

What We Heard:

**A Report on the Nova Scotia
Highway Twinning Consultations**

**Prepared for:
Department of Transportation and
Infrastructure Renewal**

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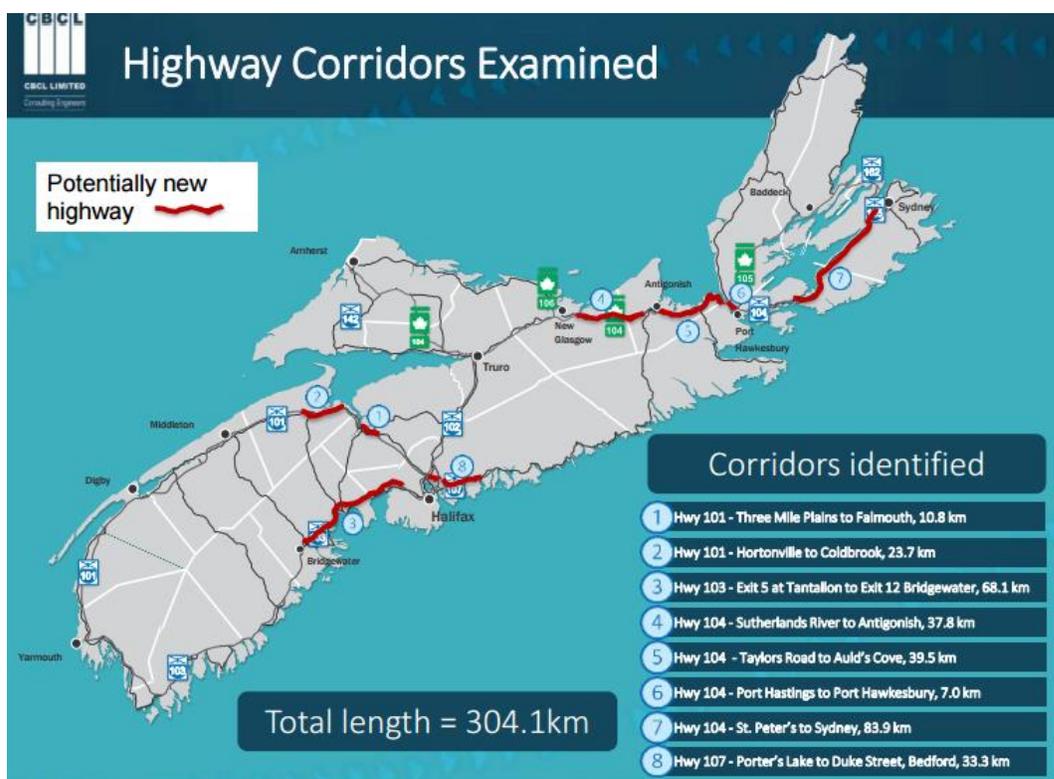
1.0 Introduction

This report presents a summary of the feedback and comments provided by Nova Scotians during the consultation process on the CBCL Highway Twinning Feasibility Study.

1.1 Project Background

In 2015, the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal (TIR) completed safety studies on the 101, 103 and 104 which made a series of short, medium and long-term recommendations to the Provincial Government on how to improve highway conditions. The ultimate safety measure in many cases is twinning. However, constructing twinned highways using conventional methods under TIR's current budget would take approximately 50-60 years to complete. In response to repeated calls to look at ways to twin sooner, TIR commissioned CBCL Limited Consulting Engineers (CBCL) to study eight individual corridors, as seen in the map below¹, and determine the feasibility of using tolls to twin sooner (8-10 years). The next step was to seek out Nova Scotians' opinions on the use of tolls as a way to offset higher costs associated with building twinned highways in a shorter period of time.

Figure 1 Map of Proposed Twinned Highway Corridors



¹ TIR website, <https://novascotia.ca/twinning>

1.2 The Consultation Process

TIR wanted to provide an opportunity to share the study findings with Nova Scotians and gather their feedback. As such, MQO, a professional research firm in Atlantic Canada, was commissioned to conduct consultations throughout Nova Scotia to gather Nova Scotians' feedback on the study findings and the concept of using tolls as a way to get twinned highways sooner than would otherwise be possible given current TIR annual infrastructure budgets. As part of the consultation process, a number of feedback mechanisms were provided to Nova Scotians. These included:

- a series of 14 public consultation sessions and 1 stakeholder session;
- an online survey;
- an open online comment box; and
- mail-in and e-mail written submissions to TIR.

The goal of this consultation process was to hear what Nova Scotians had to say on the topic. The nature of such processes is to offer a voice to those who wish to provide their views and it must be recognized that there were no limits placed on the number of times any one individual could provide feedback, nor was there any effort to impose any type of quotas to ensure those contributing were representative of the general population of Nova Scotia based on variables such as age, gender, community of residence etc. This is different from a public opinion survey where a random sample of the population is selected and interviewed to gain their opinions, with quotas to ensure the completed sample is representative of the population based on key demographic variables. The process was meant to be an inclusive one, and as such participation was not restricted in any way. We were less interested in such things as random sampling, and more focused on inviting as many Nova Scotians as possible to share their insights through any and all methods of communication provided. Please bear this in mind when reading the following report. This document is a summary of what was heard from Nova Scotians when asked what they thought about the use of tolls as an option to allow twinning to take place sooner.

Nova Scotians were very engaged in the process and had a lot to say. Over 5,300 pieces of written feedback were received. A total of 1,911 residents participated in one of the 14 public sessions held (see distribution by community below) and an additional 10 participated in an industry/organizational stakeholder session, for a total of 1,921 individuals and organizations.

Table 1 Number of people who attended public consultations (organized by region)

Public Consultation Event Attendance	Number of Attendees
New Glasgow	227
Kentville	134
Windsor	169
Bridgewater	279
Chester	196
Halifax (HRM)	39
Sydney	74
River Bourgeois	79
Port Hawkesbury	139
Porter's Lake	194
Dartmouth	78
Antigonish	197
Digby	39
Shelburne	67
Stakeholder session	10
Total	1,921

As seen below, just over 1,200 (65%) of those who attended the public consultations also submitted written feedback during the session. More than 3,700 people completed the online survey. Additionally, 151 people submitted comments through the Comment Submission Form on the Nova Scotia Twinning website and 222 people also submitted feedback directly to TIR via e-mail or traditional mail.

Table 2 Number of submissions received (organized by method of submission)

Source of Feedback & Comments	#
Online Public Survey	3776
Written Submissions - Public Consultations	1238
Written Submissions - Mailed/E-mailed Directly to TIR	222
Comment Form Submissions	151
Total	5387

Presented in this report is a summary of what was heard from each aspect of the consultation process, followed by the key findings that emerged from the entire process

2.0 Public Consultations & Online Survey Feedback

By far, the majority of feedback received came from those present at the public consultation sessions and those completing the online survey. This section provides an overview of the format and findings from these primary methods of consultation. It should be noted that there were several individuals who attended more than one consultation session and some individuals may have completed the online survey more than once.

2.1 Public Consultation Format

Representatives from TIR, CBCL and MQO Research travelled to communities in order to speak with Nova Scotians directly about the findings from the Highway Twinning Feasibility Study and to discuss the concept of using tolls to twin highways sooner than would otherwise be possible given current TIR annual infrastructure budgets. In total, 14 2-hour public consultations were held throughout the province beginning January 30th and ending March 9th 2017. Each public session was facilitated by MQO Research and included a presentation by both TIR and CBCL. TIR provided an overview of the Highway Twinning Project to date as well as background on TIR infrastructure plans and financing of the same. CBCL presented a summary of the key findings from the Highway Twinning Feasibility Study. The purpose of the presentations was to share information about the highway twinning process and the concept of using tolls to finance twinning sooner and to allow community members an opportunity to consider and discuss the information.

Following the presentations, the session format involved individuals reviewing and responding to questions individually (on question sheets at their tables), namely:

- 1) What is your opinion of the current condition of the province's 100-series highways included in the study? Consider safety, traffic congestion, travel time;
- 2) Do you think twinning is the only option to improve the province's 100-series highways? If you think there are other options, please explain below
- 3) If twinning is the preferred option to improve the condition of the 100-series highways, do you support using tolls to twin highways sooner than would otherwise be possible given our current budget?; and
- 4) Do you have any other comments or questions?

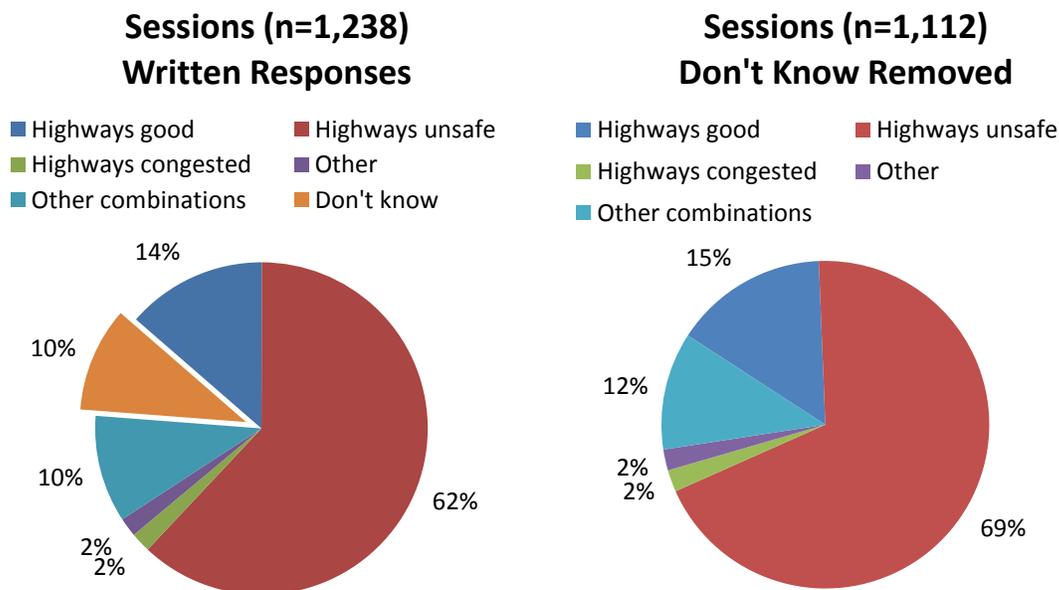
Once individuals had an opportunity to provide their own thoughts on paper, they were encouraged to have a round-table discussion of the questions and the information shared. Then as a group, discussion was facilitated by MQO Research on the questions with an opportunity for general comments and questions toward the end of each session. A note-taker recorded the discussion and individuals were encouraged to leave their question sheets behind. All of the written feedback submitted during the session or left behind after the session was over, was collected and combined with the notes from the discussion to form the “What We Heard” documents for each location. As mentioned previously, a total of 1,910 individuals attended the sessions and 1,238 (or 65%) left written comments on the question sheets. The percentage of participants leaving written responses at the end of the session ranged from (49%) to (79%), with most having at least 60% to 67% of attendees leave their individual written comments.

2.2 Feedback from Public Sessions

Q1: Highway Conditions

In terms of the condition of the 100-series highways contained in the feasibility study, for the most part individuals concerned themselves with the corridor(s) that would directly affect them and their community. For most participants in all sessions, safety of the highways was the primary concern. The results from the written responses clearly indicate this, as seen below:

Current Condition of the Province’s 100-series Highways



A small percentage (14%) of attendees at the public sessions who left written comments, noted that they felt the highways were good.

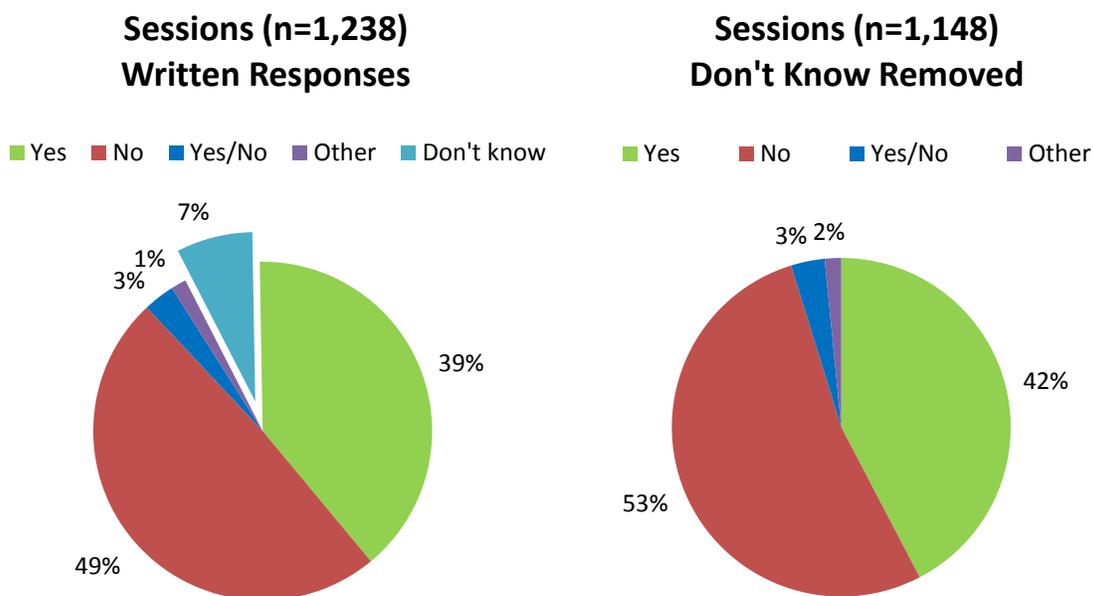
Sample comments related to highway safety concerns included:

- *“Almost completely forgotten about. There are shoulders on 101 that are washed out for 10 years.” [Windsor]*
- *“The present condition of our highways is very poor. More work needs to be done [by] paving, fixing potholes, bridges. [Before] considering adding any more, fix what we already have.” [Kentville]*
- *“Treacherous and dangerous more so in winter months. (passing lanes not enough).” [Bridgewater].*

Q2: Twinning as the Only Option

Throughout the consultations, views on twinning were mixed, but more attendees indicated that twinning was not the only option than felt it was the only option; however there was clearly a large number who held a contrary view – that twinning was the only option to improve the Province’s highways. Clearly people are divided on the idea of twinning. Again, the overall results from those who left their comments at the sessions are indicative of the split in opinions.

Perception that Twinning is the Only Option to Improve the Province’s 100-series Highways



Based on comments, many individuals were unable to separate the idea of twinning from tolling to twin and thus, many comments were made about whether twinning was even affordable given the relatively small population of Nova Scotia (compared to other Canadian provinces), the volume of traffic and the state of provincial finances.

There were some regional differences noted. In particular, attendees in **New Glasgow and Antigonish** were the most vocal and committed to the idea that twinning was the only option to improve the highway in their area. In these locations fatalities were key to their reasoning and there were many supporters in attendance who clearly have been lobbying for some time to have the area between Sutherlands River and Antigonish twinned. Those in Port Hawkesbury were also positive on the need for twinning, but support was not as entrenched as in New Glasgow and Antigonish. While the majority of attendees in each of these locations want twinning, a review of the written comments by those who left their responses, shows that there remains a percentage of individuals who are opposed to twinning (23% to 25% respectively of those leaving their comments in Antigonish and New Glasgow). Some sample responses related to why twinning is necessary include:

- *“Most definitely!! If we have to wait another 30yrs to have these highways twinned, how many other lives will be lost?? One is one too many.” [Antigonish]*
- *“It would diminish head on collisions and make the accident/fatality rates drop.” [Port Hawkesbury]*
- *“Yes. Traffic volumes are just too heavy. There's no other way to improve safety. Enforcement can only do so much.” [Kentville]*

Attendees in other locations, notably in **Lake Echo (Porter's Lake Area), Bridgewater, Chester, Digby, Shelburne and Windsor**, clearly felt that there were many other options to twinning. Many in these sessions spoke of the other solutions to increase the safety of the highways ranging from driver education, increased enforcement through police patrols, use of speed signs, jersey barriers, widening lanes etc... The concern for many was the increase in cost-of-living with businesses passing along the increase; the inequity and unfairness - rural areas being asked to pay for tolls on highways when more populated, urban areas already have twinned highways and individuals asked to pay substantial tolls to conduct daily living activities. Some examples of why twinning is felt to be unneeded include:

- *“No. The only other alternative I can think of is cement dividers of a size in which they are no wider than the current yellow lines. There would be no need to appropriate land as the current 33 1/3 provincial land would suffice.” [Digby]*

- *“No - Safety can be improved with more police presence and more/efficient maintenance on the roads/condition & clearing bushes away from the edge of the road. Drivers should be retested on a regular basis to keep their driving skills in shape (maybe 10 years)?” [Chester]*

The most negative response to twinning was received from attendees at the Lake Echo session. As mentioned, some individuals found it difficult to separate the two – twinning vs. tolling to twin sooner. For those in this location, the use of the identified corridor for twinning was felt to add undue burden on residents, being described as a road used to access services daily rather than a general transportation link between regions. Additional examples of those who opposed highway twinning as the only option are:

- *“No - more enforcement of existing legislation. To [sic] many people speeding” [Lake Echo]*
- *“Four lane narrow median is a viable option. May prove cheaper and more appropriate in areas where land access and purchase may be difficult.” [New Glasgow]*

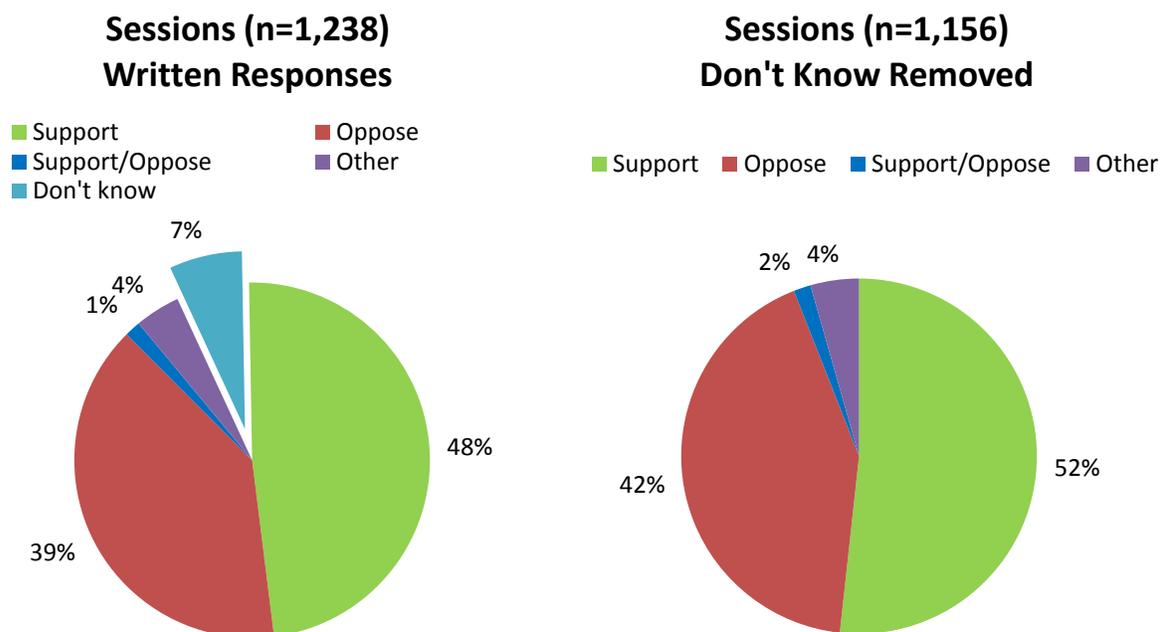
In the remaining locations, views on twinning as the only option were split. These locations were: **Kentville; Halifax; Sydney; River Bourgeois; Port Hawkesbury and Dartmouth.**

- *“No. The improvements over the last 5 years of the St. Peters to Sydney road have improved the time and safety of that road, in my opinion. Widening the road (shoulders) and opening up the "ditches" create better line of sight for driving as well.” [Sydney]*
- *“Perhaps if some sections received better lighting & dividers between lanes then more money could be saved. I do think certain portions of Corridors 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 & 8 really do need at least some twinning. I like the idea of some twinning and some 2+1 highways.” [Halifax]*
- *“Twinning for high traffic areas seems to be the best option. Changes in maximum speeds along with fines, will not stop or change the problem.” [River Bourgeois]*
- *“No. They can use police forces to better keep the roads safe.” [Dartmouth]*

Q3: Concept of Tolling to Twin Sooner

Reviewing the written responses left by session attendees, indicates that overall there was relatively more support for tolls to twin sooner than opposed, but these results are affected by the fact that many communities had a small number of written sheets included. Thus regional analysis and commentary is warranted.

Support for Tolls to Twin Sooner, if Twinning is the Preferred Option



Sample responses for those in support of tolls:

- *“I support tolls to pay for the highway. Consideration should be given to reduce the daily use for frequent travelers (i.e. Mac Passes). The cumulative costs of tolls must be considered (i.e. traveling from Canso causeway to New Glasgow). I have no problem paying \$2.00 each way on a toll highway” [Antigonish]*
- *“Yes, where feasible (Especially in high accident areas such as Marshy Hope.)”[River Bourgeois]*

Sample responses for those opposed to tolls:

- *“This could be a costly daily expense for people's budget. Many short haul trips can become costly. Presenting cost in terms of cents rather than dollars in some cases may seem just pennies but they all add up to several dollars a day.” [Location Not Given]*

- *“No - add to fuel tax, increase registration, tolls destroy small towns. People get on toll roads and don't get off. We need to have more people move freely. The more they stop and spend the more tax dollars we have.” [Windsor]*

Note that, given not all individuals would feel comfortable speaking in front of others, an analysis was undertaken to compare the tone and general opinions voiced during the discussions with the individual written comments provided by individuals. Summaries of this analysis by each community location are presented in Appendix B. For the most part this analysis revealed that the opinions voiced were reflective of the general opinions expressed individually in writing on the three questions - road conditions; options to improve safety and twinning as the only option; and willingness to pay tolls to twin the 100-series highways sooner.

There were four locations in which there was a **discrepancy in tone** between the feedback **on tolling to twin sooner** provided during the discussion portion of the public consultation and the feedback provided in the written responses left behind on the tables. Specifically, the written responses that were either submitted or left behind on tables following the public consultations in **Kentville, Dartmouth, River Bourgeois** and **Sydney** reflected a more positive outlook on the use of tolls to pay for highway twinning.

Assessing peoples' positions on highway twinning was less clear as it is evidently difficult for Nova Scotians to separate the issue of twinning from tolling to twin sooner. Furthermore, the feedback provided during the public consultations largely concerned tolls. For example, some people may oppose highway twinning because of the possibility of tolls. However, it seemed to be the case generally that written responses viewed twinning relatively more positively than the feedback provided during the public consultations. Notable exceptions were the comparisons between the public consultations and written submissions for **Antigonish, Port Hawkesbury** and **New Glasgow** which were all positive towards twinning. Additional exceptions were the regions of **Digby, Shelburne,** and **Lake Echo** which generally reflected negative responses toward twinning in both the public consultation session and in the written feedback.

The feedback provided during the **Kentville** public consultation had a negative response toward the use of tolls. During the consultation, attendees placed an emphasis on more-equitable revenue generating methods (e.g., province-wide gas tax). Attendees of the public consultation in Kentville also spoke to several alternative solutions to improving highway conditions including additional passing lanes, construction of jersey barriers, reducing speed limits, increasing law enforcement presence and/or improving driver education. However, the written submissions were considerably more positive. The majority of people who submitted written responses supported the use of tolls or conditionally supported the use of tolls depending on the cost of tolls and/or the availability of passes.

In **Dartmouth**, the feedback provided during the public consultation session was mixed. There were concerns about safety in Dartmouth, but several alternative solutions to improving highway conditions were offered. Some of these alternative suggestions included: implementing surveillance technology to monitor speeding vehicles, reduced speed limits, improved highway lighting, construction of medians/jersey barriers and increased law enforcement presence. Although the written submissions speak to the divisiveness inherent in a conversation about tolls, the themes generally suggest a more positive outlook on the use of tolls. The majority of people who submitted written responses either supported tolls generally; conditionally supported tolls depending on the cost of tolls and/or the availability of passes, and/or supported tolls because twinning was believed to be necessary to improve safety.

In **River Bourgeois**, the general tone of the public consultation seemed to be opposed to both highway tolls and twinning. However, those who submitted written responses were relatively more positive in their feedback on tolls. The majority of responses were in support of tolls or conditionally supportive of tolls depending on the cost of tolls and/or the availability of passes.

In **Sydney**, the tone of the feedback on the proposal of tolls was very negative. Some of the factors believed to contribute to poor highway conditions include poor engineering of highways, use of low-quality construction materials, poor road conditions, high traffic congestions and driver error. However, those who submitted written responses either supported tolls or conditionally supported tolls depending on the cost of tolls and/or the availability of passes.

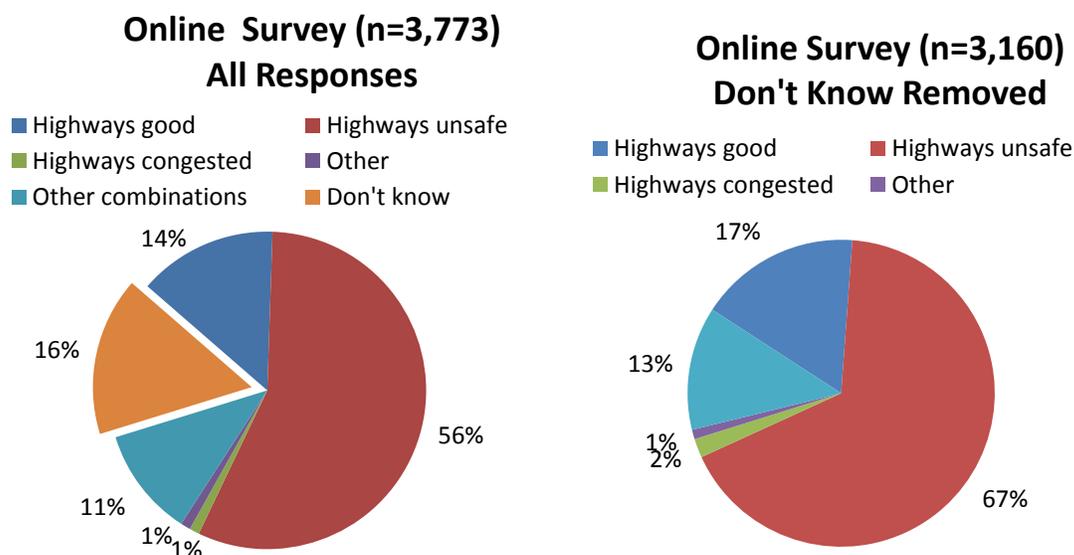
2.3 Online Survey Results

The online public survey was used as a way of gathering insight from Nova Scotians easily and efficiently across the province. The survey asked the same questions used during the public consultation sessions: 1) What is your opinion of the current condition of the province’s 100-series highways included in the study? Consider safety, traffic congestion, travel time; 2) Do you think twinning is the only option to improve the province’s 100-series highways? If you think there are other options, please explain below; 3) If twinning is the preferred option to improve the condition of the 100-series highways, do you support using tolls to twin highways sooner than would otherwise be possible given our current budget?; and 4) any other comments or questions? In total, 3,773 surveys were completed and the themes have been included in this report.

Q1: Highway Conditions

The online survey results were almost identical to the responses from the public consultations – the issues on the highways are not perceived to be related to congestion, but are about highways being unsafe and a majority responding felt they were unsafe.

Current Condition of the Province’s 100-series Highways



Similar to the responses submitted during the public consultations, the majority of responses to the online survey regarding the condition of the 100-series highways focused on the safety of the highways above all other factors. Many comments in the online survey referred specifically to a particular stretch of highway or corridor that could be affected by twinning and/or is used on a regular basis by the respondent.

Of those people who said the highways were unsafe, slightly less than half said that twinning was necessary to improve conditions. The other half of respondents stated that poor driving habits; outdated highway infrastructure; and/or the physical condition of the roads negatively impacted highway conditions.

Some examples of the comments relating to highway conditions include:

- *“They are in significant need of upgrading, twinning, modernizing. The highway between Halifax-Truro needs to be expanded to 3-4 lanes in EACH direction and needs 1 lane for truck traffic - this highway is way too congested and dangerous (speeding - most drivers are driving 120-140 and weaving in and out of traffic, overcrowded/congested, dangerous passing). The highways from Halifax to Yarmouth needs to be twinned as does the rest of the highway between New Glasgow and the Causeway - the single lane parts of the New Glasgow to Port Hastings highway are extremely dangerous. The twinned highway from Truro to Amherst is excellent.” [New Glasgow].*
- *“I regularly drive the 103 and it carries at times dense traffic. Generally going to Halifax and return for access to health services only available in the city. Some drivers do not understand speed limits and drive very dangerously creating hazards for all other vehicles. My use of the other 100 series roads are occasional and mostly for recreational purposes.” [Lunenburg]*
- *“I travel from Port Hawkesbury on the 104 to both Antigonish and New Glasgow several times a week [and] the condition of even the new highway is embarrassing as we pay some of the highest taxes in the country and see nothing but pot holes on brand new highway that was clearly not constructed with enough care....” [Port Hawkesbury].*

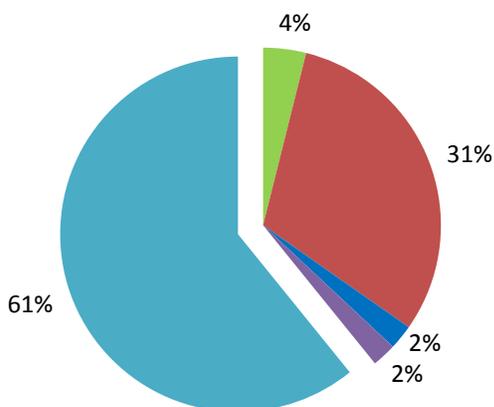
Q2: Twinning as the Only Option

Responses to the online survey indicate that a large percentage of individuals did not have an opinion on twinning as the only option to improve the 100-series Highways. Those who did, were even more opposed to twinning than was evident from the public sessions. The most common alternative solutions mentioned by respondents were: increase highway law enforcement; construct additional passing lanes; construct a barrier/median, and/or repair and maintain current highways.

Perception that Twinning is the Only Option to Improve the Province’s 100-series Highways

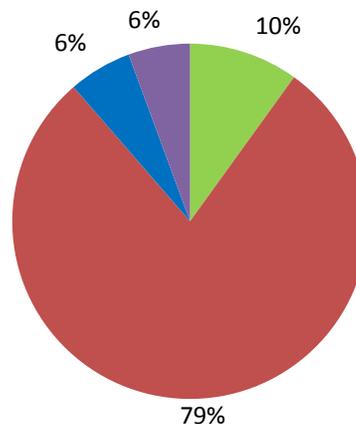
Online Survey (n=3,773)
All Responses

■ Yes
 ■ No
 ■ Yes/No
 ■ Other
 ■ Don't know



Online Survey (n=1,478)
Don't Know Removed

■ Yes
 ■ No
 ■ Yes/No
 ■ Other



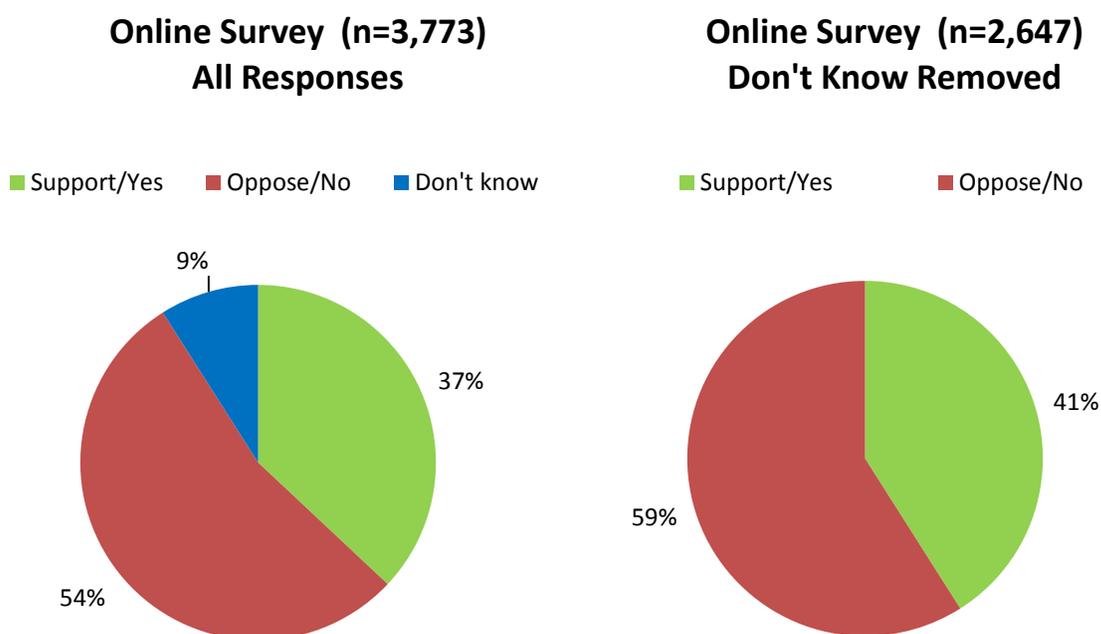
Examples of responses from those who believe there are alternative options to improving the Province’s 100-series highways:

- *“Jersey barriers are MUCH cheaper and do the same purpose as twinning would , namely separate traffic and prevent head on collisions” [Halifax]*
- *“Since Nova Scotia has expense constraints, make more passing lanes but make them longer and not just on hills.” [Lunenburg]*
- *“Proper upkeep of the roads makes more sense.” [Shelburne]*
- *“A possible alternative to complete twinning is to have passing lanes alternating every several miles from one side of the road to the other side of the road. In other words, where one passing lane ends on one side of the highway, it would begin on the other side of the highway - eliminating any sections of the highway which are strictly 2 lane highways.” [Cape Breton]*

Q3: Concept of Tolling to Twin Sooner

Compared to the feedback received during the public sessions, the overall opposition expressed through the online survey was greater to using tolls than indicated through the written responses from the public consultations. Again, it must be remembered that there are regional considerations. The most frequently mentioned reasons for opposing tolls were: the affordability of tolls for individuals/families; the sense that Nova Scotians' are taxed too much already; and/or the belief that highways should be alternately funded (e.g. gas tax).

Support for Tolls if Twinning is the Preferred Option



Examples of comments demonstrating opposition to tolls:

- *“Toll roads will hurt local populations that can least afford higher costs.” [Location Not Given]*
- *“Tolls are cumbersome. Visitors will not want to travel toll roads and the people living here don't need the added cost to travel anyway. The government is responsible for providing safe and effective roads.” [Location Not Given]*
- *“My gas tax paid to twin the other parts of the province. Why can't the other parts help us now by increasing the gas tax?” [Pictou]*

Examples of comments representing support of tolls:

- *“Tolls keep the highways in good condition like the cobequid pass.” [Hants]*
- *“Money is useless without your life. We pay to cross the bridges in Halifax, there are tolls everywhere in the rest of the world to pay for roads. Why not here?” [Antigonish]*
- *“If it will make it happen faster I am for it... But at what kind of cost? Any more than \$1.50 will be too much. Will this get implemented and tolls keep climbing? So many people I know are strapped for cash, some on assistance and anymore money they need to dish out is even less money to live off of.” [Cumberland]*

An analysis by age indicates there may be a slightly more positive willingness among those 18-34 to pay a toll to twin sooner; however, this is based on online survey responses and is not overlaid with where these individuals reside.

In summary, considering the majority of feedback received throughout the consultation process, Nova Scotians are split on the need for twinning and there is much opposition to the use of tolls to twin highways. As noted from the consultation findings, there are clearly pockets of support for the concept of tolling to twin sooner. The tone of these online responses is similar to the submissions received directly by TIR as well as the comment form submissions. However, the tone of all three forms of submissions contrast the feelings expressed in the written submissions during the public consultation, which generally seemed relatively more positive towards tolls, but the opposition is still stronger than the support.

The nature of public consultations is to provide all those interested an opportunity to provide their opinion. These opinions are thus of “interested” residents who want to have their say and cannot be construed to represent all residents of a particular area. Given the geographic differences and the indication of potential age differences noted, a survey, representative of the population as well as highway drivers (who would be affected) in certain areas is the only sure way to understand the views of all residents in a community.

3.0 Stakeholder Consultation Session

Another avenue of consultation was offered by TIR whereby invitations were sent to business and organization stakeholders in Nova Scotia. Ten stakeholders accepted the invitation and met in Halifax on February 15th.

The opinions were split as were those of the general public. The Nova Scotia Trucking Association was concerned that tolls will cause inflation on goods delivered by them and questioned the per-axel charge on trucks.

The Canadian Taxpayers Organization opposed tolls as another tax, indicating that the tolls will be on mostly “commuter high-ways” rather than major transportation links to the rest of the country and will increase diversion to secondary roads which are not as well maintained; The Atlantic Provinces Economic Council spoke to tolls being passed on to consumers by the trucking industry and felt that in the competitive model this is how it should be; and finally the Nova Scotia Road Builders Association spoke to the significant positive economic impacts of twinning all the sections of highway. For the most part, these viewpoints were not unexpected given the various members/stakeholders represented by the presenting groups.

Again, it speaks to the range of differing views on the concept of tolling to twin sooner.

4.0 Feedback from Other Sources

In addition to the participation at the public consultations and completion of the online survey, additional comments and feedback were received through an open comment box on the <https://novascotia.ca/twinning> website as well as through correspondence sent directly to TIR through either email or traditional mail. A total of 373 written comments/submissions were received through these methods. This section provides an overview of the findings from these additional sources, starting with submissions made directly to TIR, followed by comments submitted by e-mail using the Comment Form Submission.

4.1 Submissions to TIR

A total of 222 written emails/letters and a petition from 215 individuals to twin the 104 highway from Sutherlands River to Antigonish were received by TIR directly. The comments were coded by MQO to capture the key concerns or themes. As part of the coding process, comments were also coded to indicate how individuals felt regarding twinning and tolling to twin sooner.

Many of those who sent written comments directly to TIR or through the online comment box, did not specifically mention that they support or oppose twinning as the only option to improve the 100-series highways; however, among those who did mention their views on twinning, there was overwhelming support by a margin of almost 4-to-1 in support of twinning.

On the question of tolling to twin sooner, again a substantial percentage (30%) did not mention this specifically; however among those providing an opinion, a clear majority opposed tolls. Top mentions from the TIR submissions are shown in the following table:

Top Comments Received Through Submissions to TIR	Total
Total Unweighted (n)	223
Support Twinning	44%
Oppose Tolls	44%
Support Tolls	26%
Other improvements should be made- Increased enforcement/driver education	9%
Tolls/Twinning - Too Expensive/Can't afford	9%
Oppose Twinning	9%
Tolls/Twinning - Negative impact on economy/Tourism	9%
Increased congestion on non-toll routes	9%
Government decision making/process - cut government spending in other areas/more efficient budget spending	8%
Alternate Funding for Twinning- gas tax	8%
Comments regarding consultation process	7%
Highway construction/conditions - quality of construction/maintenance	6%
Alternate Funding for Twinning - general revenue	5%

The tone of the responses received directly by TIR was generally negative towards the proposal of tolls and slightly more positive toward twinning than other sources, yet many still felt that alternative methods such as increased highway law enforcement and improved driver education are better alternatives than twinning. Specific concerns regarding tolls mentioned by individuals included: the increased congestion on non-tolls routes, the high cost of tolls and the negative impact on the tourism industry. Respondents frequently mentioned that they believed that the Government of Nova Scotia should either cut spending in other areas in order to pay for highway twinning and/or use an alternative method than tolls to generate revenue for twinning (i.e. gas tax).

The tone of these responses is similar to the tone of the comment form submissions as well as the online survey.

4.2 Comment Form Submissions

The comment form submission was offered as an easy way for Nova Scotians who had access to internet to submit their comments or concerns without having to complete the whole survey. In total, 151 comment forms were submitted. As with the submissions to TIR, the comments were coded by MQO to capture the key concerns and coded to indicate how individuals felt regarding twinning and tolling to twin sooner.

On the topic of twinning, just over half of those making comments did not mention anything specific about twinning. Those who did, were in favour of twinning by a margin of almost 3-to-1 over those who indicated that twinning was not necessary.

On the topic of tolls to twin sooner, again a substantial number of individuals did not specifically provide an opinion on tolls, but among those who did, the good majority (7 in 10) were opposed to tolls, which translated into 40% of those sending comments.

Topics mentioned frequently included:

Top Five Comments Received Through the Comments Form	Total
Total Unweighted (n)	128
Oppose Tolls	40%
Support Twinning	34%
Support Tolls	18%
Oppose Twinning	13%
Other improvements should be made- Increased enforcement/driver education	13%
Tolls/Twinning - Too Expensive/Can't afford	9%
Comments regarding consultation process	8%
Alternate Funding for Twinning- gas tax	7%
Highway construction/conditions - quality of construction and maintenance.	7%
Government decision making/process - cut government spending in other areas/more efficient budget spending	6%
Other improvements should be made- median/barrier, rumble strips	5%
Not enough traffic or need for twinning	5%
Keep toll rates low/Fair to all	5%
Passes/Tax Breaks/Reduced rates (Tolls)	5%
Tolls on all twin highways (new and existing)	5%

The tone of the responses submitted through the comment form was generally negative towards the proposal of highway tolls. In several ways, the comment form submissions corresponded with the tone of the submissions to TIR. Namely, that an increase in highway law enforcement and/or improved driver education are better alternatives to twinning. Respondents also frequently mentioned the need to address the quality of highway construction and maintenance. Comment form submissions also indicated that respondents felt that tolls are too costly. Respondents frequently mentioned the need for the Government of Nova Scotia to find an alternative method of covering the cost of highway twinning (i.e., gas tax). Many responses received through the comment form included comments regarding the consultation process itself.

5.0 Conclusions

Nova Scotians are **vocal** on the topic of the use of tolls to speed up the twinning of the 100-series highways. It is clearly a **divisive subject**, with organized pockets of supporters and opponents.

Support for twinning as the best option to improve the conditions of the 100-series highways, while ideal for some residents, **was not universally accepted** as the only or even best option. For many, twinning in and of itself was not seen to deal with the many perceived causes of unsafe highways – such as driver’s actions (e.g. speeding, passing when unsafe, driving to the speed limit, weather and road conditions, distracted while driving). Other measures were felt needed to deal with these issues – driver education, enforcement of highway act, and use of cameras and speed indicator signs, to name a few. In terms of infrastructure, for many residents, dealing with the “trouble spots” without twinning would be a less costly alternative, with suggestions for additional passing lanes, wider shoulders, and re-engineering bad areas that are known to have a higher incidence of accidents.

Nova Scotians participating in this consultation process are **not overwhelmingly in support of tolls to twin sooner**. They are **split** on the idea with the pendulum swinging **toward less support**. Many feel that there are less expensive solutions than twinning to address highway safety, which was clearly a major concern of those providing feedback. There is an undercurrent of the population who do feel that twinning will be positive for the province and Nova Scotians and “just want the government to get on with it”. There are some indications that younger individuals and families are slightly more positive on twinning and tolling to twin sooner. Furthermore, there are regional differences, with those living around New Glasgow and Antigonish, much more positive toward the concept of tolling to twin sooner.

Based on these consultations, the corridors that would have the **most support for the use of tolls to twin**, would be on the **104 – between Sutherlands River and Antigonish, with other sections to Port Hawkesbury** also potential candidates. For the majority of residents in these areas who participated in the consultation process, twinning was definitely the best and only solution to improve the highway. Given the degree of commitment to this, there was therefore an acceptance (perhaps a reluctant one) and willingness to pay tolls in order for twinning to happen.

It should be noted that the topic of **tolls becomes a lightning rod for many other topics** and creates negativity toward the provincial government in terms of level of taxes, budget allocations, inequitable treatment of rural residents and financial management.

There were **many concerns expressed** by residents throughout the consultation process:

- People are fearful ...
 - that any toll will be an on-going toll/ tax forever;
 - that TIR are unable to maintain roads that are in place now, so how will the government be able to do it once they are twinned; and if tolled, once tolls come off;
 - that the construction costs will escalate even further from the estimates provided; and
 - that the province can't afford to twin the roads – the expense is too high given the current financial situation.
- People feel it [tolling to twin sooner] will hurt the economy, not help it – there is an expectation that tolls will cause increases in the cost of goods transported across the province...jobs from construction and economic spin-offs are not on the radar;
- The time-savings from twinning is not really perceived to be meaningful to people and does not influence their views on the toll now message (except among some regular commuters into Halifax for school/work);
- People feel there are other options that should be explored before any decisions are made; that other financing models should have been studied and many find it hard to assess whether tolling to twin sooner is the best option;
- Affordability of a toll was also of concern, especially for those needing to make regular trips for daily living (trips to schools, hospitals, shopping, activities) – this was perceived to be an unfair burden that others in the province would not have to pay.

Where there is support for the concept of **tolling to twin sooner**, it was evident that there is an **expectation** that the **toll will be a reasonable amount** – the cost of a cup of coffee – with discounts for frequent users and distance travelled, to minimize the burden. Some of those who want highways twinned and are on the fence about the concept appear to be somewhat willing to pay a toll, if it is reasonable.

Small business owners outside of HRM who are dependent upon road transport to move/process and get goods and products to market **perceive any toll to be a tax on Nova Scotians**, and are concerned about their ability to pass the costs along in the supply chain or to the end consumer.

There is also an **expectation** that the **Federal Government should be contributing substantially to the infrastructure** development, especially the 104 which serves as the Trans-Canada Highway from Sydney to New Glasgow.

Thus, in general, people who provided their feedback wanted safer highways, and most did not want to pay a toll for this benefit. There is an expectation that all Nova Scotians should contribute to the cost of highway infrastructure. The exception, as mentioned, was residents along the 104 who appear to be willing to embrace the concept of tolling to twin sooner.

Appendix B: Public Session Comparative Analyses

New Glasgow Summary

Group Discussion

Those in attendance at the New Glasgow consultation reported feeling unsafe on the highways due to traffic congestion and outdated infrastructure. Poor driving habits were also reported as contributors to unsafe highways. There was a general consensus in support of twinning, but a more mixed response to the proposition of tolls. Specific concerns regarding tolls discussed during the consultations included: the financial burden on local traffic and unequal distribution of financial responsibility in general. For example, an alternative solution proposed was a province-wide gas tax to cover the cost of twinning the highways more quickly. Nonetheless, the tone of the responses suggested a general support of using highways tolls if necessary in order to speed up the highway twinning process.

Written Responses Summary

Q1 “What is your opinion of the current condition of the province’s 100-series highways included in the study? (Consider safety, traffic congestion, travel time).”

One-quarter of those who submitted responses commented that highways are in physically poor condition. A quarter of respondents also said that highways are unsafe due to poor driving habits and that increased law enforcement officials were needed. An equal number of people – one quarter – reported that twinning was necessary to improving highway safety. These numbers correspond with the tone of the consultations.

Q2 “Do you think twinning is the only option to improve the province’s 100-series highways? If you think there are other options, please explain below.”

The vast majority of respondents reported that twinning was the best/only option. In contrast, less than a quarter of respondents indicated that twinning was not the only/best option and proposed the construction of a median/barrier and/or rumble strips. Slightly fewer people believed that twinning was not the only option and suggested increased highway law enforcement as an alternative to twinning. The written submissions reflect the general tone of the consultations, but are more positive toward twinning and the proposal of tolls.

Q3 “If twinning is the preferred option to improve the condition of the 100-series highways, do you support using tolls to twin highways sooner than would otherwise be possible given our current budget?”

A slight majority of respondents stated that they support twinning and see it as necessary to improving highway conditions. A considerable number of respondents conditionally support the proposal of tolls depending on the cost of tolls and whether or not passes were available.

Antigonish Summary

Group Discussion

The general sense from the responses during the consultation was positive toward the proposal of tolls. However, frequent suggestions were made to universalize payment for highway twinning projects in order to equally distribute the burden of cost. Some of the alternative revenue generating ideas that were discussed include: a gas tax and/or application of tolls to all highways (old and new). Alternative solutions to improving highway conditions other than twinning included: increasing driver education, increase police enforcement of highway laws and the construction of barriers/medians.

Written Submissions

Q1 “What is your opinion of the current condition of the province’s 100-series highways included in the study? (Consider safety, traffic congestion, travel time).”

More than one-third of those who submitted written responses stated that highways were unsafe/in poor condition in general. Less than one-quarter of respondents reported that highways are unsafe, and twinning was necessary. Slightly fewer people stated that highways are unsafe due to poor driving habits, and that police enforcement of highway traffic laws is required. The same number of people said that highways were in poor condition and that maintenance is necessary.

Q2 “Do you think twinning is the only option to improve the province’s 100-series highways? If you think there are other options, please explain below.”

An overwhelming majority of those who submitted written responses indicated that twinning was the best/only option to improving the 100 series highways. One eighth of those who submitted written submissions stated that twinning was not the only option and suggested an increase in police presence as a possible alternative to twinning. The same number of people reported that twinning was not the only option and proposed the construction of a median/barrier. The sentiment of these written responses seems to support the tone of the consultation and support the proposal for tolls in order to accelerate the process of twinning.

Q3 “If twinning is the preferred option to improve the condition of the 100-series highways, do you support using tolls to twin highways sooner than would otherwise be possible given our current budget?”

A majority of respondents supported the proposal for tolls, because twinning was felt to be necessary. A small number of respondents opposed tolls in general. Slightly fewer respondents conditionally supported tolls depending on the cost of tolls and/or the availability of passes.

Port Hawkesbury Summary

Group Discussion

The comments from the Port Hawkesbury consultation were generally positive toward tolling highways. However, support for the tolling of highways was frequently paired with a condition (e.g., if tolls were placed on all highways, if a pass system was implemented). Those in attendance during the Port Hawkesbury location were deeply concerned with the amount of accidents occurring on non-twinning highways. Factors believed to be associated with high accident rates are: driver error (e.g., speeding, DUI), high traffic congestion and outdated or poor highway infrastructure (e.g., not enough/long enough passing lanes, poor lighting, and too many culverts).

Written Submissions Summary

Q1 “What is your opinion of the current condition of the province’s 100-series highways included in the study? (Consider safety, traffic congestion, travel time).”

The responses to this question were quite mixed: one third of respondents stated that highways were unsafe and twinning was necessary. Slightly less than one-quarter of those who submitted written responses indicated that highways were unsafe and in poor physical condition in general. The same number of people said that highways were good/fine. Fewer respondents stated that highway upgrades were necessary (e.g., rumble strips and medians).

Q2 “Do you think twinning is the only option to improve the province’s 100-series highways? If you think there are other options, please explain below.”

More than half of those who submitted written responses indicated that twinning was the best/only option. In contrast, nearly one-quarter of respondents believed twinning was not the only option and proposed additional passing lanes as an alternative. Slightly fewer respondents reported that twinning was not the only option and proposed the construction of a median/barrier as an alternative to twinning.

Q3 “If twinning is the preferred option to improve the condition of the 100-series highways, do you support using tolls to twin highways sooner than would otherwise be possible given our current budget?”

The majority of responses to this question were in support of twinning. More than a third of respondents indicated that twinning was necessary. Almost one-quarter of respondents conditionally supported tolls depending on cost of tolls and/or the availability of passes. Fewer respondents stated they would support tolls if they were spread across all highways evenly.

Kentville Summary

Group Discussion

The response from the people who attended the public consultation in Kentville was generally negative towards tolling. However, several respondents proposed alternative revenue generating methods including gas tax as a means of covering the cost of twinning. Proposed alternatives to twinning that were discussed include: additional passing lanes, construction of jersey barriers, a reduction in speed limits, increased law enforcement and increased driver education. Kentville respondents indicated that traffic congestion and poor quality of road conditions were primary concerns relating to the 100-series highways.

Written Submissions Summary

Q1 “What is your opinion of the current condition of the province’s 100-series highways included in the study? (Consider safety, traffic congestion, travel time).”

A quarter of the respondents stated that twinning was necessary. The fact that support for twinning was the most common response to this question is surprising, in light of the negative response to twinning during the consultation. A quarter of respondents also indicated that highway conditions are fine/good. Fewer people reported that highways were unsafe due to poor road conditions.

Q2 “Do you think twinning is the only option to improve the province’s 100-series highways? If you think there are other options, please explain below.”

In contrast to the consultations, half of those who submitted written responses indicated that twinning was the best/only option. Less than one quarter of respondents indicated that twinning was not the only option and suggested passing lanes as an alternative. An equal number of respondents stated that twinning was not the only option and suggested constructing a median/jersey barrier and/or rumble strips to improve highway conditions.

Q3 “If twinning is the preferred option to improve the condition of the 100-series highways, do you support using tolls to twin highways sooner than would otherwise be possible given our current budget?”

The majority of participants were in support of tolls, because twinning was seen as necessary. Less than one quarter of people who submitted written responses were in opposition to twinning in general. Even fewer people expressed conditional support of tolls depending on cost and whether or not passes were available. These numbers conflict with the responses made during the consultations. The written responses viewed tolls much more positively than the feedback provided during the consultations.

Windsor Summary

Group Discussion

The general sense from the consultation in Windsor was negative in reaction to both tolls and twinned highways. The main factors contributing to poor highway conditions that were discussed at the consultations include: poor weather maintenance (e.g., plowing); poor physical road conditions (e.g., pot holes) and poor driving habits (e.g., speeding). However, respondents also spoke to the negative implications of twinning for local communities such as decreased pedestrian safety in town and high traffic congestion on non-toll routes as direct consequences of driver aversion to tolls.

Written Submissions Summary

Q1 “What is your opinion of the current condition of the province’s 100-series highways included in the study? (Consider safety, traffic congestion, travel time).”

More than one-third of people who submitted written responses stated that highways are in good/fine condition. Nearly one-quarter of respondents stated that highways are unsafe and also that twinning was necessary. Slightly fewer respondents indicated that highway conditions are generally unsafe and/or roads are in poor condition. An equal number of people said that highways are unsafe because of poor driving habits.

Q2 “Do you think twinning is the only option to improve the province’s 100-series highways? If you think there are other options, please explain below.”

More than one-third of respondents indicated that twinning was the best/only option. Slightly fewer people stated that twinning was not the best/only option and proposed an increase in law enforcement presence. Less people reported that twinning was not the only option and proposed the construction of a median/barrier instead.

Q3 “If twinning is the preferred option to improve the condition of the 100-series highways, do you support using tolls to twin highways sooner than would otherwise be possible given our current budget?”

Nearly half of respondents opposed the proposal to use tolls. Significantly fewer people who submitted written responses supported tolls, because twinning was considered necessary. The same number of people conditionally supported twinning, but wanted an alternate revenue generating method other than tolls to pay for construction. The same number of people conditionally supported the proposal for tolls, depending on the cost of tolls and the availability of passes. Lastly, a small percentage of people opposed twinning because respondents believed they could not afford the additional cost of tolls. The sentiment of the written submissions is in line with the sentiment of the consultation.

Digby Summary

Group Discussion

Respondents in Digby were generally negative toward the proposal of tolls. Many of the respondents indicated that highway conditions were fine/good. Respondents made several comments regarding the need for a 100-series highway before they are able to comment on the possibility of twinning. Alternatives to twinning that were frequently mentioned during the consultation were: increasing law enforcement, additional passing lanes, better highway signage, and construction of a barrier/media. The sense from respondents' feedback was that twinning was unnecessary.

Written Submissions

Q1 "What is your opinion of the current condition of the province's 100-series highways included in the study? (Consider safety, traffic congestion, travel time).

One-quarter of those who submitted written responses stated that the conditions of the highways were fine/good. An equal number of respondents said that highway twinning was necessary; and a quarter of those who submitted written responses stated that highways were unsafe and proposed upgrading the roads with rumble strips/a barrier. These numbers correspond with the tone of the consultations and suggest that respondents believe that conditions on the highways do not warrant twinning.

Q2 "Do you think twinning is the only option to improve the province's 100-series highways? If you think there are other options, please explain below."

Nearly half of respondents stated that no, twinning was not the only option to improve highway conditions and proposed additional passing lanes. A quarter of respondent indicated that no, twinning was not the only option and proposed an increase in the enforcement of highway traffic laws. Fewer respondents stated that twinning was the only/best option. These numbers correspond with the tone of the consultations and suggest that respondents feel that there are better alternative solutions to improving highway conditions than twinning.

Q3 "If twinning is the preferred option to improve the condition of the 100-series highways, do you support using tolls to twin highways sooner than would otherwise be possible given our current budget?"

Nearly one-third of respondents supported the proposal of tolls and an equal number of respondents opposed tolls in general. Fewer respondents supported tolls conditionally depending on the cost of tolls and/or the availability of passes. The same amount of respondents opposed tolls because they felt they could not afford it. An equal amount of respondents opposed the proposal of tolls, because twinning should be alternately funded (e.g., general budget). Although the tone of the written submissions was a comparatively more mixed response than the feedback shared during the public consultation, the response remains more negative than positive toward tolls.

The negative tone toward the proposal of highway tolls corresponds to the response during the public consultation.

Bridgewater

Group Discussion

Respondents in Bridgewater discussed some of the factors that are believed to contribute to poor highway conditions, which include: poor winter conditions (e.g., snow clearing), poor road conditions (e.g., pot holes), driver error (e.g., speeding) and outdated highway infrastructure (e.g., not enough passing lanes). Those who supported the use of tolls appear to do so conditionally and had frequently stated that tolls should be applied to all highways (old and new). There were also frequent mentions of alternative revenue generating methods (e.g., gas tax). A large number of people appeared to prefer alternative solutions to twinning to improve road conditions such as jersey barriers. The general sense of the response to the proposal of tolls in Bridgewater was negative.

Written Submissions Summary

Q1 “What is your opinion of the current condition of the province’s 100-series highways included in the study? (Consider safety, traffic congestion, travel time).”

Responses to this question were evenly spread out: slightly more than one quarter of respondents stated that highways were unsafe as a result of poor driving habits. A quarter of respondents indicated that highways were unsafe and road maintenance was necessary. A slightly fewer number of respondents indicated that highways were unsafe and proposed highway upgrades such as jersey barriers or medians as an alternative to twinning. The same number of people reported that the highway conditions are good/fine.

Q2 “Do you think twinning is the only option to improve the province’s 100-series highways? If you think there are other options, please explain below.”

More than one-third of the people who submitted written responses stated that highway twinning was the best/only option. More than a quarter of respondents said that twinning was not the only/best option and proposed additional passing lanes. The same number of people said that twinning was not the only option and proposed the construction of a median/barrier as an alternative solution. Lastly, less than a quarter of people stated that no, twinning was not the only option and suggested an increase in police enforcement presence as an alternative to twinning.

Q3 “If twinning is the preferred option to improve the condition of the 100-series highways, do you support using tolls to twin highways sooner than would otherwise be possible given our current budget?”

Nearly one quarter of respondents stated that they opposed the proposal of tolls to twin highways. Slightly fewer respondents indicated that they supported tolls, because twinning was necessary; and one-eighth of respondents conditionally supported tolls depending on the cost of tolls and/or the availability of passes. Slightly fewer reported that they opposed the proposal of tolls, because they could not afford the additional daily cost. The same number of people opposed tolls, but stated that another alternative revenue generating method should be used instead.

Chester Summary

Group Discussion

Those who attended the Chester consultation talked about some of the factors contributing to poor highways conditions. Reasons for poor conditions included: bad driving habits, heavy traffic congestion and outdated/insufficient highway infrastructure (e.g., passing lanes, narrow shoulders). Not surprisingly, many of the proposed solutions to improving conditions corresponded to what was believed to be contributing to poor highways conditions. Specifically, respondents indicated that increased presence of law enforcement officials, additional passing lanes, wider shoulders and/or the construction of jersey barriers would improve safety. Highway twinning was not seen as the only/best option for improving highway safety. The response to the proposal of using tolls to speed up the process of constructing twinned highways in Chester was generally negative.

Written Responses Summary

Q1 “What is your opinion of the current condition of the province’s 100-series highways included in the study? (Consider safety, traffic congestion, travel time).”

The majority of people who submitted responses were mostly concerned about the safety of the highways. For example, the majority of respondents indicated that the highways were unsafe in general. The biggest factors thought to be contributing to unsafe highway conditions were the physical conditions of the roads and/or poor driving habits. The sense from the written submissions reflected the tone of the session.

Q2 “Do you think twinning is the only option to improve the province’s 100-series highways? If you think there are other options, please explain below.”

Respondents who submitted their comments generally had a more positive outlook towards twinning. The most frequent response was that twinning was the best/only option to improve the 100 series highways. However, respondents also proposed additional passing lanes; the construction of a median/barrier, and/or increased enforcement of highway laws as possible alternatives to improving highway conditions. The proposed alternative solutions to improving highway conditions in the written responses corresponded to the issues contributing to poor highway safety in the consultations.

Q3 “If twinning is the preferred option to improve the condition of the 100-series highways, do you support using tolls to twin highways sooner than would otherwise be possible given our current budget?”

One-quarter of the people who submitted written responses opposed the use of tolls to pay for the cost of highway twinning. Slightly fewer people expressed their conditional support of tolls depending on the cost of tolls and the availability of passes. The third most common response was an unconditional support of using tolls to have highways twinned sooner. Although there was some support for the use of tolls, the general tone of the written submissions matches the tone of the feedback provided during the public consultation. In short, Chester participants responded negatively to the proposal of tolls.

Shelburne Summary

Group Discussion

The tone of the comments made during the Shelburne consultations was negative toward the proposal of tolls. The conditions of the roads were generally believed to be acceptable, but poor driving habits have reportedly contributed to an unsafe highway environment. Alternative solutions to improving the overall conditions of the 100-series highways include: additional passing lanes, increased highway law enforcement, construction of jersey barriers and implementation of public transit. The cost of tolls and the financial burden it would place on rural communities, particularly seniors, was reported as a significant reason for opposing the proposal of tolls. However, twinning itself was not seen as something that was necessary (e.g., a number of respondents indicated that Shelburne does not currently have 100 series highways).

Written Responses

Q1 “What is your opinion of the current condition of the province’s 100-series highways included in the study? (Consider safety, traffic congestion, travel time).”

One-third of respondents stated that the roads were unsafe and required upgrades such as rumble strips and/or barriers. Nearly one-quarter of those who submitted written responses reported that the highway conditions were good/fine. Slightly fewer respondents reported highways as unsafe due to poor driving habits and an equal number of people reported that the highways were unsafe and required maintenance. In comparison with the comments made during the consultation, more respondents indicated in the written submissions that the highways were in poor physical condition.

Q2 “Do you think twinning is the only option to improve the province’s 100-series highways? If you think there are other options, please explain below.”

Nearly half of respondents reported that no, twinning was not the only option and proposed additional passing lanes as a potential solution to improving highway conditions. One-quarter of respondents reported that twinning was the best/only option. An equal number of people stated that twinning was not the only option and proposed an increase in highway law enforcement as an alternative solution to twinning. Slightly fewer indicated that general road repair was a better alternative to twinning. These numbers correspond to the comments made during the consultation in which it was made clear that twinning was not believed to be the best/only solution.

Q3 “If twinning is the preferred option to improve the condition of the 100-series highways, do you support using tolls to twin highways sooner than would otherwise be possible given our current budget?”

Slightly more than one-quarter of respondents opposed the proposal of tolls in general. Fewer respondents reported that twinning was necessary and an equal number of respondents conditionally supported the proposal for tolling, depending on the cost of tolls and/or the availability of passes. In general, both the written submissions and feedback provided during the public consultation appear to be negative toward the proposal to use tolls.

River Bourgeois

Group Discussion

The majority of people seemed opposed to both tolls and highway twinning. Two main factors believed to contribute to poor highway conditions were driver error (e.g., cell phone usage, speeding) and high traffic congestion. Alternative solutions to improving highway conditions other than twinning were: construction of a median/barrier; additional passing lanes; additional rumble strips; mandatory driving tests for seniors; and increased police patrol on highways. Some respondents indicated that twinning was desirable, but wanted an alternative revenue generating method to tolls.

Written Submissions Summary

Q1 “What is your opinion of the current condition of the province’s 100-series highways included in the study? (Consider safety, traffic congestion, travel time).”

Slightly more than one-quarter of those who submitted written responses indicated that highways are unsafe and upgrading is necessary. Slightly fewer people reported that highways are unsafe due to poor road conditions. An equal number of people reported that highways are unsafe and that twinning is necessary. These numbers reflect a more positive outlook on twinning and contradict the tone of the consultations.

Q2 “Do you think twinning is the only option to improve the province’s 100-series highways? If you think there are other options, please explain below.”

More than a third of respondents indicated that twinning was the best/only option. Significantly fewer respondents indicated that twinning was not the best/only option and proposed additional passing lanes as an alternative to twinning. Slightly fewer people reported that twinning was not the only option, because twinning was unnecessary. An equal number of people indicated that twinning was not the best/only option and proposed the construction of a median/barrier as an alternative to twinning.

Q3 “If twinning is the preferred option to improve the condition of the 100-series highways, do you support using tolls to twin highways sooner than would otherwise be possible given our current budget?”

More than a third of respondents indicated that they supported twinning unconditionally, because it was felt to be necessary. A quarter of respondents conditionally supported twinning depending on the availability of passes and cost of tolls. An equal number of people reported that they opposed tolls altogether. These numbers contradict the tone of the consultation and are more positive toward the use of tolls.

Sydney Summary

Group Discussion

The general tone of the consultation was very negative toward the proposal of tolls and twinning. Respondents proposed a number of possible contributors to the poor condition of highways including: poor engineering design of highways, poor construction of highways (e.g., low-quality material such as paint and asphalt); poor road conditions (e.g., ruts, pot holes); high traffic congestion, particularly in regards to heavy trucks; and driver error (e.g., speeding). Frequently mentioned alternative solutions to improving highway conditions (besides twinning) include: additional passing lanes, construction of a railway system, increased driver education, installation of surveillance technology and/or increased highway law enforcement/patrolling.

Written Submissions Summary

Q1 “What is your opinion of the current condition of the province’s 100-series highways included in the study? (Consider safety, traffic congestion, travel time).”

The responses to this question contradict the tone of the consultation. Nearly one-quarter of the respondents indicated that the highways were in fine/good condition. Slightly fewer stated that highways were in unsafe/poor condition and an equal amount of respondents indicated that highways were unsafe and believed twinning was necessary.

Q2 “Do you think twinning is the only option to improve the province’s 100-series highways? If you think there are other options, please explain below.”

Half of the people who submitted written responses indicated that twinning was the best/only option. Significantly fewer people stated that twinning was not the only/best solution and suggested additional passing lanes as an alternative to twinning. Fewer people indicated that twinning was not the best/only solution and proposed the construction of a median or rumble strips as an alternative to twinning. An equal number of respondents stated that twinning was not the only option, because twinning was unnecessary.

Q3 “If twinning is the preferred option to improve the condition of the 100-series highways, do you support using tolls to twin highways sooner than would otherwise be possible given our current budget?”

More than a third of respondents indicated that they supported the use of tolls, because twinning was necessary. One quarter of respondents indicated that they opposed twinning altogether; and one eighth indicated that they conditionally supported tolls depending on the cost of tolls and the availability of passes.

Halifax Summary

Group Discussion

The response to both tolling and twinning in Halifax was mixed. Respondents talked about feeling unsafe on the highways. Traffic congestion, particularly during the warm summer months, was mentioned as a contributor to poor highway conditions. Respondents proposed jersey barriers, increased presence of law enforcement, as well as a reduction in speed limits as possible alternatives to improving highway conditions. However, respondents seemed undecided in their position on tolls. Responses to tolls ranged from opposing tolls, but expressing support for alternative revenues (e.g., gas tax); to those who were still undecided and/or conditionally supporting tolls (e.g., if tolls were implemented on all highways). The sense from the consultations was that if additional revenue had to be generated in order to speed up the process of highway twinning, the burden should be dispersed equally (e.g., tolls on all highways or gas tax).

Written Submissions Summary

Q1 “What is your opinion of the current condition of the province’s 100-series highways included in the study? (Consider safety, traffic congestion, travel time).”

In response to this question, the majority of respondents reported that they believed highway twinning was necessary and/or that highways were unsafe in general. The third most common response was that highways were congested. The same number of people reported that the road conditions were good/fine. The tone of the written responses matches the tone of the public consultations.

Q2 “Do you think twinning is the only option to improve the province’s 100-series highways? If you think there are other options, please explain below.”

Nearly half of respondents reported that twinning was the best/only option. However, nearly one third of respondents indicated that twinning was not the best/only option and suggested medians/jersey barriers and/or rumble strips as possible alternatives. Some respondents also suggested constructing additional passing lanes as an alternative to highway twinning.

Q3 “If twinning is the preferred option to improve the condition of the 100-series highways, do you support using tolls to twin highways sooner than would otherwise be possible given our current budget?”

Nearly half of respondents indicated they support the use of tolls to twin highways sooner than conventional methods would allow. A quarter of respondents conditionally supported the proposal of tolls, depending on the cost of tolls and the availability of passes. In contrast, one-eighth opposed tolls in general. An equal number of people stated that the cost of highway twinning should be taken from the general budget.

Lake Echo (Porter's Lake Area) Summary

Group Discussion

The response to the proposal of tolls during the Porter's Lake consultation was overwhelmingly negative toward both twinning and tolling. The main contributors to poor highways conditions were said to be: poor highway markings and signage, poor road conditions, insufficient highway patrolling by law enforcement officers, driver error and high traffic congestion. Proposed alternatives to twinning that were discussed included an increase in law enforcement, update of highway markings (e.g., freshly painted lines) and signage, maintenance of existing roads and additional passing lanes.

Written Submissions Summary

Q1 "What is your opinion of the current condition of the province's 100-series highways included in the study? (Consider safety, traffic congestion, travel time).

Nearly one-third of respondents indicated that road conditions are fine/good. Less than one quarter of those who submitted written responses indicated that highway conditions are unsafe in general. An equal number of people reported that highways are unsafe because the roads require upgrading such as a median/barrier/rumble strips. Respondents also frequently indicated that highways were unsafe due to poor driving habits and also that increased highway law enforcement was needed.

Q2 "Do you think twinning is the only option to improve the province's 100-series highways? If you think there are other options, please explain below."

One quarter of the people who submitted written submissions indicated that twinning was not the only option and was not necessary. Slightly fewer people responded that highway twinning was not the only option and that highway laws should be enforced instead. Additional passing lanes and highway upgrades such as the construction of a median/barrier were also frequently mentioned alternatives to twinning.

Q3 "If twinning is the preferred option to improve the condition of the 100-series highways, do you support using tolls to twin highways sooner than would otherwise be possible given our current budget?"

Slightly more than one-quarter of respondents stated that they opposed tolling in general. Fewer people who submitted written submissions indicated that they opposed the tolls because they could not afford the additional costs. One eighth of those people who submitted written submissions reported that they supported the use of tolls, because twinning was felt to be necessary. These findings correspond to the tone of the consultations.

Dartmouth Summary

Group Discussion

The overall response to the proposal of highway tolling as a method of accelerating highway twinning was mixed. Respondents indicated that the highways were in good physical condition. The major concerns regarding the condition of the highway were mainly poor driving habits (i.e., speeding), high traffic congestion and outdated infrastructure (e.g., lighting). Respondents suggested various alternatives to improving highway conditions including: surveillance technology to monitor driving speeds, lower speed limits, improved highway infrastructure (e.g., lighting, medians, jersey barriers) and increased law enforcement presence on highways.

Written Submissions Summary

Q1 “What is your opinion of the current condition of the province’s 100-series highways included in the study? (Consider safety, traffic congestion, travel time).”

In contrast to the feedback provided during the consultations, the tone of the written submissions was much more consistent. For example, written submissions reflected a more positive outlook on twinning and tolling. One-third of those who submitted written submissions indicated that highways were unsafe and that twinning was necessary. However, slightly less than a quarter of people reported that highway conditions were good/fine. An equal number of people indicated that highways were unsafe in general.

Q2 “Do you think twinning is the only option to improve the province’s 100-series highways? If you think there are other options, please explain below.”

Nearly half of those who submitted written responses stated that twinning was the only/best option. Nearly a quarter of respondents indicated that the construction of a median/barrier was a better alternative than twinning. Fewer people believed that additional passing lanes were a better solution to improving highway conditions than twinning.

Q3 “If twinning is the preferred option to improve the condition of the 100-series highways, do you support using tolls to twin highways sooner than would otherwise be possible given our current budget?”

Nearly one-quarter of those who submitted written responses supported the use of tolls, because twinning was necessary. However, an equal number of people indicated that they opposed the use of tolls in general. Fewer people reported conditional support for the proposal for tolls depending on the cost of tolls and if passes were available. An equal number of people stated that they supported tolls because twinning improved safety.