

GOLDSTREAMNEWS

Province chips in for Spencer interchange

By Rick Stiebel - Goldstream News Gazette - November 02, 2007

\$32-million interchange expected to break ground this winter

The provincial government anted up \$4.9 million in funding Wednesday, clearing the way for construction of the Spencer Road Interchange to begin this year.

The total cost of the project, which will eliminate the stop light at Spencer Road and the Trans-Canada Highway, is estimated at \$32 million, with future development cost-charges bearing the bulk of the price tag.

Langford Mayor Stew Young said the project is an important part of the overall transportation network for the region, and will improve traffic flow and reduce the environmental impact of traffic congestion. The interchange will also help in furthering the integration of Langford as a community, Young added.

Langford residents got their first look at plans for the project at an open house Tuesday night at the Langford Legion.

Close to 200 people dropped by for a look, with 46 providing written comments.

"Twenty-eight were very positive and 15 were opposed," said Langford clerk administrator Rob Buchan.

Long-time Florence Lake resident Valerie Braunschweig said she was "very pleased" with the design, pointing out the interchange has been a topic of discussion for 20 years.

"I love the design, and they've taken steps to protect the environment," she said.

"I think they've done the best they could to address concerns."

Critics who spoke to the News Gazette said there wasn't enough public input into the process, and the money would be better spent on rail and improved transit.

Larry Wartels, spokesperson for the Coalition to Protect Goldstream Watershed, said vast tracts of forest will be destroyed, and efforts to preserve Spencer's Pond and the cave were "tokenism."

Langford chief engineer John Manson said he was pleased with the amount of positive feedback at the meeting.

A redesign avoids impacting Spencer's Pond and preserves a karst cave, Manson noted.

Rob Bowen, who lobbied Langford to preserve Spencer's Pond, however, called the project a "tightrope walk through some of the best ecological features within Langford."

Transportation Minister Kevin Falcon said the interchange has been in the works for a long time because of population growth on the West Shore.

“It will help meet the needs of the regional growth strategy and it will improve safety by eliminating the signalized intersection that now exists,” Falcon said in a news release.

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