, a total of 18 people attended the sessions.

Each session was independently facilitated and featured short presentations describing the Regional Transportation Plan and some of its recommendations. Opportunities for participant comment, discussion and questions followed each presentation. Staff took notes during both sessions, and a summary of feedback is included as part of this report.



"Engaged" participants include those who completed the virtual open house or attended a video consultation panel. "Aware" participants visited the project page but did not complete an engagement tool.

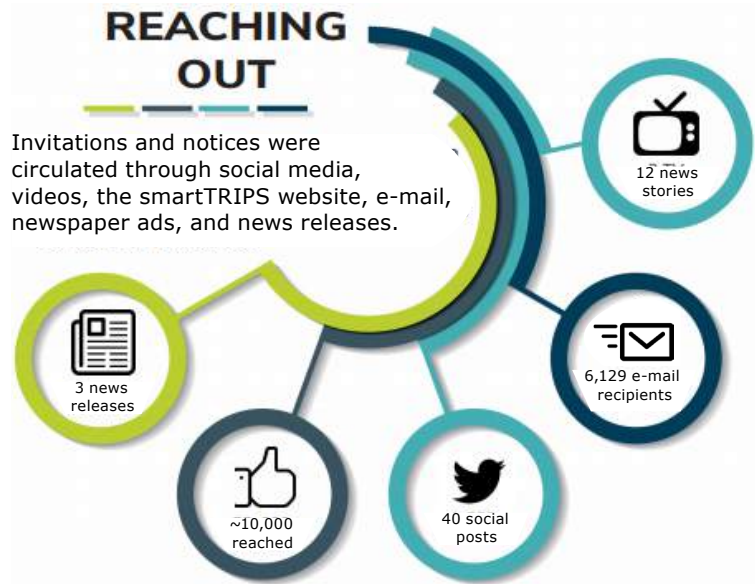
Outreach & promotion

The opportunity for residents to participate and provide comments on the draft Regional Transportation Plan was promoted through a variety of channels and incentives.

Incentives to participate included a prize draw for a \$700 gift card to a local bike shop as well as \$25 gift cards offered to those who attended the live video consultation panels.

Special attention was given to reach out to communities in the project's geographic area, including Peachland, West Kelowna, Westbank First Nation, Lake Country and the Regional District of Central Okanagan. To do this, each partner government created videos of their Mayor, Chair or Chief promoting the engagement opportunity. These videos were then shared through social media.

Efforts to engage diverse audiences and people with varied interests and perspectives included emailing past participants and various community groups and organizations encouraging them to participate and share the engagement opportunity through their networks.



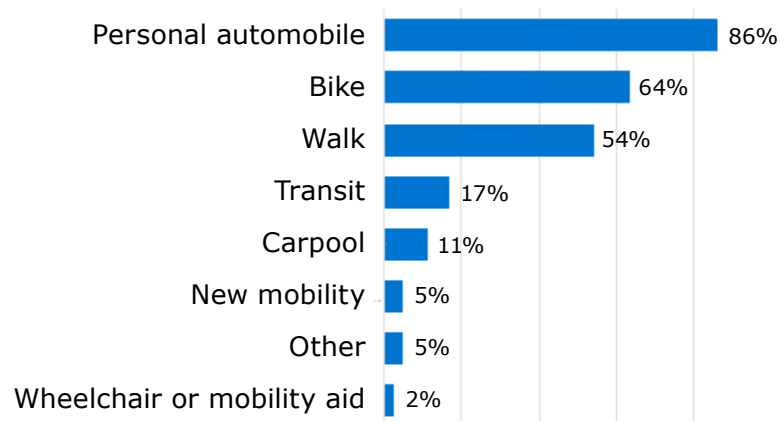
Pictured: Screenshots of partner governments' promotional videos shared via social media

Who we heard from

Participants in the virtual open house and live video consultation panels represented diverse perspectives and interests including cycling, transit, walk-ability, road efficiency, climate change, mobility and accessibility, and communities across the Central Okanagan. The majority of participants in the virtual open house indicated that their typical transportation mode is personal automobile, biking or walking.

Responses were weighted to mirror the distribution of the population by age and geographic location.

Virtual open house respondents' typical transportation mode



"This may be better than an actual open house because I had time to read the study and make up questions that brought out my comments."



What we heard: at-a-glance

Through the live video consultation panels and virtual open house, residents shared open-ended comments about the Regional Transportation Plan.

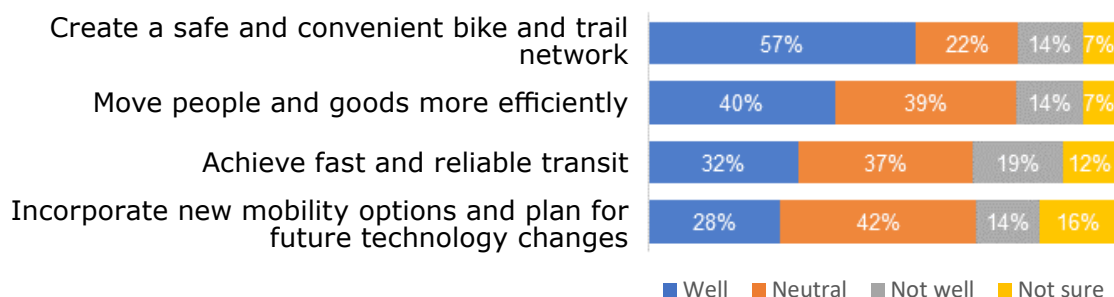
The project team read each of the 1,200 open-ended comments and developed a list of themes based on their content. Each time a theme was mentioned in a comment it was tallied. The top themes that were mentioned most often are shown below, with font sizes corresponding to the number of times each theme was mentioned.



Alignment with outcomes

Question: "Overall, how well do you think the Regional Transportation Plan achieves the following outcomes?"

Most respondents marked either "well" or "neutral" in response to this question. The outcome that the most respondents marked the RTP as achieving "well" was "create a safe and convenient bike and trail network."



What we heard: Virtual open house & questionnaire summary

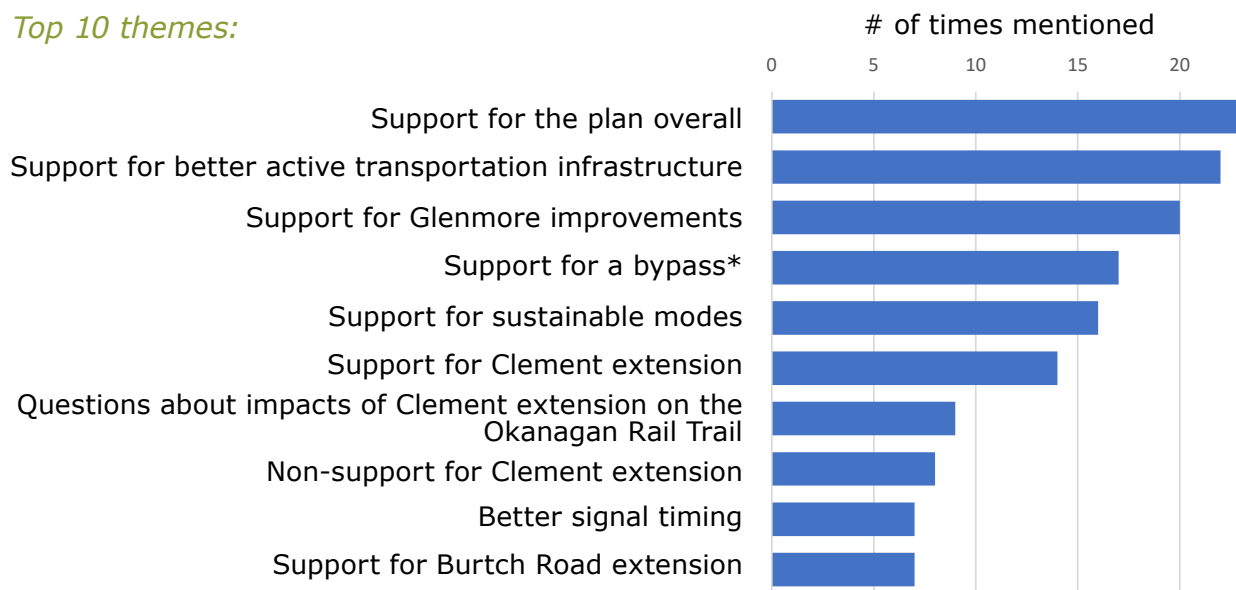
The project team read each comment submitted in the virtual open house questionnaire, identified themes, and tallied each comment based on its content. The top 10 themes that participants mentioned most often are included in this section, and verbatim comments are included in the Appendix.

Moving people and goods more efficiently



Staff shared proposed recommendations to improve the regional road and goods movement network, including potential projects, and asked participants for comments and considerations.

Top 10 themes:



*Note that a bypass or second crossing is the purview of the Province and outside the scope of the Regional Transportation Plan.

"Congestion on Spall Road and Enterprise need to be addressed with the extension of Clement Avenue to Highway 33."

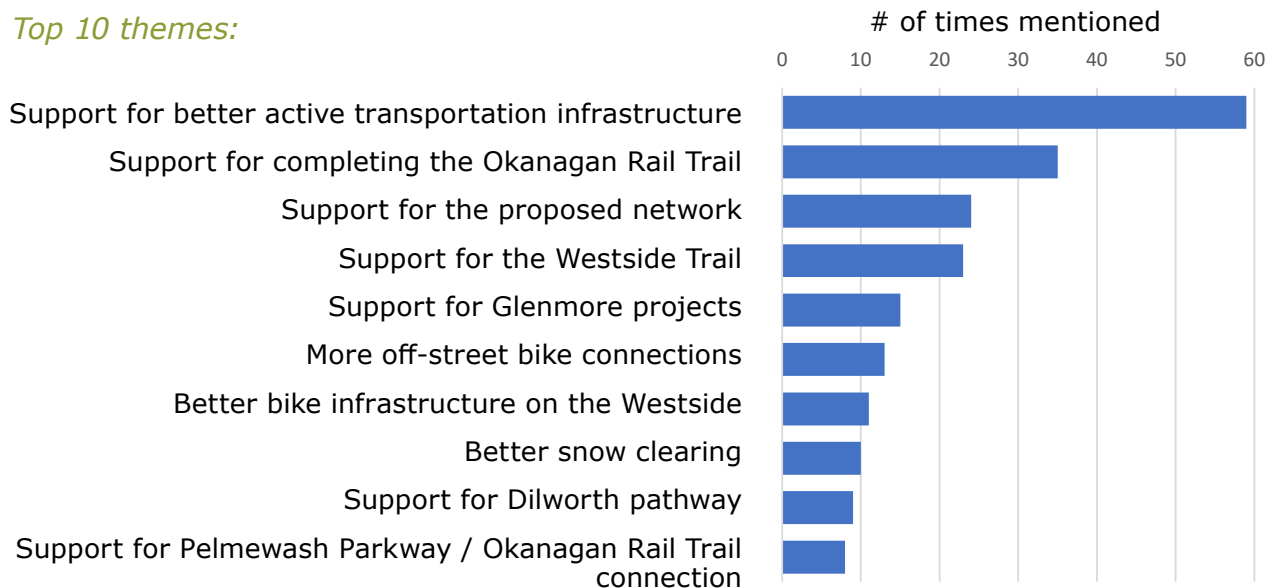


Creating a safe and convenient region-wide bike and trail network



Staff shared proposed recommendations to create a safe and convenient region-wide bike and trail network, including potential projects, and asked participants for their comments and considerations.

Top 10 themes:

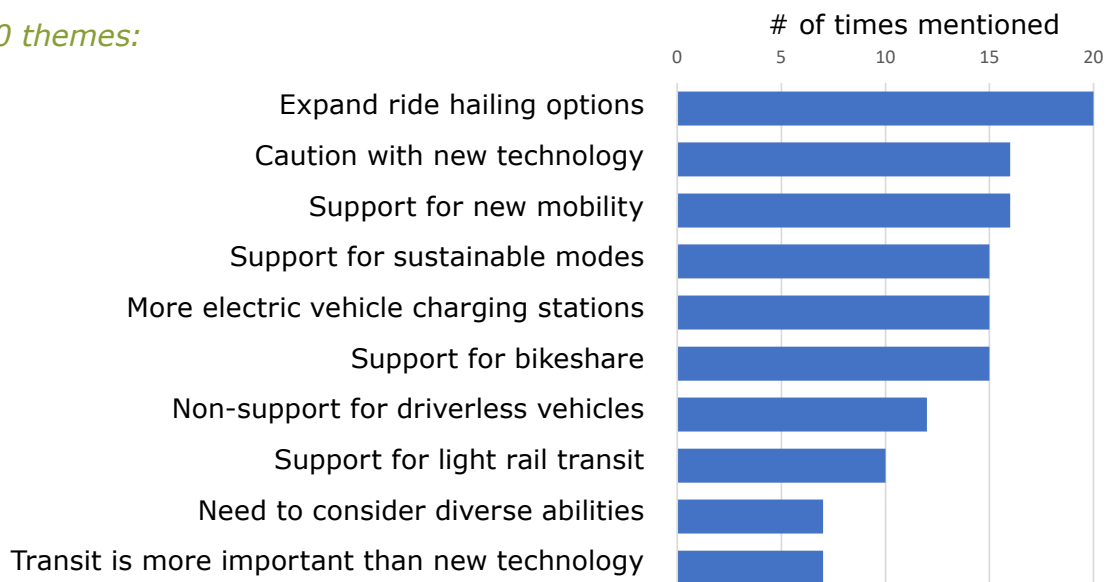


Incorporating new mobility options & preparing for technology change



Staff shared an overview of the draft Regional Disruptive Mobility Strategy, and its approach to prepare for future technology change, and asked participants for their comments and considerations.

Top 10 themes:

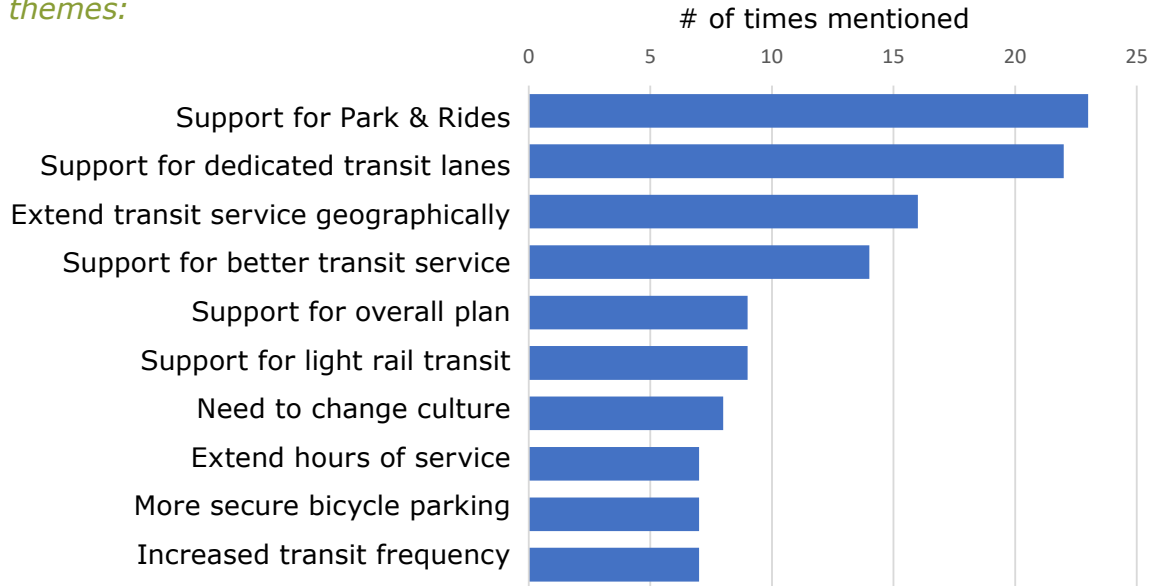




Achieving fast and reliable transit

Staff shared proposed recommendations to achieve fast and reliable regional transit, including potential projects, and asked participants for their comments and considerations.

Top 10 themes:



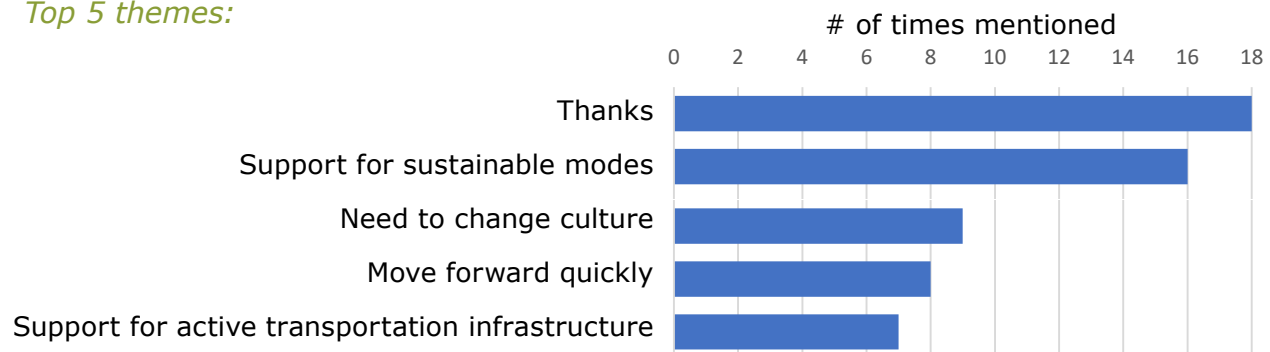
"I love the idea of Park and Rides for a growing city. A forward thinking eco-friendly option for commuters."

General feedback on the plan



Participants had an opportunity to provide further general feedback on the draft Regional Transportation Plan. The comment that was mentioned most often included a general "thank you" from participants.

Top 5 themes:



"This is important and we need to make the necessary (and unpopular with some citizens) investments in the infrastructure and marketing to draw people into adopting a more viable transportation system. You have a difficult challenge but it is one that an increasing number of our residents recognize as an issue that cannot be sidestepped."

What we heard: Live video discussion panel summary

This section includes a summary of the comments and questions heard from participants of the two live video consultation panels hosted on August 19 and 20. All comments have been reviewed by the project team and helped inform development of the final Regional Transportation plan.

Overall direction of the plan

When asked to comment on the overall direction of the plan, participants indicated:

- General ideas are good, and they would like to see a more aggressive and faster roll out (moving people out of cars and into other modes)
- Interest in fast, easy things we could do to move people to transit (e.g. free bus passes for newcomers)
- Like the four pillars, components and connections
- Support for a shift to transit and cycling
- Interested in agriculture and goods movement; didn't see much of that in the plan
- General support for the plan direction, including its emphasis on completing the bike and trail network and achieving fast and reliable transit
- Support for its comprehensiveness and that it is region-wide
- It's important to consider persons with disabilities and vulnerable people, including providing shade and signs in braille
- A desire to see more of a clear vision, commitment and strategy to achieve transit and climate goals

Moving people and goods more efficiently

When asked to comment on the recommendations presented, participants indicated:

- It's important to strengthen the local road network
- Concern about congestion shifting to other roads (especially the roads that provide a less congested alternative to Highway 97)
- Concern that the Clement Avenue extension might encourage more people to drive
- A desire to see more about changing behaviours – for example, getting trucks to deliver at different times of the day to encourage 'peak spreading'
- A desire for better transit to reduce congestion on central routes
- A strong preference to see the Okanagan Rail Trail preserved as part of the Clement Avenue extension
- Support for improvements to Glenmore Road that would make it safer for vehicles and bikes
- Concern about existing traffic volumes to Lake Country
- Interest in an overpass to the Kelowna International Airport
- The importance of the efficient movement of goods and people to the airport and in the industrial area
- Support for better connections from the airport and university to Mission and Glenmore areas
- Suggestion to synchronize traffic lights to reduce greenhouse gas emissions
- Concern that traffic might shift to Clement Avenue

Creating a safe and convenient region-wide bike and trail network

When asked to comment on the recommendations presented, participants indicated:

- Recreational, commuter and exercise cycling should all be considered
- Safer routes would encourage more people to ride, including seniors
- Currently there is no safe way to get from Kelowna to Lake Country by bike
- Educating motorists about sharing the road with cycle lanes and cyclists is important
- Specific and individual preferences for paved vs non-paved bike paths
- Safe and convenient bike routes will make it easier for people to choose cycling
- There are missing links in the network near the ECO Centre and on Springfield
- Suggestion that Leckie Road might be a better location than Dilworth Drive for a connection between the Okanagan Rail Trail and Mission Creek Greenway
- A desire to see more active transportation infrastructure on Glenmore Road to Lake Country

Incorporating new mobility options

When asked to comment on the recommendations presented, participants indicated:

- Lower trust in ride sharing and automated vehicles improving traffic flow
- The “last mile” in Lake Country is the difficulty
- Connecting a mini-bus to a ‘hub’ location might help, especially if it could connect people to hospitals and other services
- Park and Ride doesn’t meet the needs of many potential bus riders; not a great option
- Desire to see light rail transit with options at hubs to connect people to hospitals
- Suggestion to consider that electric vehicles use lithium batteries, which are hard on the environment
- Biking and transit should be more competitive and more appealing than driving a car

Achieving fast and reliable transit

When asked to comment on the recommendations presented, participants indicated:

- Support for the idea of a transit spine (widening the shoulder along Highway 97 from Westlake Road to the bridge, an eastbound transit lane across the bridge during the morning rush hour and dedicated transit lanes along Harvey Avenue from the bridge)
- A direct transit route to the airport is important
- Queue jumping for transit at intersections is important
- More frequent and better transit service is needed
- Park and Rides do not help many potential transit users
- Rapid transit is necessary to reduce congestion
- Safety and convenience are the biggest motivators to change behaviour
- Desire to see the transit spine extend to Lake Country
- Desire for a westbound transit lane during the evening rush hour as well
- Support for more dedicated median transit with smart technology
- Support for improvements to transit, including access to the airport and university
- An interest in light rail transit (LRT)
- Transit needs to be reliable, frequent and fast to attract ridership

Other comments

When asked to provide other comments, participants indicated:

- Safety and convenience is necessary to encourage behaviour change; thinking bigger and more aggressively will trigger behaviour change (for example, don't use bike lanes for snow storage during the winter)
- Behaviour change happens because of economic tools like increased parking rates
- Programs to educate youth to take transit have been successful and should be explored
- The school district has not been helpful in terms of supporting transit or bus solutions for students; a lot of traffic is still generated by parents dropping off their children at school, which is in part because the roads to school are unsafe for cycling or walking
- Suggestion to consider 3-wheeled bikes, which are great for seniors and people with mobility challenges
- Question was asked: By 2040, what percentage of people do we project will be taking transit and what is the strategy for achieving that goal?
- More sustainable transportation requires bold political leadership that sets targets
- Question was asked: How does this plan align with provincial goals around climate change and active transportation? For example, CleanBC.
- Better connections to the airport (transit and bike) may help ensure tourists/visitors have less impact on the roadway; consider a free shuttle for tourists
- Look to tourists/tourism as a way to fund transportation improvements

One thing for the project team to keep in mind

When asked for the one thing they would like the project team to keep in mind as they finalize the RTP, participants said:

- (Transit) hubs and speeds
- Efficiency, safety
- Be bold
- Alleviate bottlenecks
- Make it easy
- Safety for bikes
- Protect downtown for walking and cycling
- Transit is not an option for some people, based on their jobs
- Be bold about the future of transportation and the climate emergency
- Equity – consider all voices including children; talk to transit riders
- I like the direction; ensure there aren't unintended consequences
- (Transit) hub and spoke
- Great job. Feeling good about the plan

Engagement feedback

Virtual open house participants were also asked how they felt about the engagement process. The most common themes heard in the open-ended comments included a general “thank you” as well as a desire to have a clearer understanding of how public feedback is being used.

In response to standard exit survey questions about the engagement process, the majority of respondents had either a positive or neutral response.

71% agreed the information was clear and understandable

53% agreed they understand how public input is being used throughout the process

65% agreed they felt participating was a valuable experience

64% agreed their knowledge and understanding of the Regional Transportation Plan improved

Conclusion & next steps

Since 2018, people from across the region have added their priorities and perspectives to the regional transportation planning process through online questionnaires and in-person events including region-wide pop-up open houses and interactive conversations.

Early public and stakeholder input helped confirm the vision and goals for the project, and the latest virtual open house and live video consultation panels, along with technical considerations, were used to help inform development of the final plan.

The final Regional Transportation Plan will be presented to each of the Sustainable Transportation Partnership of the Central Okanagan (STPCO) partners for endorsement in Fall 2020.



The Regional Transportation Plan is a project of the Sustainable Transportation Partnership of the Central Okanagan (STPCO).

For more information, please email info@smartTRIPS.ca or visit smartTRIPS.ca.

