



SMITHE STREET

Public and Stakeholder Engagement Summary

May - June 2021



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PART ONE: OVERVIEW

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and Council's 'Reallocation of Road Space to Support Shared Use During Pandemic' motion in May 2020, staff have been re-shaping how we use our streets and public spaces to help residents physically distance and provide opportunities to exercise and travel more comfortably. Some of the key projects include Beach Avenue Room-to-Move, a 40-km network of Slow Streets, hundreds of new patio spaces, and dozens of pop-up plazas and social service parklets.

As we've seen more people cycling and walking in Vancouver with the continuation of the pandemic, staff have identified another project that can be delivered later this year to provide more space for travel, both during the pandemic and the recovery.

By upgrading active transportation on Smithe Street (Richards Street to Thurlow Street) using a low-cost approach, we will fill a key gap in the downtown cycling network. Recognizing that many people may still not want to take transit in the COVID recovery phase, the project will provide a direct and comfortable east-west cycling route between the West End and the Cambie Bridge.

In addition, to make cycling more comfortable, we continue to develop an All Ages and Abilities (AAA) network throughout the city. An extension of the Smithe Street protected bike lane would close a gap in our downtown AAA network, by connecting the Haro Street local street bikeway, which ends at Thurlow Street, and the Hornby Street and Richards Street protected bike lane.

We've been hearing feedback about this gap over several years and during seven related project engagements since 2016. This project also supports the Climate Emergency Action Plan's target of ensuring two-thirds of trips in the city be by active transportation and transit by 2030.

In spring 2021, staff engaged stakeholders and the public to gather feedback on a proposed design for Smithe Street upgrades. This engagement summary shares key design modification that were made to the design based on stakeholder and public feedback. The summary analyzes 567 survey responses that were completed between May 11 to June 7, 2021. The survey was available online on the City's new platform at Shape Your City. This engagement summary also includes the feedback of those who called and/or wrote to the City via email, 3-1-1 or VanConnect.

Project webpage: vancouver.ca/smithe-street-upgrades

Please review the detailed designs in the informational booklet: syc.vancouver.ca/projects/smithe-street-upgrades/smithe-street-upgrades-informational-booklet.pdf

What we did

Stakeholder engagement

In spring 2021, staff virtually met with stakeholders like the Downtown Vancouver BIA, Vancouver Fire and Rescue Services, the Provincial Court of British Columbia, and the Orpheum and Commodore Theatres to present the design and receive initial feedback.

The stakeholder discussions focused on general motor vehicle circulation, access for emergency vehicles, entry and exit from parkades/driveways, loading/passenger zones and overall safety for all road users.

Public engagement

Later in spring 2021, we gathered public feedback on a proposed design for Smithe Street upgrades through an online survey. We received 567 survey responses from May 11 to June 7, 2021. The survey was available online on shapeyourcity.ca/smithe-street-upgrades.

Outreach

A communications outreach plan was developed to support the engagement process by ensuring public awareness of the project objectives, timeline, trade-offs and opportunities to provide feedback.

Notification letter: Letters were sent to over 6000 residents and about 600 businesses along Smithe Street between Richards to Thurlow streets.

Posters: 26 eye-level signs were installed along Smithe Street, targeting people walking, cycling, or rolling in the area to inform about the project and the survey.

Social media: Organic content and posts are shared on the City's Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn platforms. The social media posts had over 2,000 engagements (shares, comments etc.) and about 92,000 impressions.

Consultation web page: Dedicated project pages (vancouver.ca/smithe-street-upgrades and shapeyourcity.ca/smithe-street-upgrades) were created to share information about the project and opportunities to provide feedback. We received over 1200 visitors.

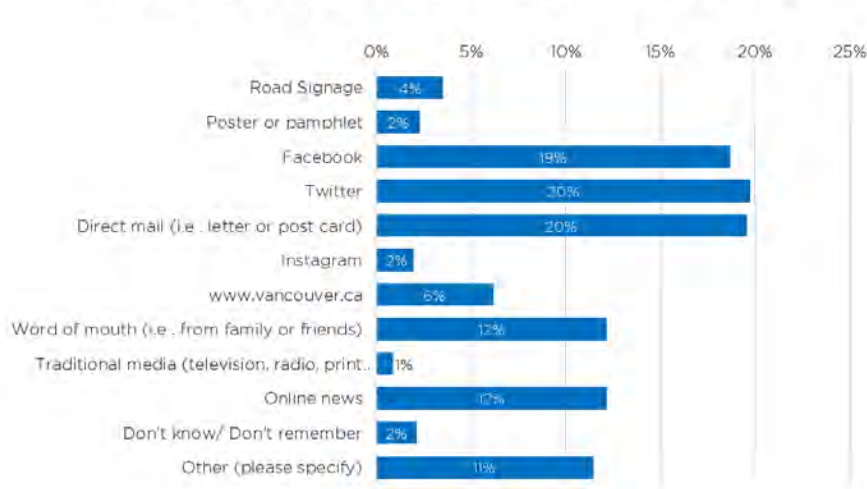
Partner networks: Stakeholders were encouraged to share engagement opportunities with their membership.

Newsletter: Over 450 people have subscribed to the email newsletter as of June 2021.

Most people learned about the project from direct mail (notification letters) and social media, followed by word of mouth and traditional news media. Other included reddit posts,

newsletters and media articles. Road signage and posters were a comparatively small proportion.

How did you learn about the project? (Select all that apply)

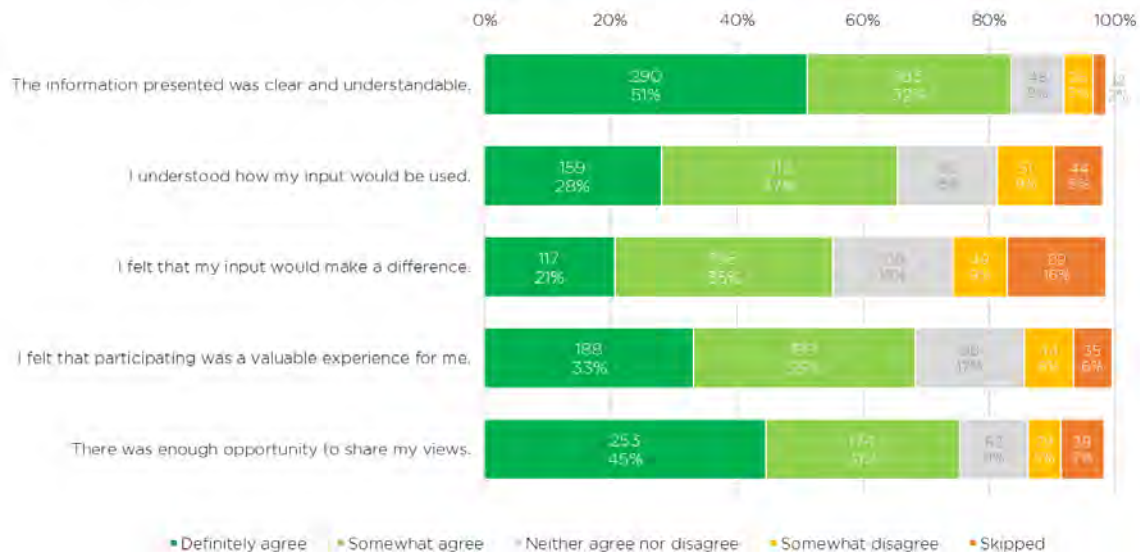


Given the need for physical distancing, this also meant that our engagement options were limited. It was important for us to engage the public meaningfully and seek feedback on the proposed design.

Based on the survey, many of the participants ‘definitely agree’ or ‘agree’ that the information was clear and understandable. More than 60% of the participants understood how their input would be used, but 55% felt that their input would make a difference. Many felt that participating was a valuable experience and more importantly, that there was enough opportunity to share their views.

Staff have reviewed the public input and modified the designs to address the concerns.

Reflecting on this consultation, please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements?



Key Design Modifications

More than 70% of participants reported the project objectives to be very important or important to improve their experience along Smithe Street. A few shared concerns around motor vehicle capacity and some shared suggestions on how we can improve the design for people walking, rolling, and cycling as well as reduce conflicts between people cycling and driving. We have refined the design based on the stakeholder and public feedback to improve safety and comfort for all road users.

Design modification based on Stakeholder feedback:

- ✓ Remove curb bulge west of Seymour Street to maximize passenger zone length
- ✓ Allow turns to lane west of Seymour Street for loading dock access
- ✓ Retain off-peak parking and taxi pick-up/drop off on north curb rather than relocating to south on Smithe Street at Granville Street intersection
- ✓ Remove planters between Howe and Hornby streets, and replace with a simple concrete median at sidewalk height. This will serve as a barrier to traffic while being permeable to emergency services and uninviting for seating or other uses.
- ✓ Reconfigure emergency vehicle access at the Smithe-Thurlow intersection

Design modification based on public feedback

- ✓ Reconstruct curb ramps to increase space for people to walk or wheel using assistive devices at Smithe-Burrard intersection and mark wider crosswalks
- ✓ Repave and general sidewalk improvements between Homer and Granville streets
- ✓ Improve advance warning of the right turn to Hornby Street and extend the right turn lane on approach to Burrard
- ✓ Coordinate traffic signal timing for driving and cycling
- ✓ Restrict left-on-red at Richards Street to reduce conflicts
- ✓ Reinforce restrictions at Smithe-Thurlow with landscaping that supports emergency vehicle access
- ✓ Increase the width of the bike path where possible (while retaining a planter separation and lanes for general traffic)
- ✓ Provide a mountable curb rather than completely flush where bike lane is raised to better delineate the bike lane and sidewalk
- ✓ Emphasize the eastbound cycling connection from Smithe to Nelson streets at Richards Street in wayfinding signage
- ✓ Add bicycle racks

Please refer to the next section of the summary for more in-depth staff responses to ‘what we heard’.

Next Steps

As a quick-build project, we are adjusting the proposed design to incorporate stakeholder and the public feedback to the detailed design and preparing for construction. We expect to begin with preparatory work for traffic signals and paving as soon as July 2021, and to open the cycling connection by the fall 2021.

PART TWO: DETAILED SUMMARY

Who we heard from

It is important for us to understand the demographics of who we are hearing from through the online survey. We asked demographic questions related to income, where participants live, ethnicity, gender identification, and age.

Area of Residence and Work

Most of participants lived within Vancouver with 70% using Smithe Street for commuting purposes. The survey included responses from 21% people who live (own or rent) and 9% who work along Smithe Street. We also heard from 32% participants who shop along Smithe Street, but live elsewhere.

Gender Identification and Age

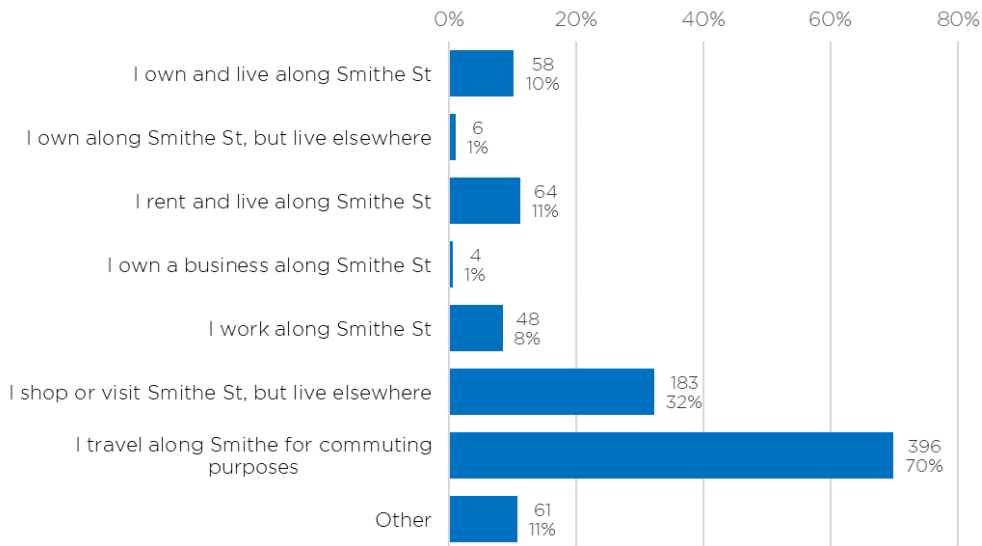
Participants were more likely to identify as men (63%) than women (28%). 2% identified as non-binary or gender diverse, 6% of respondents preferred not to say and 1% suggested other. A diverse range of age groups participated with higher representation from 30 to 50 years and lower representation of people under the age of 29 and above 50.

Ethnicity and Household Income

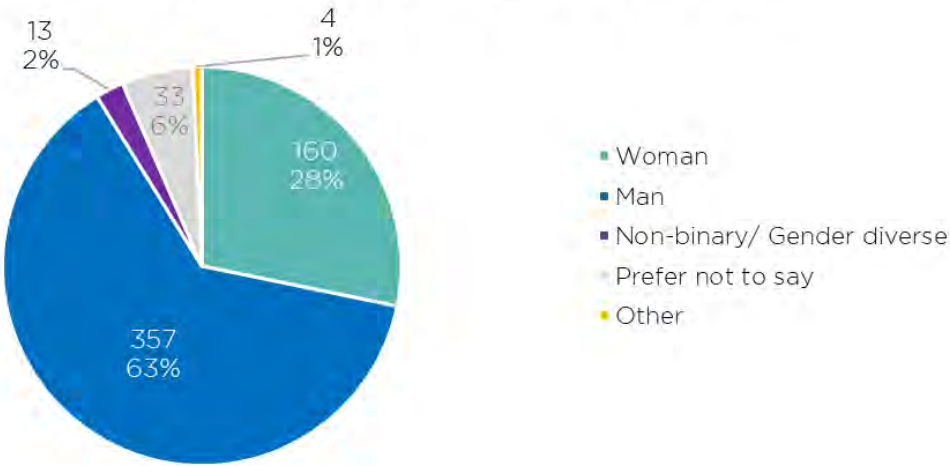
Many of the survey participants identified as European (e.g. British Isles, German, French, Greek, etc.) (68%). The percentage of survey participants varied depending on household income bracket; showing under-representation of lower income brackets, especially those with income under 40K.

Below figures are based on 567 surveys.

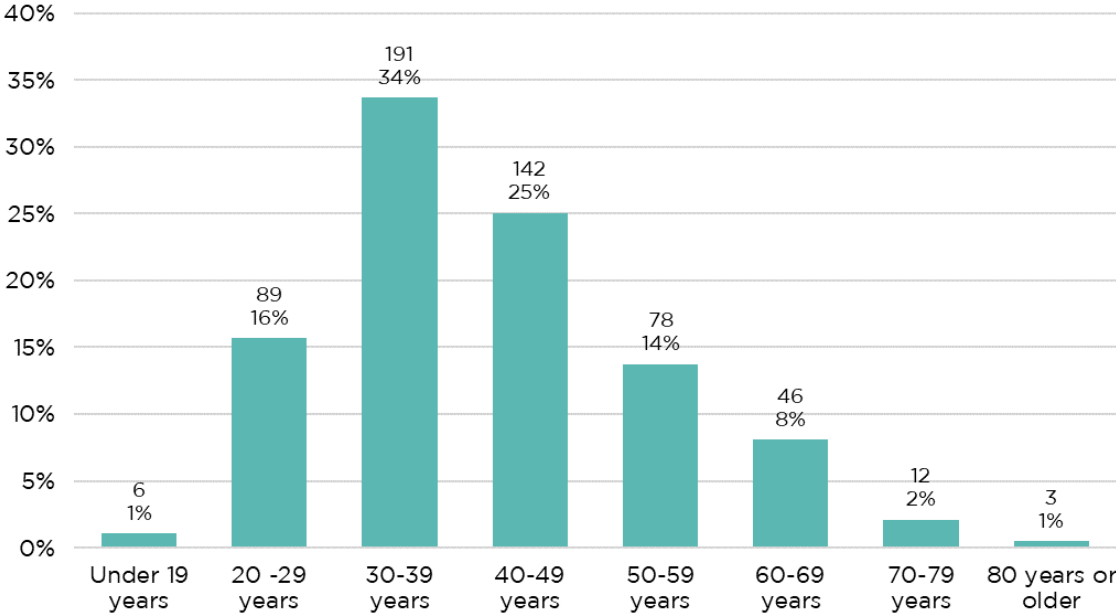
What is your connection to Smithe St? (Select all that apply)



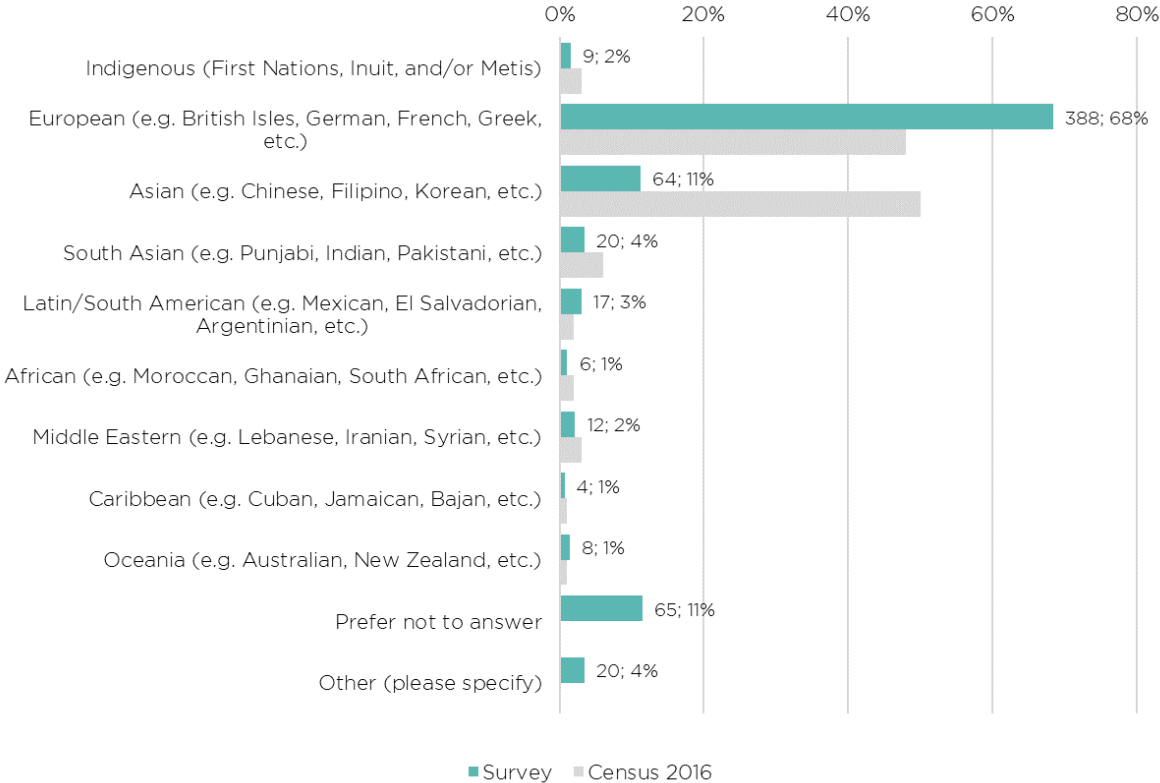
How would you describe your gender identity?



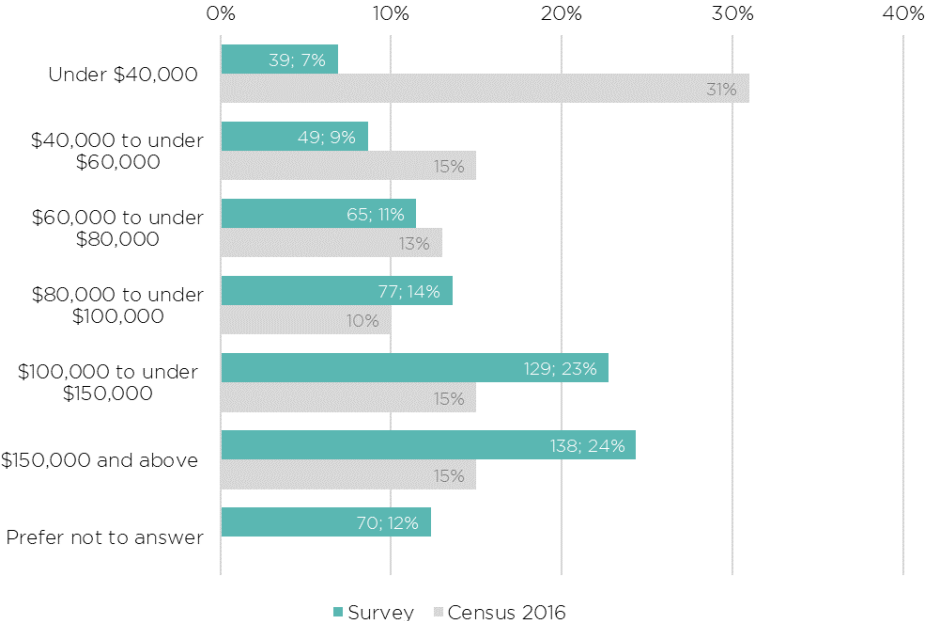
Which age group do you belong to?



What do you consider your main ethnic origin or that of your ancestors (parents, grandparents)?



Which of the following best describes your total household income per year before taxes?

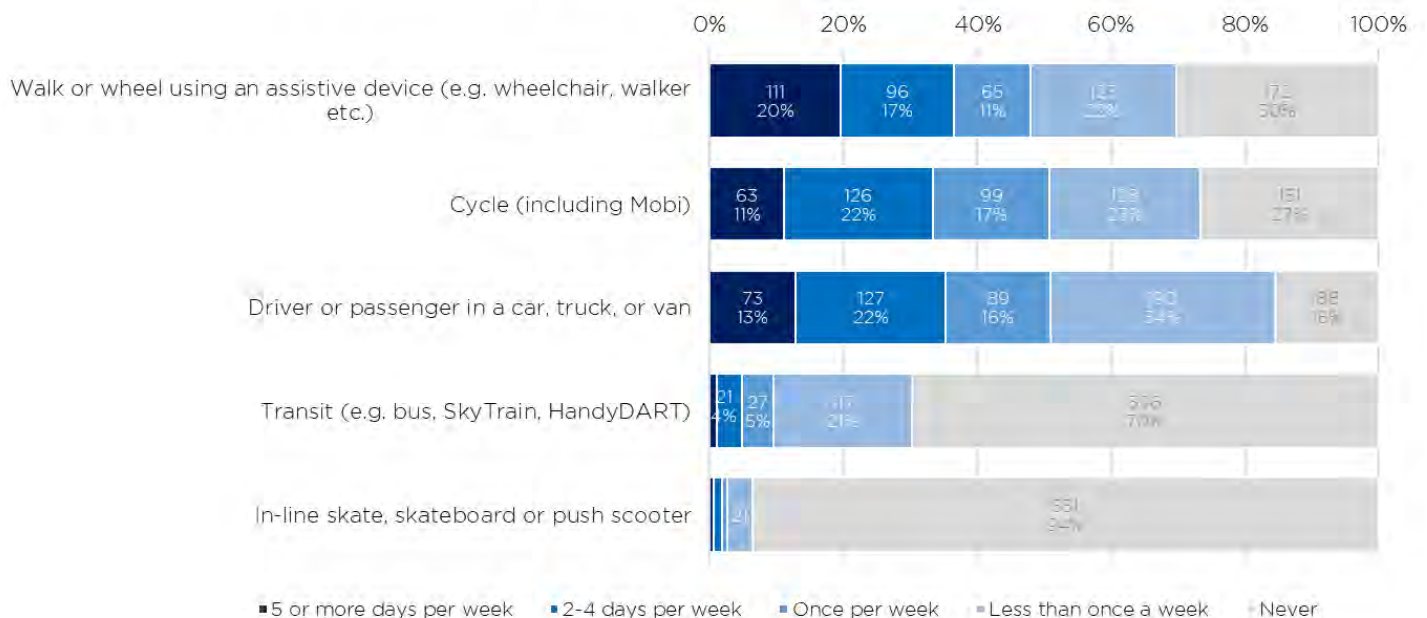


What we heard

Participants reported how they normally travel along Smithe St. using a wide variety of travel modes.

- 48% walk or wheel using assisted device at least once a week
- 50% cycle at least once a week and 3% travel using in-line skate, skateboard or push scooter
- 51% drive at least once a week
- About 10% people reported using transit facilities (including HandyDART) once a week

How often and what forms of transportation do you use to travel on Smithe Street?

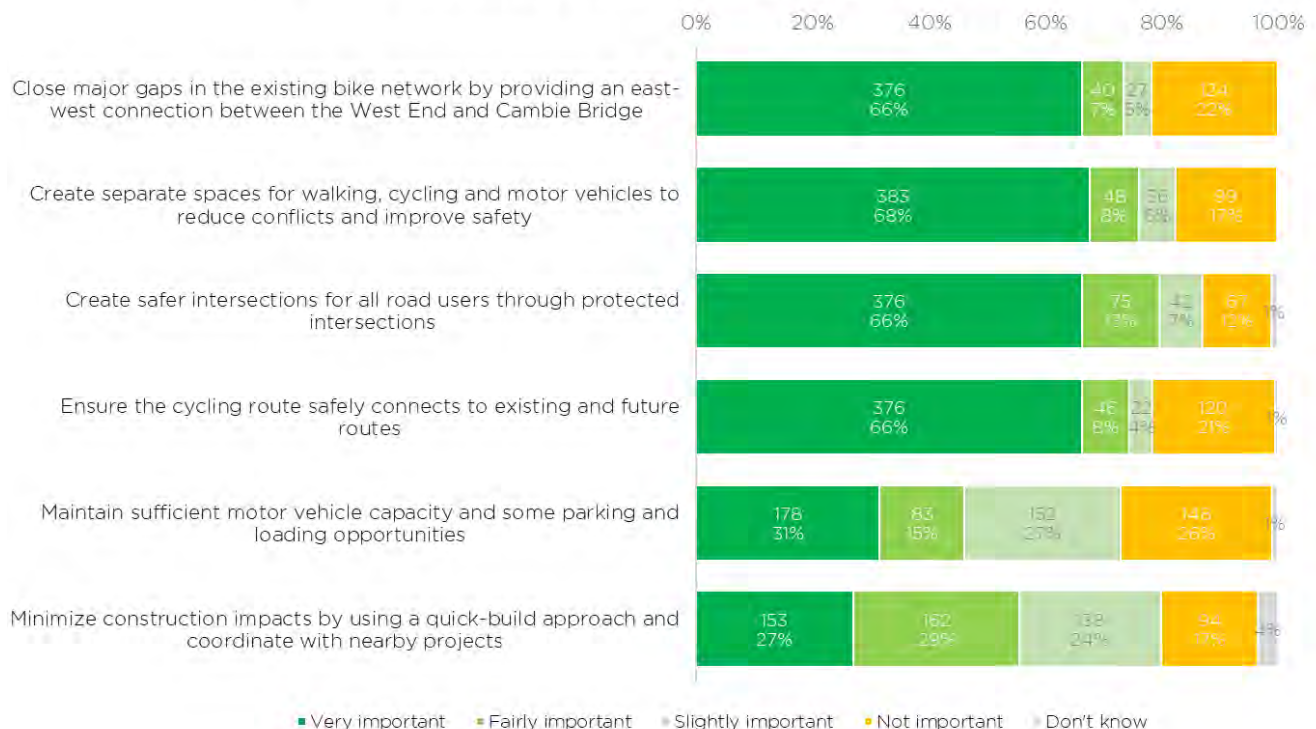


The survey responses highlight objectives related to safety and building a cycling network by closing the gaps as more important. More than 70% participants reported below objectives to be very important or important to improve their experience while traveling along Smithe St:

- Close major gaps in the existing bike network by providing an east-west connection between the West End and Cambie Bridge
- Create separate spaces for walking, cycling and motor vehicles to reduce conflicts and improve safety
- Create safer intersections for all road users through protected intersections
- Ensure the cycling route safely connects to existing and future routes

Smithe Street serves as a major westbound connection for the downtown, servicing many residences, businesses and amenities. It is an important arterial roadway, distributing traffic (particularly from the Cambie Bridge) onto the downtown grid before ending at Thurlow Street. We understand maintaining sufficient motor vehicle capacity and parking/loading opportunities is important to serve the neighbourhood. The proposed design will maintain sufficient vehicle capacity for pre-COVID traffic volumes with dedicated turn lanes and added turn signals.

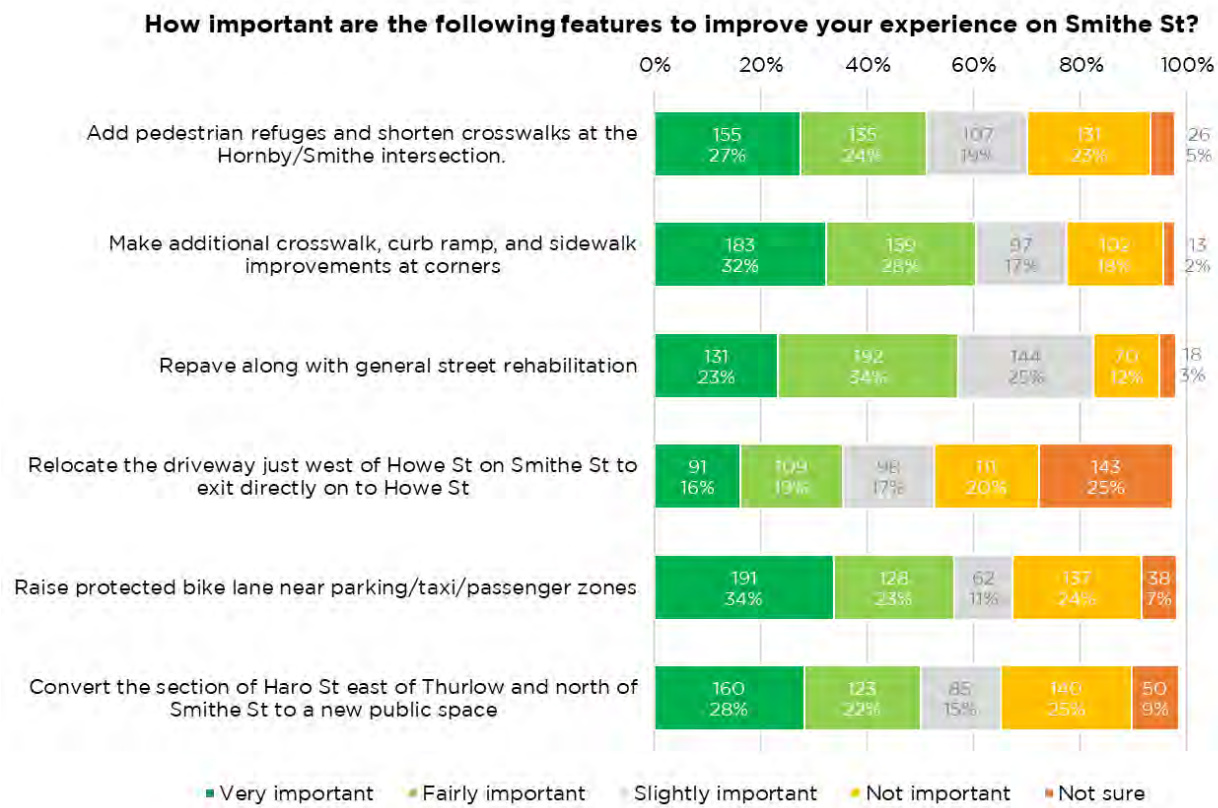
How important are the following project objectives to improve your experience while traveling along Smithe St?



Since the current upgrades are based on quick-build approach, we are identifying opportunities to add more design features that can improve safety and comfort for people walking, cycling, rolling and driving in the long-term.

More than half of the participants reported below features as very important or important:

- Add pedestrian refuges and shorten crosswalks at the Hornby/Smithe intersection
- Make additional crosswalk, curb ramp, and sidewalk improvements at corners
- Repave along with general street rehabilitation
- Raise protected bike lane near parking/taxi/passenger zones
- Convert the section of Haro Street east of Thurlow Street and north of Smithe Street to a new public space



Downtown Connections

As we build out the downtown bike network, we asked the participants about any other cycling connections that were important to them. Some of the key themes included:

- Bute Street
- Robson Street
- Connection to Gastown
- Connection from Gastown/Alexander/Water west to Coal Harbour and Seawall
- Safer connection to the Granville and Lions Gate bridges

- Pacific Street
- Many more...

Staff will review these connections and incorporate the feedback as part of larger network planning process.

Key themes and staff responses

Themes	Staff Responses
<p>Interest in learning reasons for not selecting Helmcken/Nelson streets as east-west connection</p>	<p>As part of the evaluation process to provide an east-west cycling connection, Smithe, Nelson and Helmcken streets were considered as all are identified on the five year cycling priority map. To view the entire assessment table, please see Appendix – B in the informational booklet.</p> <p>Helmcken Street currently has two-way motor vehicle traffic and parking on both sides similar to Drake Street. Similar to Drake, to accommodate a two-way protected bike lane, only up to 50% could be retained, along with turn restrictions and/or converting to one-way. It could serve two-way cycling, but Greenway treatments would require more time and cost.</p> <p>For Nelson Street, given the road width, it would still require one of the Smithe or Helmcken streets for westbound trips. In addition, Nelson Street has higher through volumes, the Howe Street turn and adjacent driveway would be difficult to access.</p> <p>As a result, of the three streets, Smithe provides the highest value for the cycling network, and also minimizes changes to motor vehicle circulation and parking. Staff will monitor the new cycling network and use the feedback received when considering future network changes in the area.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improve safety for people walking, rolling and cycling at key intersection, especially where two cycling routes intersect ▪ People cycling or riding e-scooters on the sidewalk ▪ Safety concerns while turning on Burrard Street 	<p>Sidewalks and protected bike lanes make walking, rolling and cycling safer and accessible. They appeal more to people who are interested in cycling but are concerned for their safety.</p> <p>We are proposing a protected intersection where two cycling routes connect as it reduces the likelihood of collisions between vehicles, bikes, and pedestrians by -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Providing separate infrastructure for each mode ▪ Reducing high-speed vehicle turns ▪ Improving sightlines ▪ Reducing the time & distance during which people are exposed to potential conflicts

	<p>At Richards: A protected intersection has been built as part of the Richards Green Complete Street Improvements project. We also plan to restrict left-on-red at Richards Street to reduce conflicts between turning road users.</p> <p>At Hornby: An interim protected intersection will be built at Hornby Street as part of Smithe Street upgrades. In the future, we will return to build a fuller protected intersection, including significantly shorter crosswalks.</p> <p>At Burrard: Through detailed design, we expect to include additional improvements to corner ramps, shorter and wider crosswalks, as well as creating more space and tighter curves at corners. We have also considered a westbound left turn signal phase at this intersection and ensuring through the current changes that it could be more easily added in the future.</p> <p>Province has recently approved a new pilot project that would allow electric kick scooters to legally cruise the streets of six British Columbia municipalities, including Vancouver. To make cruising safer for all road users in Vancouver, staff are preparing recommendations for Council that will identify details on the city’s participation in the Province’s pilot program. The recommendations will include rules on how and where users will be permitted to operate electric kick scooters such as - no sidewalks, permitted types of roads – bike lanes, minor streets, etc. Staff are expected to present to Council this summer.</p>
<p>Concerns while changing lanes approaching Hornby and Burrard streets.</p>	<p>We expect the new laning will make it easier to understand which lane to use (left lane for left turns, centre lane for through, right lane for right turns) on approach to Hornby and Burrard streets. We will consider additional signage if necessary. As a first measure, we have extended right turn arrows from just after Howe Street up to the Hornby Street intersection, and extended the right turn lane on approach to Burrard.</p>
<p>Interest in learning more about the Smithe-Thurlow intersection</p>	<p>The new design for the Smithe-Thurlow intersection is driven by several factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Connecting the proposed two-way protected bike lane on Smithe Street and mixed traffic with local street bikeway on Haro Street ▪ Traffic patterns on Haro Street west of Thurlow Street confirmed through the Haro Street Bikeway engagement process to:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Favour circulation south of Robson Street and work with the existing one-way on Jervis Street ○ Recognize the existing motor vehicle restrictions on Bute Street ○ Maintain access to Haro Park Centre ○ Favour the direction of emergency response ▪ Providing additional requirements to support emergency response, particularly ladder trucks from Fire Hall #7 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ To Haro Street without conflicting with motor vehicle or bicycle movements ○ Allowing the repositioning and maneuvering of fire apparatus in front of Fire Hall #7. ▪ Adding physical measures to restrict Smithe Street motor vehicle traffic to only left turns onto Thurlow Street (existing restriction). These measures include new concrete islands, a median extension into the Thurlow intersection, and landscaping that allows emergency vehicle passage. ▪ Favouring the diagonal eastbound bicycle movement and allowing right turns for bicycles on to Thurlow Street while avoiding conflicts with the westbound motor vehicle turning left ▪ Reducing construction effort in recognition of potential future coordination with 1045 Haro redevelopment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Suggestion to add separate traffic signal at Smithe-Thurlow intersection ▪ Convert the section of Haro Street east of Thurlow Street and north of Smithe Street to a new public space 	<p>Additional changes to Smithe-Thurlow intersection are expected through the 1045 Haro Street redevelopment. These may include the new public plaza, as well as an opportunity to include upgrades to the signal such as a completely separate turn phase from the south crosswalk.</p> <p>For the current changes, we expect to operate the signal roughly as existing, which would include the westbound left arrow and eastbound bicycles proceeding separately.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Proposed protected bike lane is too narrow ▪ Suggestions to widen the bike lane by narrowing the lane separation 	<p>Staff have re-reviewed widths in the entire design. There were opportunities to provide a slightly wider bike lane in many sections, including some entire blocks of 3.0m, and only a limited number of sections that reach the same 2.7m minimum (as currently used on multiple blocks of Hornby Street).</p> <p>Where there are localized pinch points, some planters have been removed to allow a reduced median width. Most sections continue to use the width of planter median that is designed to mount signs, account for the</p>

	<p>opening of vehicle doors, provide comfort when facing oncoming motor vehicle traffic, and allow passenger use at the Orpheum, as well as to allow landscaping.</p> <p>Due to the existing roadway width, even with narrower general traffic lanes, it is not possible to provide 3 lanes and a significantly wider protected bike lane.</p>
<p>Add bike racks</p>	<p>We will work to locate additional bike racks at suitable points along the protected bike lane, favouring destinations and locations on the north side.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Traffic flow between Howe and Hornby streets ▪ Queueing of vehicles on Smithe Street to turn onto Hornby Street ▪ Suggestions to improve traffic signal coordination for better traffic flow 	<p>One of the objectives for the proposed design is to maintain sufficient capacity for pre-COVID motor vehicle volumes. The proposed design maintains sufficient motor vehicle capacity by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Including dedicated turn lanes for these busy turns. ▪ Separating turn phases at Hornby St and Burrard St to reduce conflicts and provide more time to turn. Meaning, we will adjust the signal timing to include a longer protected right turn phases (compared to a shorter right turn phase followed by a phase that allows right turns after yielding to people walking). With the longer dedicated phase, we do not anticipate the proposed changes to further impact queuing. Staff are also reviewing opportunities for coordinating traffic signals on Hornby at both Smithe Street and Robson Street to potentially improve the queuing situation. ▪ Reducing the current lane changing around Burrard St by having a consistent through lane beside turning lanes. <p>There are several nearby interacting construction projects, as well as upcoming weekend activations to Granville Street affecting transit, and each of these will overlap the remaining steps in BC’s Restart (COVID reopening plan). As a result, traffic conditions may be more variable initially.</p>
<p>Access to parkade/driveway</p>	<p>Access to parkades will be maintained in the proposed design. The proposed design will include green paint, bike stencils (that we have redrawn to be more visible to perpendicular traffic), yield on turn signage, and signs warning exiting drivers of the two-way bike traffic. Close attention will be paid to the width of driveway openings, for example, to have two separate crossings for adjacent driveways rather than one large and unclear crossing. In</p>

	<p>general, signalized intersections have a higher potential for conflict compared to driveways.</p> <p>Depending on future construction effort, we do have some additional measures that include a raised sidewalk and bike lane to reinforce the priority, and if the remainder of the bike lane is at road level this would also have people cycling ramping up and down. Richards St at Georgia St is one of the recent examples with similar design approach.</p>
<p>Continued concern for exiting court parking onto Hornby, across the protected bike lane at Robson Street intersection</p>	<p>Some improvements to the original design were made with the recent 800 Robson plaza improvements. We will continue to monitor this exit with its proximity to the Robson St and Hornby St intersection. Over the long term there may be opportunities to shift the exit further away from the intersection or coordinated with future projects at that intersection.</p>