

CITY OF VANCOUVER
BRITISH COLUMBIA CANADA



Executive Summary

**City of Vancouver
Downtown Transportation Plan**

Submitted to: City of Vancouver

February 2002



Ipsos  **Reid**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The following is a summary of results from the City of Vancouver's Downtown Transportation Plan survey. A total of 900 telephone interviews were conducted with a randomly selected sample of downtown businesses (n=300), residents (n=300) and commuters (n=300) between the dates of January 9 and 21, 2002.

Given that downtown residents and commuters (from Vancouver and non-Vancouver areas) share similar views on many issues explored in this study, we have combined their views into a 'residential' component. However, we do highlight areas where differences in opinion exist among the three groups.

Getting Around in Downtown Vancouver

Downtown Vancouver is pedestrian and transit-friendly. Getting around in downtown Vancouver is not currently seen as a problem if you are walking or taking public transit. The same cannot be said for getting around by private vehicle or by bicycle.

Perceptions of Getting Around Downtown

"In general, would you say it's easy or difficult to get around in downtown Vancouver?"

Mode	Easy		Difficult	
	Businesses %	Residents %	Businesses %	Residents %
Walking	96	88	2	8
Public transit	62	63	19	20
Bicycle	38	29	38	34
Private vehicle	35	34	52	42

Awareness of the Downtown Transportation Plan

Awareness of the Downtown Transportation Plan is quite low. Only 20 percent of business owners/operators and 23 percent of residents are aware of it. And of those who have heard of the Plan, few say they are very familiar with it. People have typically heard about it through their local community newspaper, with direct information from the City of Vancouver being the second most common source of information.

Although awareness of the Plan is low, a majority of people state that it matters to them that there is a plan (59% of residents, 55% of businesses). Few residents or business owners/operators say that it does not matter much that Vancouver has a Downtown Transportation Plan.

Reaction to the Downtown Transportation Plan

In general, residents and business people are very supportive of the Downtown Transportation Plan with support for the Plan growing once people know more about it. There is, however, a noticeable drop in the proportion saying they strongly support the plan once they know more about it. Some of the Plan specifics are clearly tempering support. Nevertheless, the specific information about the plan is bringing more people onside with the Plan as opposition drops once more information about the Plan is provided.

Support for Plan Before and After Hearing About It

"Now based on this description and on anything else you may have read, seen or heard, do you generally support or oppose the goals of the draft Downtown Transportation Plan?"
"Now that we've talked about some of the specific proposals in the draft Downtown Transportation Plan, please tell me whether you support or oppose this draft Plan."

	Businesses		Residents	
	Support %	Oppose %	Support %	Oppose %
Before details provided	66	27	78	15
After details provided	74	23	84	11

Both before and after details are provided, support for the Plan is typically higher among residents than business people. It is also typically higher among Vancouver residents and among public transit users and people who walk to work. Vehicle drivers tend to be a little less supportive of the Plan.

People generally support the Downtown Transportation Plan because they believe it will improve traffic flow and reduce congestion. They also feel the Plan will make things better for pedestrians and cyclists, and that it will improve public transit. Those opposed to the Plan oppose it because they say it does not focus on drivers/commuters, and because there is too much emphasis on cyclists and pedestrians.

Support for General Plan Strategies

The Downtown Transportation Plan includes several basic tenets: minimizing road congestion, creating a network of downtown bike lanes, giving pedestrians greater priority, and developing a network of downtown-only transit routes. Support is high for each component. Support for minimizing road congestion is the highest, with more than nine-in-ten supporting it.

Reaction to Plan Components

"The draft Downtown Transportation Plan proposes four strategies to improve access to and within the downtown peninsula, and to enhance its economic vitality. Do you support or oppose ...?"

Tenet	Support		Oppose	
	Businesses %	Residents %	Businesses %	Residents %
Minimizing road congestion	90	92	7	4
Network of downtown bike lanes	71	78	27	18
Priority to pedestrians	68	76	28	18
Downtown-only transit routes	70	76	24	18

Reaction to Plan Components

Fourteen potential components of the Plan were tested with business owners/operators and residents. These were designed to have an impact on one of the following: pedestrians, cyclists, public transit, goods movement and general traffic.

Overall, the majority of business owners/operators and residents support the potential changes that would impact pedestrians, cyclists, public transit, as well as goods movement. Both groups, however, are less supportive of the proposed changes to general traffic.

Reaction to Plan Components Affecting ...

"Now I'm going to read you some of the SPECIFIC components of the Downtown Transportation Plan and I'd like to know whether you support or oppose each one."

	% Support	
	Businesses (n=300) %	Residents (n=600) %
Pedestrians		
Creating a network of clearly defined pedestrian routes that will provide direct links to major destinations in the downtown peninsula	74	81
Improving sidewalks by widening them, creating corner bulges and enhancing weather protection	67	73
Cyclists		
Creating a network of dedicated cycling routes that connect to major destinations in the downtown peninsula	74	84
Investing in cycling infrastructure such as more bike racks, destination and distance signage	74	81
Public Transit		
Introducing new bus routes to make more direct connections between areas, such as between the West End and the VGH area	83	85
Creating a reduced bus fare zone for the downtown peninsula	81	84
Expanding fixed rail networks such as SkyTrain and streetcars	83	83
Adding more dedicated bus lanes in the downtown peninsula	57	68
Goods Movement		
Providing sufficient loading areas for commercial vehicles	90	86
Limiting and regulating semi-trailer truck access within downtown residential areas	78	80
Clearly defining a downtown network of truck routes to move goods	76	80
General Traffic		
Encouraging lower speeds by adjusting traffic signals to synchronize for a 40 kilometres per hour speed	59	63
Extending afternoon rush hour parking restrictions by 30 minutes	61	62
Providing additional on-site parking	60	57

Reaction to Specific Changes

In total, we explored public reaction to six **specific** changes to the downtown peninsula that would generally impact traffic flow or street design.

Three potential changes would impact **traffic flow**: converting Beatty Street from a one-way street to a two-way street; converting Homer Street from a one-way street to a two-way street; and, converting Pender Street from a two-way street to a one-way street toward Chinatown. Survey results show that over six-in-ten business people and residents support changes to Beatty Street and Homer Street. On the other hand, support for changes to Pender Street is lower among the business community (48% vs. 61% of residents).

Three potential changes would impact **street design**: redesigning Helmcken Street to give pedestrians and bikes more space by eliminating some parking spaces; creating a southbound bike lane on Burrard Street by narrowing the six existing traffic lanes to standard width and eliminating 42 parking spaces; and, allowing cars on the Granville Street Mall. Here we find slightly more mixed levels of public support. In all, two of the three proposed changes are endorsed by the majority of residents and business people: redesigning Helmcken Street, and creating a southbound bike lane on Burrard Street.

The one proposed change to street design that receives the lowest overall support is the idea of allowing cars on Granville Street. However, this is one area where overall support is higher among the business community (47%) than the residential community (38%).

Reaction to Specific Changes

"As you may or may not know, there are a number of considerations in the Downtown Transportation Plan for SPECIFIC changes to the downtown transportation network. Please tell me whether you support or oppose each one."

	% Support	
	Businesses (n=300) %	Residents (n=600) %
Converting Beatty Street from a one-way street to a two-way street	68	74
Converting Homer Street from a one-way street to a two-way street	63	61
Converting Pender Street from a two-way street to a one-way street	48	61
Redesigning Helmcken Street to give pedestrians and bikes more space	62	62
Creating southbound bike lane on Burrard Street	54	55
Allowing cars on Granville Street Mall	47	38

Perceived Impact of Plan on Residents and Business Owners/ Operators

Overall, downtown residents and commuters (Vancouver and non-Vancouver) believe that the Plan will have a favourable impact on them as a resident and as a commuter. Indeed, when we asked residents whether they would be more or less likely to shop in the downtown core if the draft Downtown Transportation Plan was implemented, one-third of residents say they would be more likely to shop downtown.

Perceived Impact of Downtown Transportation Plan on ...*

"Overall, do you think the draft Downtown Transportation Plan will have a positive or negative impact on ...?"

		% Very Positive	% Total Positive	Net Score*
You as a downtown resident	(n=300)	33	76	+ 65
You as a commuter into downtown	(n=482)	31	73	+ 58
Businesses in the downtown peninsula	(n=600)	26	76	+ 63
		% Very Likely	% Total Likely	Net Score
Shopping in downtown Vancouver	(n=600)	17	33	+ 27

**Net Score = Total positive minus total negative.*

Business owners/operators, on the other hand, are slightly less enthusiastic that the Plan will be good for business activity. However, we do find that business owners/operators who have street-level storefronts are more likely than others to embrace the Plan as they think the Plan will have a positive impact on their business.

Perceived Impact of the Plan on Businesses

"Overall, do you think the proposed Downtown Transportation Plan will have a positive or negative impact on your business?"

		Businesses	
		% Positive	Net Score**
All Businesses	(n=300)	51	+ 38
Business to Business	(n=151)	40	+ 25
Business to Consumer	(n=151)	59	+ 45
Business to Consumer, Street-Level Storefronts	(n=56)*	75	+ 66
Business to Consumer, No Street-Level Storefronts	(n=95)*	49	+ 32

** Small base size.
**Net Score = Total positive minus total negative.*