

TO: CITY MANAGER 1993 SEPTEMBER 29

FROM: DIRECTOR PLANNING & BUILDING OUR FILE:

SUBJECT: TRAFFIC CONCERNS IN THE BURNABY HEIGHTS AREA:
CORRESPONDENCE FROM KAREN ALLEN, 4256 ETON STREET,
BURNABY, B.C.

Purpose: To respond to concerns raised by Karen Allen with regard to traffic in the
Burnaby Heights area.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT a copy of this report be forwarded to Karen Allen, 4256 Eton Street, Burnaby, B.C. V5C 1K3.

REPORT

1.0 BACKGROUND

At its regular meeting of 1993 September 27, Council received correspondence from Karen Allen of 4256 Eton Street in Burnaby with regard to traffic problems in the Burnaby Heights area. The correspondence referred to the need for measures to reduce and control through traffic in the Burnaby Heights area and requested an update on the City of Vancouver proposals for the Skeena Tunnel, and the future disposition of the local bus operating on Eton Street, ie. the #140/141 Kootenay Loop. This report is written to respond to the concerns and inquiries raised by the correspondent.

2.0 SKEENA TUNNEL

In 1993 July (see *attached* report) Vancouver City Council considered a number of options for the Skeena Tunnel including the following:

- (i) That the Skeena Tunnel remain open.

- (ii) That the Skeena Tunnel be closed except for pedestrians, cyclists and emergency vehicles following revisions to the traffic control signals on Hastings.
- (iii) That the Skeena Tunnel remain open and that the eastbound left turn from the eastbound McGill ramp be prohibited in the afternoon peak period from Monday to Friday (as shown in Figure 1 of the attached report).

While the first and second options have been the subject of considerable discussion since the early stages of planning for the Cassiar Connector, the latter option of a left turn prohibition was viewed as a possible compromise between the divergent views held by the community in Vancouver Heights. Community input from the Vancouver Heights areas was solicited through a community meeting held in 1993 March and a questionnaire delivered to businesses and residents in the area.

The questionnaire posed three options including opening the tunnel, closing the tunnel, and keeping the tunnel open only until left turn bays are installed at Boundary and Hastings.

The following summarizes the results of this survey:

	BUSINESS	RESIDENTIAL	TOTAL
Open Tunnel	17	128	145
Closed Tunnel	0	161	161
Open Tunnel Until Turn Bays on Hastings	1	20	21

Based on these results a total of 145 respondents (approximately 44%) support an open tunnel, while 161 (49%) support closing the tunnel. The obvious polarization in the community suggested an even division of opinion on the issue, and as a result, the need for an option that responded to the concerns of the "open tunnel" supporters for access to the neighbourhood and the "closed tunnel" supporters for reduced traffic through the community. The third option of prohibiting left turns from the McGill eastbound ramp during the afternoon peak period was proposed as a compromise which would reduce non-local traffic and restrict access for only part of the day.

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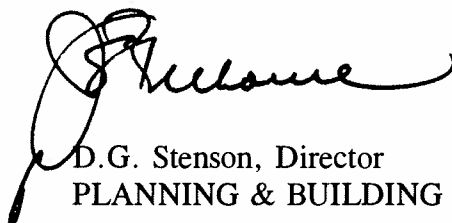
This compromise option was approved by Vancouver City Council and has been implemented subject to review in six months time. It is expected to address the concerns of the correspondent to some degree by reducing through traffic in the Burnaby Heights area as well as Vancouver Heights. It will be possible to document this impact through traffic counts undertaken in Burnaby Heights before and after the installation of the left turn prohibition and a further report to Burnaby City Council will be forthcoming on the results of the traffic analysis.

3.0 TRANSIT SERVICE IN BURNABY HEIGHTS

The correspondent cites the #140/141 Kootenay Loop transit route as a possible reason for the lack of action by the City of Vancouver in closing the Skeena Tunnel. Currently the #140/141 does not use the Skeena Tunnel and is therefore not a consideration in the evaluation of Skeena Tunnel options. The use of minibuses for this route has been suggested, but as part of the North Burnaby transit service changes, which have been approved by Burnaby City Council but not yet implemented by BC Transit, this route would be extended to serve Burnaby Heights, Brentwood Mall, BCIT, Canada Way and the Edmonds Town Centre. Small buses would not provide sufficient capacity to accommodate this expanded service.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The correspondence from Karen Allen notes the issue of through traffic in the Burnaby Heights area and the recent accidents which have occurred in the area. In response to queries regarding the Skeena Tunnel and Burnaby Heights transit service it is noted that the City of Vancouver has implemented left turn prohibitions on the McGill off-ramp to the Skeena Tunnel which are designed to substantially restrict through traffic eastbound in the PM peak period from using the Skeena Tunnel. These traffic measures will not affect transit service in Burnaby Heights. While the correspondent suggests the need for a neighbourhood traffic plan for the area it is the view of staff that actions in this regard should await a review of the effectiveness of the Skeena Tunnel measures. It is therefore suggested that the City of Burnaby monitor the effect of these measures on the volume of through traffic in Burnaby Heights and report back to Council upon completion of the traffic analysis.


D.G. Stenson, Director
PLANNING & BUILDING

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Date: July 7, 1993

TO: Standing Committee on Planning and Environment

FROM: City Engineer

SUBJECT: Skeena Tunnel Operation, Traffic Signals and Transit

RECOMMENDATION

- A. THAT the traffic control signals at Hastings and Skeena and at Hastings and Kootenay be upgraded to serve vehicular traffic, subject to funds being provided in the 1994 Traffic Signal Program.
- B. THAT BC Transit be requested to provide small-bus service within the Vancouver Heights neighbourhood when available.

CONSIDERATION

The following options for the operation of the Skeena Tunnel are submitted for consideration:

- C. THAT the Skeena Tunnel remain open.

Or

- D. THAT the Skeena Tunnel be closed except for pedestrians, cyclists and emergency vehicles, following revisions to the traffic control signals on Hastings at a cost of \$25,000, with funds to come from Streets Basic Capital - Unappropriated Account No. 14/02/9708/999 - Other Improvements

Or

- E. THAT the Skeena Tunnel remain open and that the eastbound left turn from the eastbound McGill ramp be prohibited in the afternoon peak period from Monday to Friday at a cost of \$500 with funds from existing operating accounts.

The Director of Planning recommends D.

The City Engineer recommends E.

CITY MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The City Manager RECOMMENDS A and B and offers C, D and E for consideration.

COUNCIL POLICY

Council's priorities for travel are walking, cycling, transit, goods movement and the automobile, in that order.

Major changes in roadway design are reviewed by Council.

Council has consistently protected neighbourhoods from through traffic.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to forward to Committee the results of the poll of the community on the operation of the Skeena Tunnel, the status of traffic signals on Hastings at Skeena and at Kootenay, and transit preferences.

BACKGROUND

In 1980 the Terms of Reference for the Cassiar Connector project included the disconnection of the Cambridge ramp and the closure of the Skeena Tunnel.

On April 25, 1989 City Council approved the design for the Cassiar Connector Project and approved the following motions:

THAT the City Engineer report back on alternative designs for the Bridgeway access, minimizing the loss of PNE land, and include analysis of the options of not retaining Empire Stadium, and keeping the Skeena Tunnel open to all traffic, as well as related cost estimates.

On January 7, 1993, the Planning and Environment Committee reviewed a report on the operation of the Skeena Tunnel and Council passed the following motions:

THAT the issue of the Skeena Tunnel operation be referred to a public meeting to be held in the community followed by a house to house poll and a report back on the results of the poll, design details and costs

AND

THAT there be no change to the status of the Skeena Tunnel until the effect of the installation of traffic lights at Hastings and Skeena and Hastings and Kootenay has been evaluated.

Also on January 7, 1993, the Planning and Environment Committee reviewed a report on transit service to the North East section of the Hastings Sunrise neighbourhood and the following motion was approved by Council:

THAT Council direct staff to meet with the Northeastern Hastings-Sunrise neighbourhood to discuss transit options for their community and report back.

On February 4, 1993 the Traffic Commission approved referral of the operation of traffic signals on Hastings at Skeena and at Kootenay to the public meeting on the Skeena Tunnel operation and that the neighbourhood be polled.

POLL RESULTS

The public meeting was held at Franklin School on March 3 about the three subject areas, as follows:

- ° Skeena Tunnel operation
- ° Traffic Signal operation on Hastings Street
- ° Transit Service

This meeting provided an opportunity for City staff to describe the issues from the Committee reports of January 7 and the Traffic Commission report of February 4 and for area residents and business representatives to speak on the issues and ask questions.

A questionnaire was developed for distribution to each residential address and business address to poll opinions on these issues. After preparation of a draft questionnaire, comments on its contents were solicited from persons representing the different view points. A majority of the comments about the draft questionnaire were incorporated into the final questionnaire (Appendix A). Distribution of the questionnaire commenced on May 6, 1993 and was completed by May 7, 1993. One questionnaire was delivered to each address within the area bounded by Hastings Street, Boundary Road, the Inlet and Cassiar, with a separate survey of the Bridgeway Industrial Area. Some locations presented delivery problems such as dogs or locked gates. To deal with these locations, questionnaires were mailed to these addresses by May 12. Completed questionnaires were accepted up to June 22, and accounted for 68% of the 489 delivered. The results are presented by subject area:

A. Skeena Tunnel Operation

The following summarizes the results on the tunnel questions:

	BUSINESS	RESIDENTIAL	TOTAL
Open Tunnel	17	128	145
Closed Tunnel	0	161	161
Open Tunnel until turn bays on Hastings	1	20	21

(a) Community Results

The foregoing results portray a division of opinion with regard to an open or closed tunnel. For the residential community responses, 161 favoured a closed tunnel compared with 148 in favour of an open tunnel. For further refinement of data, the results in Appendix B provide block face information.

(b) Business Results

Businesses in the Bridgeway Industrial area and those adjacent to Hastings all (18) supported an open tunnel.

(c) Combined Results

In total, more responses favoured an open tunnel with 166 in favour and 161 opposed.

(d) West of Cassiar

While the poll information represents the viewpoints of those most directly affected, there are others within adjacent neighbourhoods that are affected by the tunnel operation. Persons living west of Cassiar have submitted a petition with over 100 names, requesting that the tunnel remain open.

X (e) Burnaby

Burnaby residents have expressed interest in the operation of the Skeena Tunnel. A copy of this report has been sent to the City of Burnaby's representative.

(f) Possible Alternative

Although the community is polarized on tunnel operation, it would still be desirable to achieve a position that responds to both concerns. One possible alternative was offered in the questionnaire but did not receive much support (21/330). The alternative solution would include a restriction at a strategic location to reduce non-local peak period volumes. Prohibition of the eastbound left turn from the eastbound McGill off ramp would result in a significant proportion of the non-local trips being eliminated. This measure would have the effect of reducing access to the community, but only during the afternoon peak period.

(g) Costs

The costs for implementing the different methods of operation for the Skeena tunnel are as follows:

- i) Open tunnel - no cost
- ii) Closed tunnel - approximately \$25,000 City cost, and the Ministry of Transportation and Highways contribution to upgrade the tunnel lighting would be lost with this option.
- iii) Open tunnel and install a left-turn prohibition for eastbound McGill off-ramp - approximately \$500

B. Transit Service

The residents were given an opportunity to respond to two questions regarding transit in Vancouver Heights. The responses to these questions are shown in Appendix C.

The purpose of the first question was to determine whether, in fact, transit was important to the residents. Off-peak service was rated as important by the majority of transit users. It would appear transit is not important to over one third of the respondents. At present, residents must walk uphill to Boundary Road, or walk to Kootenay Loop and Hastings Street.

The second question was a preference choice of whether to leave service where it is on Boundary Road (39%), extend existing service to Skeena via Cambridge (11%), or implement some form of small bus service (50%). The extension to Skeena was tried previously and generated extremely low usage. Given the results of the poll and the dispersed nature of the demand, a minibus system appears most suitable, and is recommended.

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C. Traffic Signals

The survey area for the signals also included residents south of Hastings to Adanac. A total of 514 surveys were returned with an overall response rate of 55%. The survey results are summarized as follows:

SIGNAL UPGRADE @
HASTINGS/SKEENA

SIGNAL UPGRADE @
HASTINGS/KOOTENAY

Sub-area	Yes	No	No Response	Yes	No	No Response
N. of Hastings (332)	132	174	26	135	171	26
S. of Hastings (182)	155	25	2	154	25	3
TOTAL (514)	287	199	28	289	196	29

The responses returned from the community north of Hastings Street show 52% against the proposed upgrades, while the community south of Hastings were 85% in support.

Overall, when both sub-areas results are combined, there is 56% for and 39% against the proposed signal upgrades.

CONCLUSIONS

Skeena Tunnel Operation

The division in the community still is evident and a decision to either close the tunnel or leave it open will only be acceptable to about half of the area population. Council had originally approved the terms of reference for the Cassiar Connector study, which included closure of the tunnel. The Director of Planning recommends this position be maintained.

On the other hand, Skeena Tunnel does fulfil a collector role in the community, and a large number of residents have expressed their opposition to the loss of this route. The volumes have dropped since completion of the connector and are now typical of a collector street, but the high proportion of through traffic remains as a concern. (See Appendix D for details).


The alternative option to reduce through traffic is to prohibit the eastbound left turn from the McGill ramp in the afternoon peak period. This would allow the collector role to continue, but prohibit the largest component of through traffic, and is therefore supported by the City Engineer.

Transit Service

Existing service should be retained on Boundary Road and not extended via Cambridge to a new turnaround at Skeena or through the tunnel.


Transit is an important mode of travel for many in Vancouver Heights. No conclusion can be made as to whether existing services on Boundary, Hastings, and Kootenay Loop are adequately serving the Vancouver Heights residents, although most want service retained on Boundary Road. The configuration of the community is such that the present arrangement requires excessive walking distances, much of it on steep grades. However, ridership was not sufficient to sustain an expanded service when implemented on a trial basis. A small bus service could provide a greater degree of flexibility to meet the community's needs, without the cost and impacts of an expanded full-size bus route. Since a majority of respondents would support such a service, this should be pursued when BC Transit expands the use of small buses in the Region.

Traffic Signals

 The present signals on Hastings are pedestrian-activated only. Upgrading them to vehicle activation would provide better access to the community, but with the potential impact of increased traffic emphasis at these locations. This trade-off is one the community has a strong interest in, and a majority of respondents support an upgrade of the signals.

Given the improved access, community support, and the low potential of through traffic, this upgrade is recommended.

Director of Planning Comments

Planning staff recommend Council adopt Recommendation D - close the tunnel, except for pedestrians, cyclists and emergency vehicles. This is suggested because the Composite Scheme adopted by Council on February 4, 1986 included closure of the tunnel, based upon an exhaustive technical and public consultative process. The closure will improve residential amenity in the neighbourhood, especially regarding noise, auto pollution and safety, by reducing non-local traffic. However, due to the division of neighbourhood opinion on this matter, it may be preferable to close the tunnel on an experimental basis for six to 12 months to gauge the actual local and commuter effects, prior to proceeding with a permanent closure. 

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Ministry of Transportation and Highways Comments

1. The Ministry supports the open tunnel option.
2. The Ministry had previously agreed to upgrade the lighting in the Skeena Tunnel as part of the Cassiar Connector project. If the tunnel is closed, the Ministry does not believe this expense (approximately \$80,000) is justified and will not proceed with the lighting upgrade.

* * * * *

Approved	Report dated <u>July 7, 1993</u>
City Manager _____	Department Head <u>D.M. Henderson</u> City Engineer
Date _____	Date <u>July 7/93</u>
IRTS Number _____	Author <u>D.M. Henderson</u> Phone <u>7343</u>

Concurrence of other departments

_____	_____	Date _____
_____	_____	Date _____
_____	_____	Date _____

DMH/sf
Attach.
ET0499.cov

APPENDIX C

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QUESTION: When is transit important to you?
Choose 1 or more

		% of Choices
1.	Not Important	157 33%
2.	To/From Work	120 25%
3.	Midday/Evgs./Sat.	127 27%
4.	Sunday	72 15%
		<u>476</u>

QUESTION: Choose 1 or more transit options .

<u>Options</u>	-	<u>1st Preference</u>	% Resp.
1.	Leave on Boundary	109	39%
2.	Extend to Skeena	30	11%
3.	Small Bus between Kootenay & Renfrew	77	27%
4.	Small Bus in Neighbourhood to Kootenay	66	23%
		<u>282</u>	

SUPPORTS ITEM NO. 2
P & E COMMITTEE AGENDA
JANUARY 7, 1993

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Date: November 23, 1992
Dept. File No. 305 577

TO: Standing Committee on Planning & Environment
FROM: City Engineer
SUBJECT: Skeena Tunnel

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RECOMMENDATIONS

- A. THAT the issue of the Skeena Tunnel operation be referred to a public information open house followed by a neighbourhood survey and a report back on the results of the survey, design details and costs.
- B. THAT the establishment of a building line on Hastings Street from Cassiar Street to Boundary Road be referred to public hearing.

CITY MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The City Manager RECOMMENDS approval of A and B.

COUNCIL POLICY

Major roadway changes in design are reviewed by Council.

Council has a policy of protecting neighbourhoods from through traffic.

Council's priorities for travel are walking, cycling, transit, goods movement and the automobile, in that order.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to review the closure of the Skeena Tunnel in relation to the completion of the Cassiar Connector Project.

Traffic Conditions

As a result of Cassiar project roadway changes, the Skeena Tunnel and Cambridge Street have both experienced reduction in volumes, Cambridge from 9,800 in 1989 to 6,600 in 1991 and Skeena from 9,400 in 1991 to 5,700 in 1992. Now that the overpass is closed (Spring 1991) the volume using Cambridge Street primarily is from the Skeena Tunnel. Both streets serve as local collectors and have no bus routes on them. The traffic volumes on these streets are similar to the levels found on other collectors throughout the City. For example 45th Avenue carries 5,700 vehicles and Champlain Crescent 4,600 vehicles, respectively.

The composition of the traffic using the Skeena Tunnel has been analysed and separated into five components as follows:

Vancouver Heights residents	5.7%
Other Vancouver residents	11.7%
Burnaby Heights residents	12.5%
Other Burnaby residents	16.6%
Other Locations residents	53.5%

The composition of traffic was based on an afternoon peak period (4 p.m. - 6 p.m.) study that recorded southbound license plate numbers. The home addresses of these vehicles were sorted by postal code summarized to provide an assessment of the through component of traffic. The data here indicates only about 20% of the traffic has a local home address at this time of day.

Ideally, a through traffic component should be small, but in this case it is large. To achieve a low through traffic component local residents would have their access reduced. In this area the closure of the tunnel would eliminate the through traffic component but with a reduction of local access as well. Considerable interest has been expressed about this issue by residents of Burnaby Heights.

The Ministry of Transportation and Highways has just initiated a study of the traffic conditions in the Cassiar Connector area. Traffic conditions that have changed as a result of the connector will be reported on, including issues related to the local City street system.

Alternative Routings

If Skeena Tunnel were closed, three groups of local-trips - the Vancouver Heights Community, Burnaby Heights, and the Bridgeway Industrial Area - would be required to use Hastings Street and the Bridgeway connections to Hastings Street. For entry into the Vancouver Heights community, a left turn from eastbound Hastings will be required. Currently there are no left turn bays for eastbound traffic from Hastings at Skeena, Kootenay or Boundary; therefore, some delay and congestion would occur. An increase in accident numbers could also be expected on Hastings Street.

The recommended building line would be established on the north side of Hastings from Cassiar to Boundary with widening of 4.3 metres (14 feet). The north side was chosen since the residual property would be 108 feet deep, similar to the existing south side property depth of 102 feet. Therefore, both north and south sides of Hastings would have property depths that would permit development.

Public Process

An Open House was held on June 19, 1991 in the community. Businesses, residents and owners were invited to the Open House. Approximately 20 people (see Appendix A) attended, and the following points summarize their comments:

- ° do not increase traffic in the neighbourhood
- ° businesses on Hastings do not want to be expropriated
- ° some residents support left turn bays at Skeena or Kootenay for local trips and some do not
- ° most support left turn bays on Hastings at Boundary
- ° some want Skeena tunnel closed and some want it open.

There has been ongoing interest and communication from persons supporting a tunnel closure and those who prefer an open tunnel. A petition of more than 100 signatures supporting an open tunnel has been received. Staff attended a meeting in the spring of 1992 to address the concerns of a group of Vancouver Heights residents.

Given the divisive nature of this issue, it is recommended that an extensive community consultation process be initiated. It is proposed that an Open House be held in the community to provide information so all those interested would be in a position to understand the issues. Following this open house, there would be a survey prepared in consultation with both those who support an open tunnel and those who wish it closed. The survey would provide an indication of resident opinions and has been used successfully in this neighbourhood previously. Survey results would be reported to Council.

Skeena Tunnel Options

Three options have been outlined with regard to the use of the tunnel, specifically:

1. Close the tunnel, as originally proposed;
2. Keep the tunnel open; or
3. Re-evaluate the tunnel closure when the improvements are made at Hastings and Boundary.

CONCLUSIONS

The tunnel closure is a subject of considerable concern and there are three options presented for consideration:

1. A closure to all users except emergency vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists.
2. Retain the open tunnel and provide additional traffic calming.
3. Re-evaluate the tunnel closure at such time as the left turn bays are built on Hastings Street for east/west traffic at Boundary Road.

The construction of left turn bays on Hastings at Boundary should be supported as a component of the Provincially funded Barnet/Hastings People Moving Project. Building lines should be established on Hastings from Cassiar to Boundary.

The information discussed in this report would be presented at an open house, the area residents would be surveyed and the results would be reported to Council.

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FIGURE 1

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