

What We Heard

Fifth Street Bridge Rehabilitation Project
Phase 1 Public Engagement Summary



CITY OF
COURTENAY
Engineering Services

December 2019

Prepared by

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STRATEGY GROUP

About The Project

The City is planning for the rehabilitation of the Fifth Street Bridge, including improving cycling and pedestrian accessibility across the Courtenay River. New widened pathways will improve pedestrian and cycling connectivity across the river, access to downtown, and help accommodate continued growth in the number of people who walk, cycle and use mobility aids.

Originally constructed in 1960, the Fifth Street Bridge is an important piece of transportation infrastructure spanning the Courtenay River. The bridge requires structural improvements, new coating and paint to repair and prevent corrosion and deck repairs. The last significant investment in the bridge, including seismic upgrading, was completed in 2012.



On-going public engagement is an important project objective with opportunities for people to learn more and provide feedback throughout the various phases of the project.

Overview

In November and December 2019, the City reached out to the community for input and offered a variety of ways for residents to review project plans, speak with project staff, and provide feedback about what is important to consider as the City plans for ways to mitigate impacts wherever possible during construction. A survey (online and print), stakeholder meetings, and a public open house took place.

SURVEY:

Available from Tuesday, November 12 – Friday, December 6, 2019, through SurveyMonkey.com online and print, 643 responded to the survey.

STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS:

Letters were sent out to over 20 stakeholders in the region inviting them to a one-on-one meeting with City staff and project consultants. To date, meetings with the following stakeholder groups has occurred and outreach to others continues.

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|---|---|
| 1) CFB 19 Wing Comox | 6) BC Transit |
| 2) Cycling Coalition | 7) Comox Valley Regional District |
| 3) BC Ambulance | 8) Province of British Columbia
Ministry of Transportation |
| 4) Comox Valley Chamber of
Commerce | 9) Courtenay Fire Department |
| 5) The Downtown Courtenay Business
Improvement Association (DCBIA) | |

Promotion and Awareness-Raising

- Letters were sent via mail and email to key stakeholder groups
- Media release was distributed to local media
- Social media posts were shared by City of Courtenay via Twitter and Facebook and promoted throughout the awareness campaign
- Print ads appeared in the Comox Valley Record and the CV Collective
- Emails sent via project e-newsletter

Promotional print ad >

Learn More About Plans
to Rehabilitate and Upgrade
the Fifth Street Bridge



The City of Courtenay is planning for the rehabilitation of the 60-year-old Fifth Street Bridge, including upgrading cycling and pedestrian connections across the Courtenay River.

Learn more, ask questions of the project team, and provide feedback at an upcoming open house. If you can't make the open house, the same information and opportunities to provide input are available online.

OPEN HOUSE:
Thursday, November 21, 2019
5 p.m. – 7 p.m.
Florence Filberg Centre, Rotary Hall (downstairs)

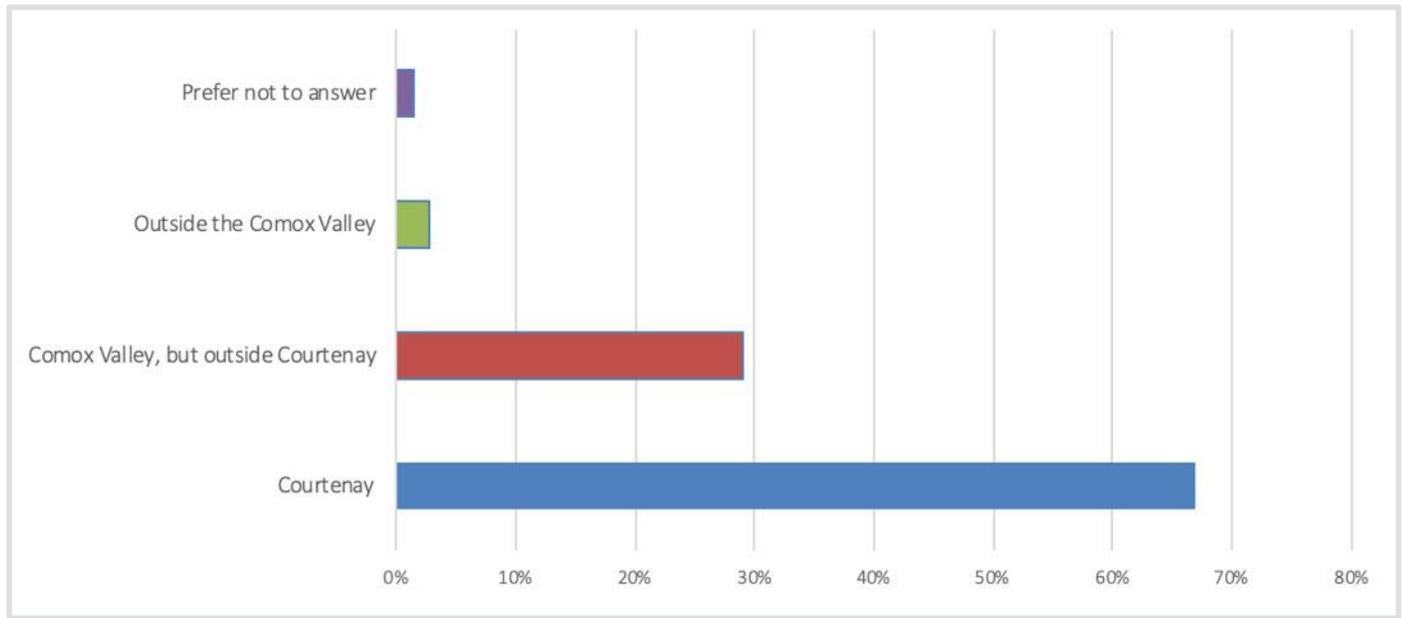
Other ways to share your feedback: Complete the online survey by Friday, December 6, 2019 - www.courtenay.ca/fifthstreetbridge



Email: fifthstreetbridge@courtenay.ca
Phone: 250.703.4838

Who Participated

2/3 of the respondents to the online survey lived in the City of Courtenay.



What We Heard

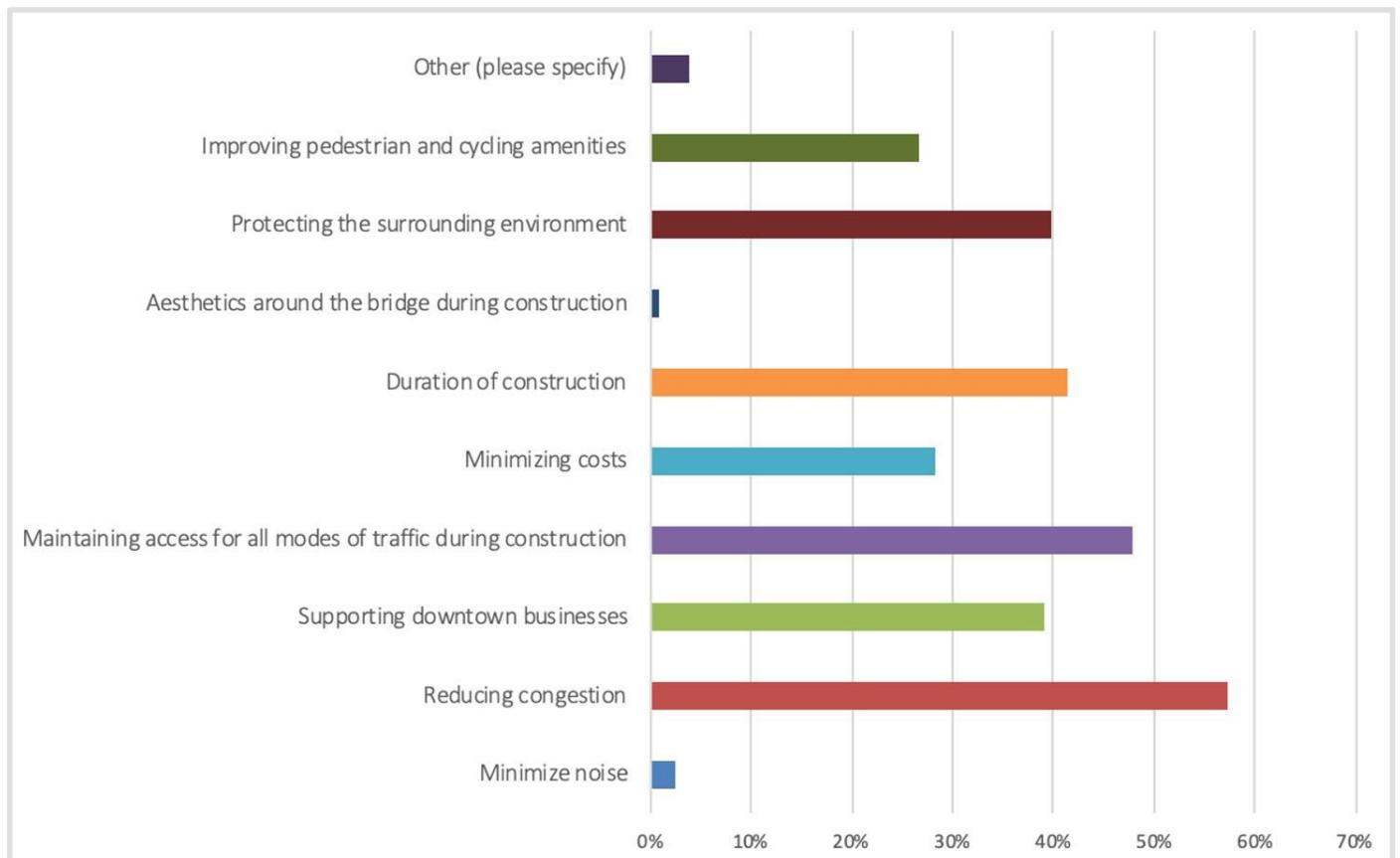
A number of themes emerged from the stakeholder meetings, 631 completed surveys, and the comments received at the open house.

- During construction, respondents are most interested in seeing congestion reduced, maintaining access for all modes, and minimizing the duration of construction. Respondents are concerned about how congested the area will be during construction and about potential construction delays.
- When asked about travel behaviours, respondents are most likely to take an alternate route, plan for additional time, or travel outside of peak periods. 20% indicated they may not change their travel behaviour.
- When asked about the importance of improving connections to and from the bridge, there were strong polar views about whether connections to the bridge were needed. Those who cycle and those who attended the open house ranked the need for improving connections higher.

- When asked about placing priority on connections on the west or east side of the river, the west was preferred.
- The majority of respondents did not feel strongly about changing the colour of the bridge. However, if it is decided that the colour will change, there are stronger feelings about what colour it should be or what should guide that decision.
- In terms of communications preferences, construction signage, newspaper and radio and City of Courtenay Facebook were preferred. Several respondents indicated interest in an app or text service that would deliver updates to a mobile device. Of those who attended the open house, there was higher interest in open houses and a project e-newsletter.
- The importance of priority access for emergency vehicles was mentioned several times. Discussions with Courtenay Fire Department also highlighted the importance of priority access for fire department volunteers responding to the station in an emergency.
- Stakeholder meetings with BC Transit, School District and emergency services, highlighted the need for ongoing dialogue in relation to impacts to tall vehicles and scheduled routing.
- When the public was asked what they like most about the rehabilitation project, respondents indicated the improved amenities and access for cycling and walking and mobility aids, improved aesthetic of the bridge and that the work is overdue. Several noted the iconic or landmark role of the bridge within the community.
- A common concern expressed is that the investment doesn't address the current vehicle congestion and several questioned whether vehicles lanes could be expanded or whether money is better spent building a new vehicle bridge at Fifth Street or at a different crossing. Several questioned whether the multi-use pathways are needed and whether the additional construction time was worth the impact to the community and downtown businesses.

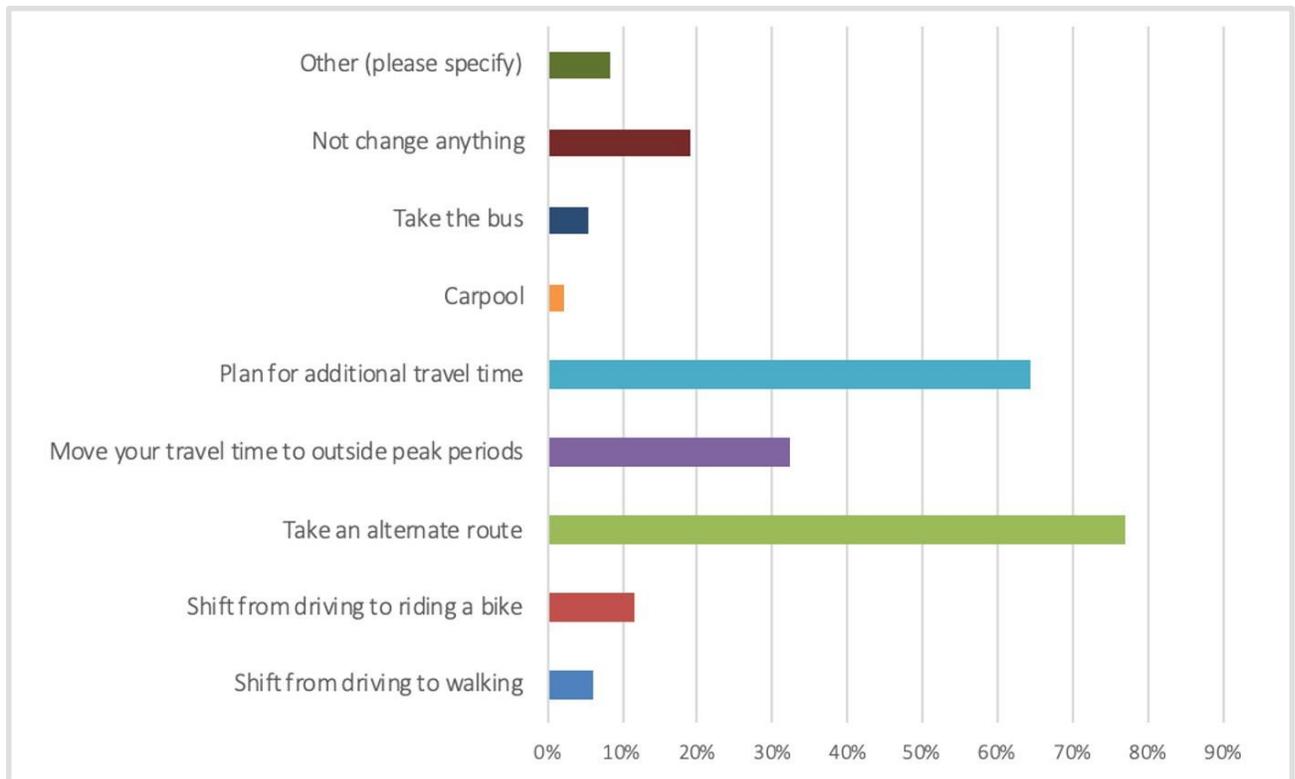
What Was Heard By Question:

1) *Rehabilitating and upgrading a bridge while remaining open to traffic requires a number of considerations. The safety of both work crews and public will always be top priority. Of the following considered, please select three that the most important to you:*

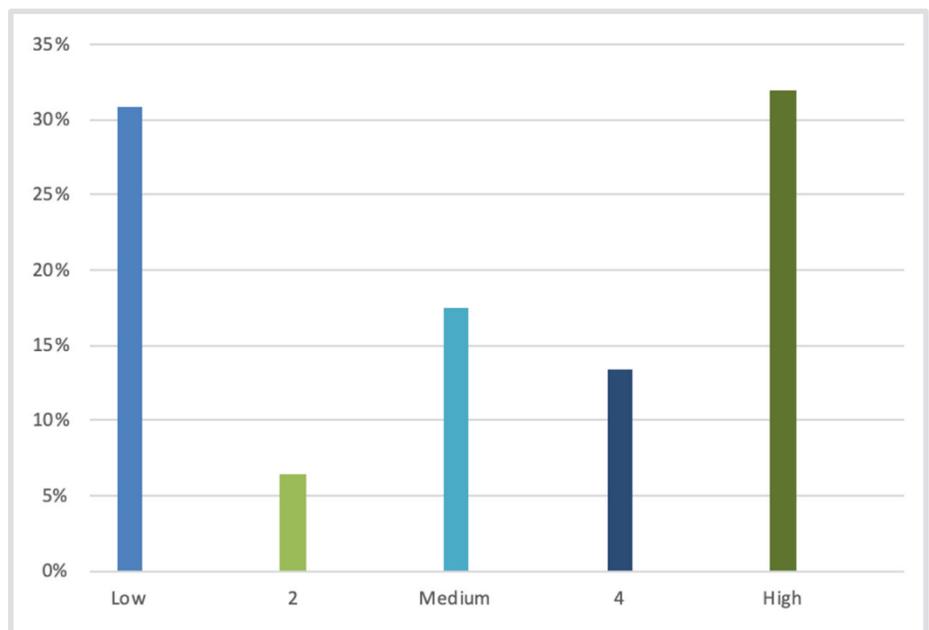


Note: of those who attended the open house the most important considerations during construction were protecting the surrounding environment and improving pedestrian and cycling amenities.

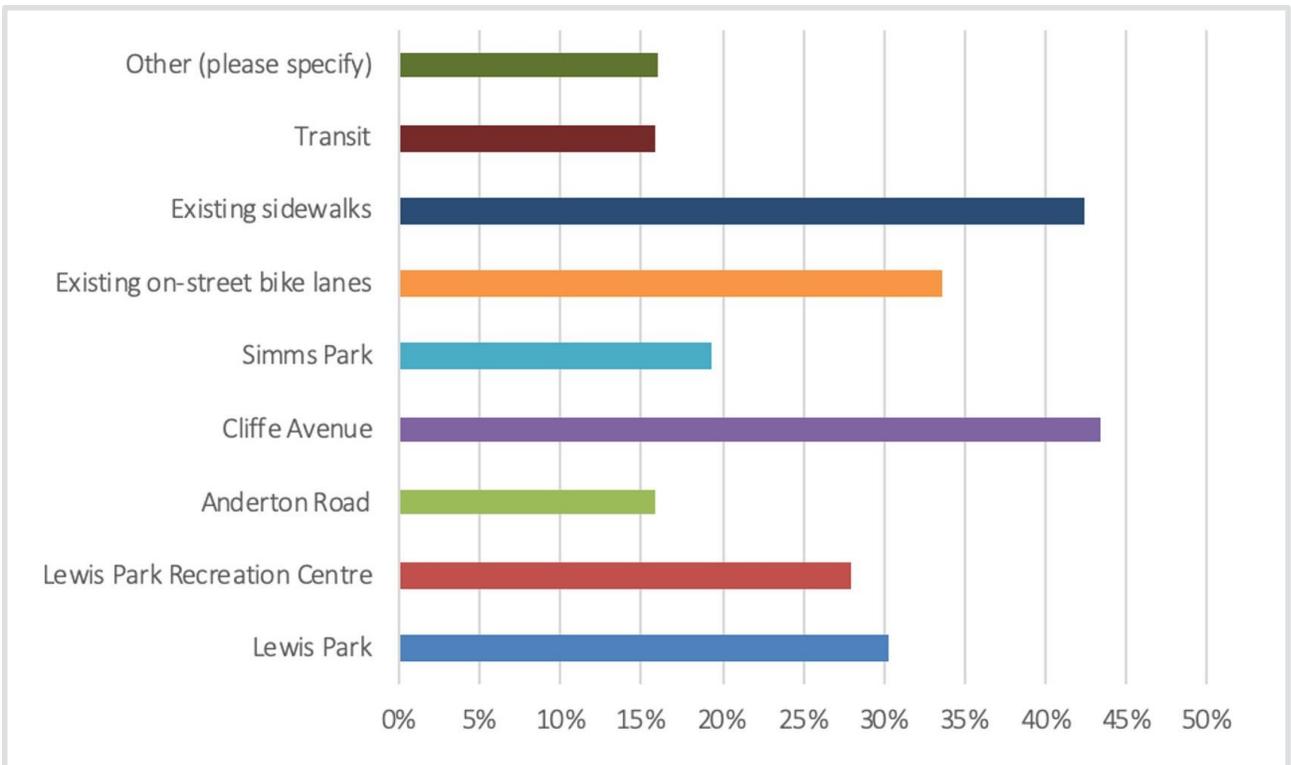
2) *The construction required to safely rehabilitate the Fifth Street Bridge will causes traffic disruption in adjacent areas for several months. In terms of your own travel behaviours, during construction are you most likely to:*



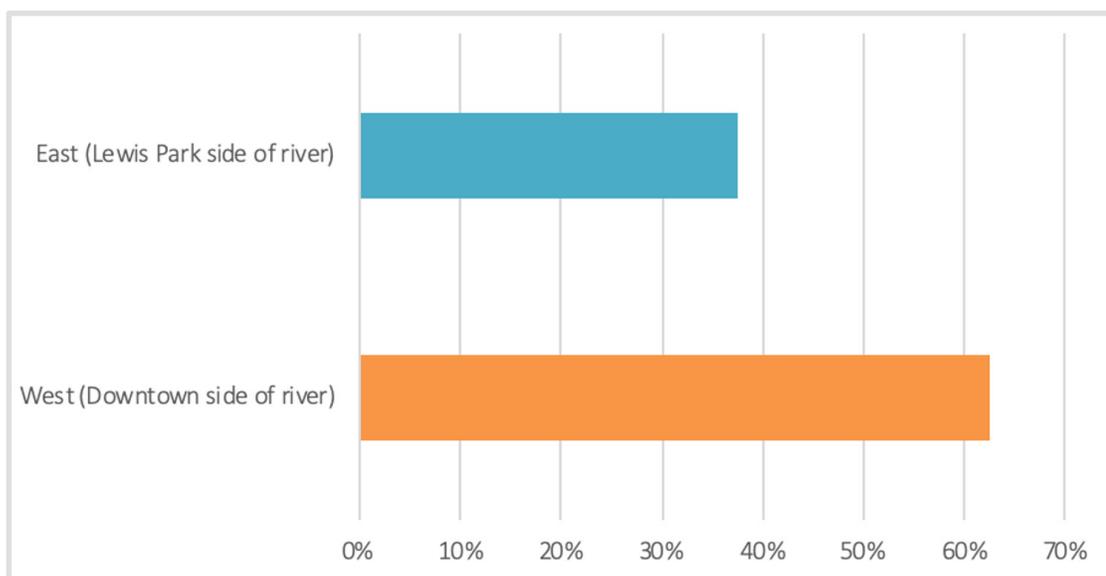
3) *How important is improving the connections to and from the Fifth Street Bridge for people who walk, cycle, and use strollers or mobility aids?*



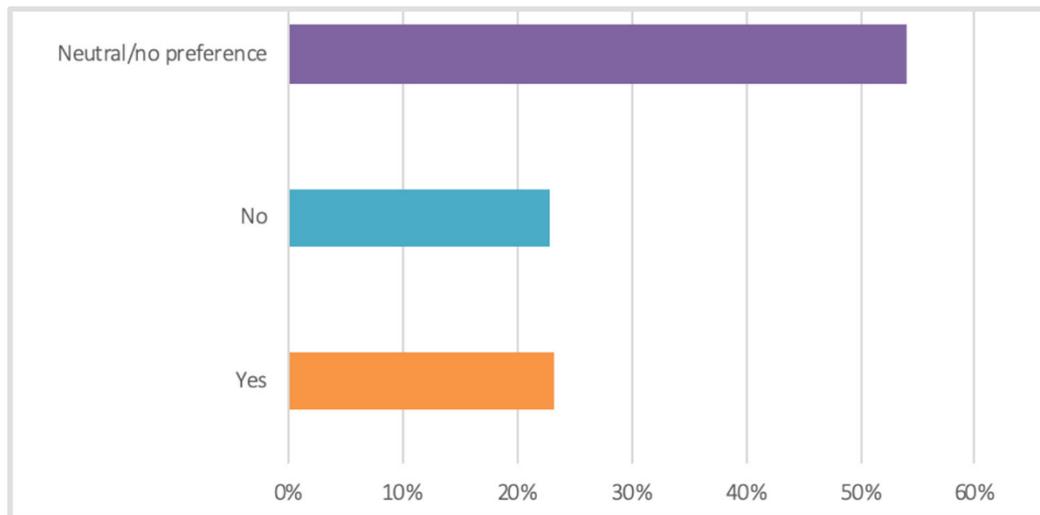
4) Which walking and cycling destinations are most important to connect to, from the Fifth Street Bridge?



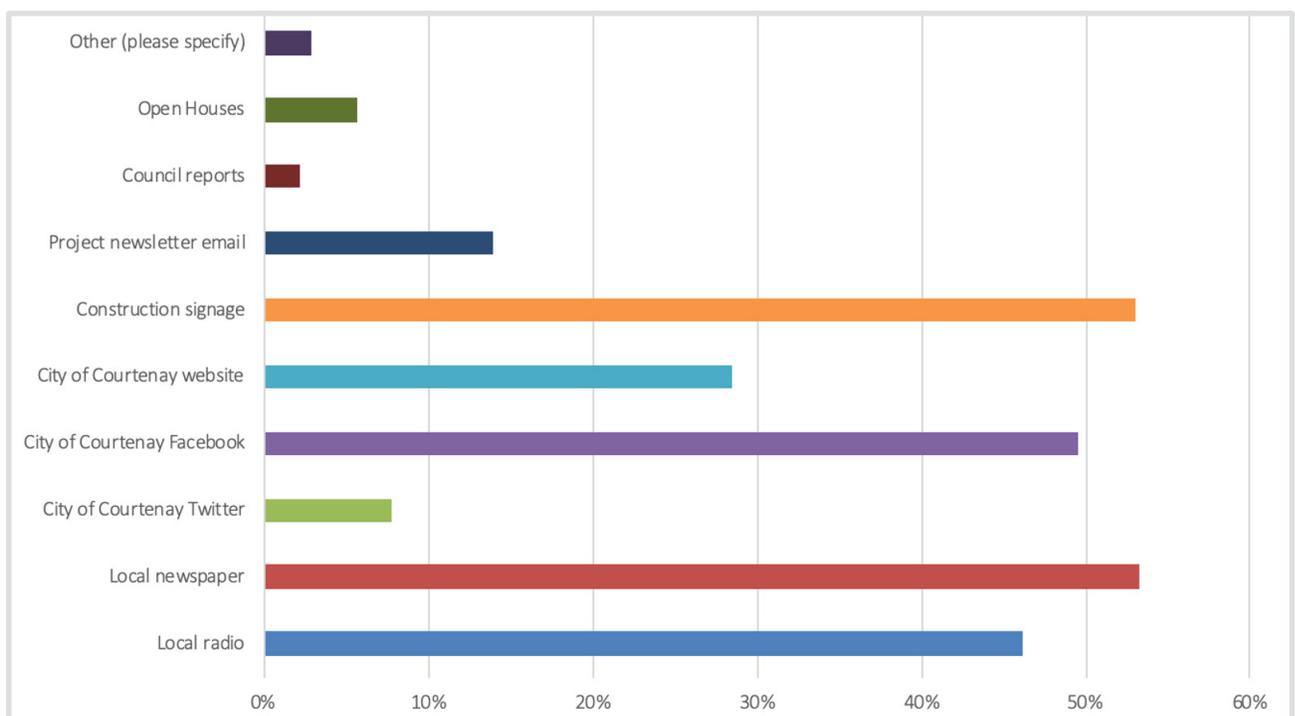
5) If priority needed to be placed on improving connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists on either side of the bridge, which would you prioritize higher?



6) *The Fifth Street Bridge Rehabilitation project includes moving all of the existing lead paint and recoating the bridge to protect the steel from corrosion. They are may be an opportunity to change the colour of the bridge. Do you feel the Fifth Street Bridge should be recoated a different colour?*



7) *We recognize that regular and proactive communications during construction are important to mitigating impacts to the public. What is the best way to keep you informed?*



Note: open house respondents rated the project email and open houses higher.

Next Steps

All input collected within Phase 1 of the public engagement process will be considered in detail and will further inform overall project and traffic management planning. The results of the public engagement process will be presented to Courtenay City Council in early 2020 and will be shared on the City of Courtenay website.