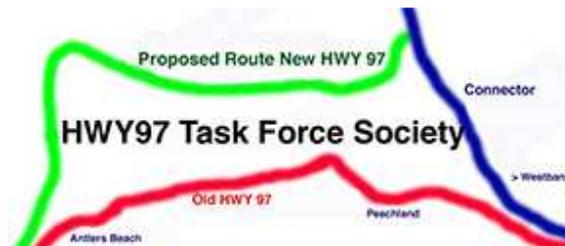


# Highway 97 Expansion

## The Single Most Important Decision Affecting the Future of Peachland

Presentation to District of Peachland  
August 2015



# The Single Most Important Decision Effecting the Future of Peachland

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## Introduction:

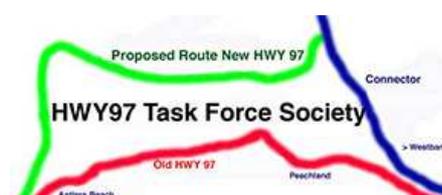
Since the mid 80's, there has been discussion and plans to expand Highway 97 to 4 lanes in keeping with its designation as the major north-south route in the province from the US border to Alaska. The only section between Penticton and Vernon that has not been expanded is through Peachland. However, with the Okanagan Lake Second Crossing Project now well underway, there is a new urgency in ensuring Peachland's voice is heard so that the highway expansion benefits the community.

There is no doubt of the broad support for the Bypass:

- Previous district councils have express support for a bypass around the town and created the Highway 97 Committee whose mission is:  
*"to advocate the routing of Highway 97 bypassing Peachland, and the conversion of the existing highway to a local road that will enhance the beauty, livability and economy of Peachland. (www.Peachland.ca)*
- At the all-candidates meeting prior to last year's municipal election, every candidate expressed support for a bypass with loud approval from those attending.
- The Highway 97 Task Force Society currently boasts over 750 **paid** members all supporting a bypass.

It is apparent there is significant community support for a Highway 97 Bypass around Peachland. What Peachland now needs is an official declaration that the Bypass is the only acceptable route in expanding the highway from the Connector to south of the District. With that declaration, all District officials and staff would be in a position to petition all parties involved in influencing a final decision. Vernon and Kelowna city councils have already started planning for bypass routes even though it may be years before they are built. Peachland needs to be proactive on this front also, as it is

***the single most important decision affecting the future of Peachland.***



# The Single Most Important Decision Effecting the Future of Peachland

## Why a Bypass?

Various studies in BC, other parts of Canada and the US show that a bypass around a community provides more long term benefits than expanding a highway through a developed area. With the Vancouver Island Highway for example, visitors to the bypassed communities has increased after an initial period of adjustment. Everywhere in the world, the norm for a major highway is to go around, not through a town providing long term benefits for the province, region and local communities.

It should be noted however that traffic volumes have rebounded from their original decline that resulted when the Inland Island Highway first opened, and have slightly exceeded the previous high volumes on some streets.

*(City of Parksville Transportation Update, Boulevard Transportation Group, Aug 2002)*

## What are the benefits of a bypass to Peachland?

### Economic:

A "Highway" to "Tourist secondary road" would allow new development, especially along the currently unusable portion of lakefront land out to Antlers Beach. Hotel, motel and other tourist developments would then be possible. Peachland, with more kilometers of public lakefront than Kelowna and Penticton combined is the only lakefront community without a hotel or motel.

Increased tourism and 'dollars-spent-per-tourist-visit' would benefit all Peachland businesses. Currently, most tourists drive to Beach Avenue, picnic, swim, spend very little and leave at sundown as they have nowhere to stay, except in our B&B's which are often booked up.

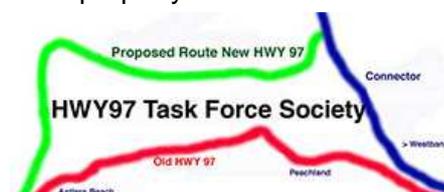
If you were on Beach Avenue on the Saturday of the long weekend, you would have noticed the outdoor patios and restaurants had room to spare during the dinner hours! Where did the tourists go?

With the exception of the Petro Canada station and the A&W, a diversion of through traffic will not harm and would in time help businesses in Peachland. The number of visitors to coastal communities bypassed by the Island Highway increased after an initial period of adjustment. *(Terry Condon's report of the Island Highway Economic impact for PEDC).*

A bypass would enable highway services and other commercial & industrial enterprises to be developed on lands up in the bypass area, near the connector and at the west end of Princeton that could have easy access to the bypass.

Allow "meaningful" planning along the existing highway corridor. Encourage development along the Princeton to Antler's Beach section - hotels/ motels/ restaurants/ galleries. Slower speed limits and designation as a scenic tourist route would entice tourists to explore our downtown area encouraging longer visits increasing dollars spent per tourist visit. New hotels and motels would provide an opportunity to attract snowbirds like Osoyoos does for the winter months increasing business opportunities during the off-season period.

Local realtors indicate that a bypass would increase most property values in Peachland, already a popular destination residential centre even with the current uncertainty. On the other hand, 4-laning an existing route would likely drive property values down



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A bypass could unlock the economic potential of Peachland, creating new business opportunities, increasing employment as well as diversifying and increasing the tax base

Make Peachland a destination not a place to drive through.

## Environment:

A bypass would help maintain the existing quality of the local ecosystem. Trepanier and Deep Creek would stay intact protecting the kokanee spawning grounds.

Pollution (dust, emissions and noise) would be significantly reduced in Peachland with most or all through traffic taking the bypass. No more stop and go, idling at the three lights and at the other highway intersections through town.

On August 1<sup>st</sup>, traffic was backed up from Clements all the way up Drought Hill to Gorman's Mill in West Kelowna!

Peachland's terrain forms an amphitheater. Noise travels up the slopes and affects virtually everyone in Peachland. Through traffic being rerouted above and behind Peachland would cut both air and noise pollution.

## Improves the Quality of Life:

People move to Peachland for a number of reasons. They stay because of the quality of life. Peachland is an amphitheatre with all the noise from the vehicles traveling up the slopes and affecting virtually everyone. A bypass may not completely eliminate this but it will be reduced with lower speed limits and the diversion of through-traffic to a bypass.

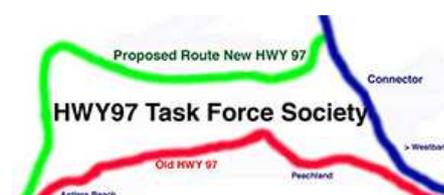
Without a bypass, the existing highway would be 4-laned creating a barrier between the hillside residents and the lakeside amenities disrupting the community further. How would residents above the highway access the businesses of Beach Avenue? How would the elementary school children walk to school? What would happen to the tennis courts, the new pickle ball courts and skate-board facility at Lambly Park?

A bypass would mean no more logging and gravel trucks on Princeton Avenue and on the current highway.

## Control over development:

Encourage and inspire confidence in business and residential development proposals. Proposals that were supported by District council have often been held up by the Ministry of Highways (MOTI). MOTI has been reluctant to give the green light on development proposals as a decision on the highway expansion has not been made. A decision for a Bypass would allow our council to develop policies that would allow Peachland to grow and prosper.

If a development requires direct access to the highway they require MOTI approval. Any development application within 400m of the highway must be submitted to MOTI for comment.



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That the ministry cannot “green light” any proposal because it has not been decided whether to 4-lane or bypass Peachland has virtually frozen development in this corridor for many years. There are a number of development proposals on the table that would have more certainty if a bypass was approved.

The following developments were subject to MOTI intervention.

Ponderosa Golf Course	2,100 units both multi-family and single family plus commercial
New Monaco	Up to 2,500 units plus commercial
Princess Street	56 multi-family
Aqua Vitta	60 room hotel
Pentowna Marina expansion	175 additional boat slips

**Community Enhancement:**

Increased property and business taxes would follow development, funding community improvements, roads, paths, parks etc.

95% of the property tax base in Peachland is residential, 5% is commercial. Additional business opportunities would increase the commercial component providing more balance to the tax base.

Peachland acquires 4 additional kilometers of accessible and usable lakeshore. Peachland has more public lakefront than Kelowna, and Penticton combined but cannot take advantage of with the current highway or if is expanded in place – a lost opportunity.

Recreational Development - With lower, slower traffic volumes along the section south of Princeton, cars could park on the shoulders along the whole length. Piers could be extended into the lake providing water access for both swimmers and boaters with picnic tables provided at the wider spots.

**Safety:**

Reduced Risk - fewer accidents.  
 Lower traffic volumes and lower speed limits provides opportunities for new sidewalks and bike paths. Skate board park and other recreation facilities would no longer be located along a major highway.

An Alternate Route in case of an Emergency  
 In the event of an Emergency or another fire, an alternate route for the residents and the emergency personnel.

The current risky accesses to Hwy 97 at our cross streets with no lights (Huston, Buchanan, Trepanier, Chidley, Todd, Lilly, Hawkes and Renfrew) and various driveways fronting 97 would be made safer.

A bypass will provide a much needed firebreak protecting Peachland. According to Provincial Forest Fire personnel, 2015 may be the new normal for fires. A Bypass above



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Peachland would provide a fire break (similar to that provided by the Connector when the fire broke out above the Tourist Information Booth) as well as providing much better access for fire fighters to the areas above Peachland.

## No Major Disruptions during Construction:

Construction of a bypass eliminates the need for costly and disruptive highway closures, lane blockages, detours, flag people, blasting and traffic stoppages on the existing highway 97 in Peachland.

The construction of the by-pass from Winfield north had very little effect on traffic during construction.

## The Residents Want It:

The Hwy 97 Bypass Society has over 760 paid members and membership is growing quickly.

At the pre-election public debates in Peachland this past fall every candidate for mayor and council expressed support for a Peachland Bypass, and ran with that plank in their campaign.

## Why Not Expansion in Place?

- **Construction Disruption**

Construction may take up to 3 years. Where will the highway traffic go during detours, blasting and closures? Beach Ave, Buchanan and Houston Roads will have to be used as the highway detour?

- **4-lanes means 6-lanes at intersections**

Four-laning does not mean just 4 lanes; it means 6 lanes at all controlled intersections allowing for merging lanes in both directions.

Uncontrolled intersections would also require extra lanes for safety.

- **Peachland will lose the opportunity to develop the waterfront from Princeton Avenue to Antler's Beach**

- **Through traffic even less likely to stop & visit.**

- **Will divide community**

- **More Noise & Pollution**

- **Loss of prime Real Estate for Commercial & Residential development.**

- **Some Peachlanders will lose their homes and property values will fall.**



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## Conclusion:

The highway will be expanded. The questions is when and how. The case is clear – there have been no studies to suggest otherwise. A bypass would be good for Peachland.

As a bypass is primarily a political decision, it is important that

- Council declare that a Bypass is a priority for the community
- Use every opportunity to advocate for a bypass (council and staff)
- Action has to be taken now – the province is reviewing its options. Are they even considering a bypass?

## The future of Peachland depends on a bypass

