

**Esquimalt Road Active Transportation Improvements
and Underground Utility Renewals Project**

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Purpose of this report

Thank you to all who participated in the Phase 1 engagement. In this report, we summarize feedback gathered in September 2024. Your suggestions and concerns will help inform the final design for Esquimalt Road from Dominion Road to Joffre Street.

What is a “What We Heard Report”?

A “What We Heard” report communicates the feedback and insights gathered during community engagement activities. Its purpose is to summarize the key points raised by participants, reflect on their concerns and suggestions, and demonstrate how participants’ input will influence future actions and decisions.

About this project

The Esquimalt Road Active Transportation Improvements and Utilities Upgrades Project will better connect Esquimalt Road to critical areas, including the City of Victoria, Department of National Defence lands, business centres, recreation centres, and other local and regional destinations. This project is part of the Township's new Active Transportation Network Plan, which aims to create a 5.3-kilometer bike-friendly network on Tillicum Road, Lampson Street, and Esquimalt Road, supporting our goal to improve walking and biking experiences for everyone.

We will carry out this project in two key phases. It will incorporate public feedback and technical analysis to ensure the best possible design before moving into construction in 2024/2025.



- **Phase 1:** In the first phase, we're upgrading the section of **Esquimalt Road from Dominion Road to Joffre Street**.
- **Phase 2:** The second phase will focus on the section of **Esquimalt Road from Joffre Street to Canteen Road**, with similar improvements to enhance the route and possible alternate route options.

These phases will also upgrade underground utilities to save on costs and streamline construction efforts. In September 2024, we are focusing on Phase 1 improvements. Stay tuned for Phase 2 of this project in the fall of 2024, when we will share the design for Esquimalt Road from Joffre Street to Canteen Road.

Phase 1 engagement

We shared the proposed design for **Esquimalt Road from Dominion Road to Joffre Street** in September 2024 and asked for feedback on the design.



What we did

In September 2024, we began the first phase of community engagement. We hosted an online survey on Engaging Esquimalt. We asked participants to complete the survey and encouraged them to review the information boards that described what we're considering in the proposed design. The survey was open for three weeks, from **September 4 to September 25, 2024**.

How we got the word out

The Township notified residents using various digital and in-person communications methods to encourage people to participate in the online survey and to visit the Engagement Esquimalt project page by:

In-person

- Promotion on display at rec centre and sports centre TV screens
- Poster display in Rec Centre atrium
- Postcards mailed throughout Esquimalt to homes/businesses (10,000 hard copies distributed)
- Advance notification of the project was shared in the Current newsletter (10,000 hard copies distributed to homes and businesses)

Facebook

22,311 post views (4 posts created)

Instagram

1,411 post views (3 posts created)

LinkedIn

237 views (1 post created)

Engaging Esquimalt project page

2.3K page views

E-newsletters (subscriber-based)

- Mailed to 116 recipients (Economic Development business list) 25 clicks
- Mailed to 634 recipients (Economic Development contact list) 13 clicks
- Mailed to 34, 545 recipients (Parks/Recreation client list)
- Mailed to 548 recipients (News/Events list) x3: 52 total link clicks
- Mailed to 143 recipients (Engaging Esquimalt list) x 2: 80 link clicks

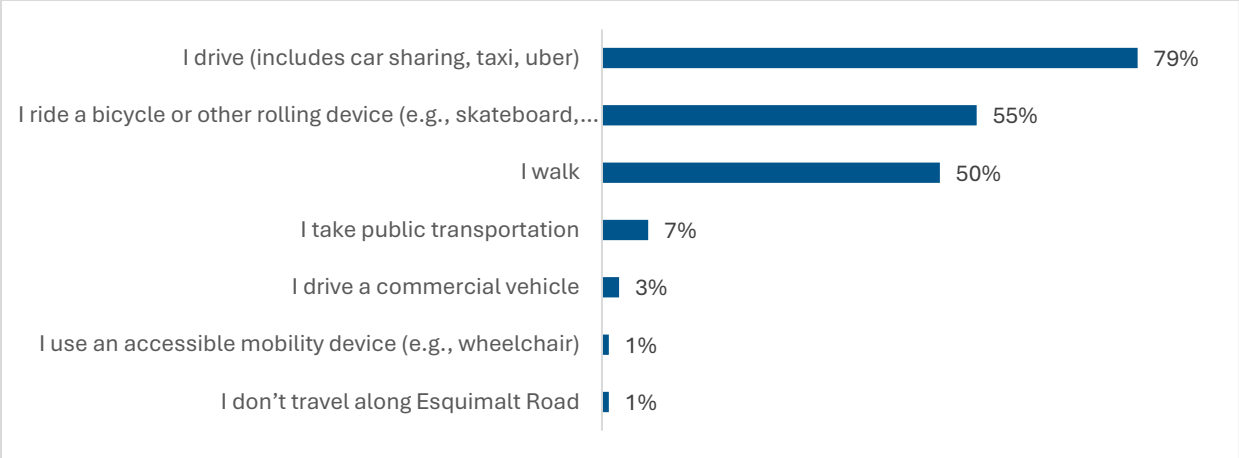
What we heard

We have finished phase one of engagement for this project and sharing what we heard from participants in the online survey.

Your Esquimalt Road experience

Travel

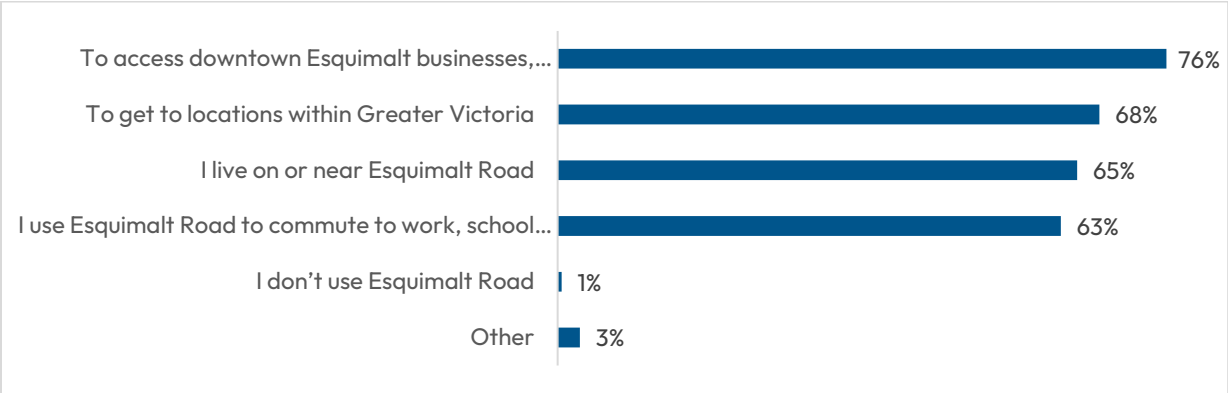
We asked what people mostly travel by when they travel through the Esquimalt corridor. Most survey participants said they mostly drive, ride bicycles and rolling devices, and walk.



395 responses

Reasons for travel

We asked why people travel on Esquimalt Road. Most participants travel on Esquimalt Road for various reasons, such as to access downtown business, recreation, services, to get to locations within Greater Victoria, and because they live in the neighbourhood.



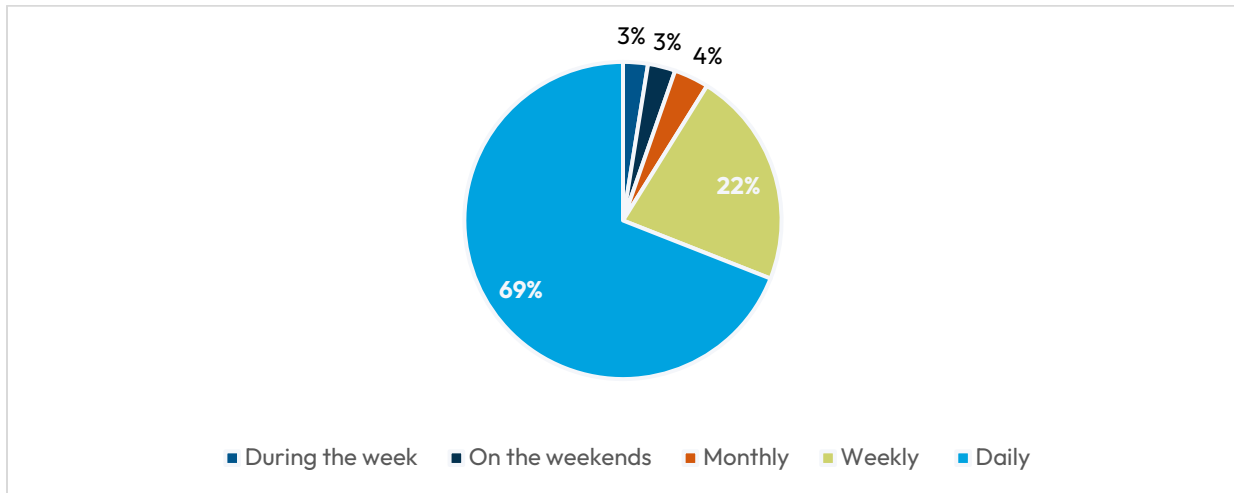
395 responses

Other

- **Community involvement:** One person shared that they drive seniors to appointments.
- **Property ownership:** One participant mentioned that they own properties along Esquimalt Road.
- **Delivery services:** Some participants mentioned they provide delivery service along Esquimalt Road using an e-bike.

Travel frequency

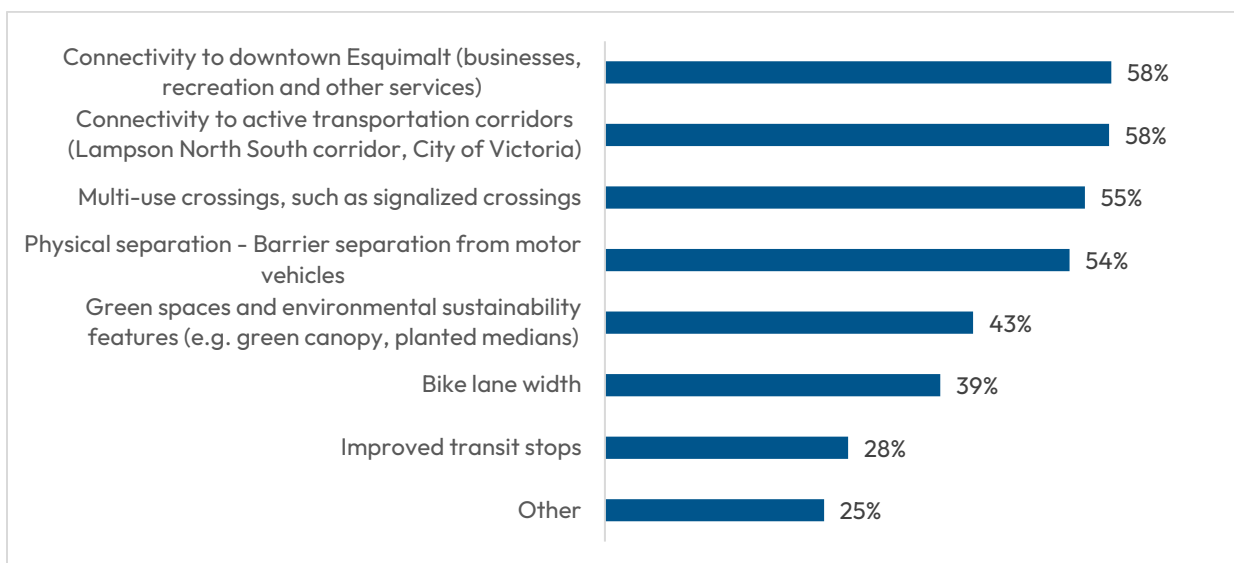
We asked how often people travel along Esquimalt Road. Most participants (**69%**) travel on the corridor during the week, and some (**23%**) during the weekends.



395 responses

Important design features

We asked people what design features are most important to them in making Esquimalt Road safer and more comfortable for people of all ages and abilities. Over half of participants said their most important design features were downtown connectivity, active transportation connectivity, multi-use crossings, and physical separation.



395 responses

Other

Some participants (**25%**) expressed their concerns and worries about the proposed design features. Here is a summary of their feedback:

Parking and accessibility: Some participants were concerned about the reduction of parking spaces, especially accessible parking. They had concerns about an impact on businesses and residents.

Traffic flow and congestion: Some participants are concerned about traffic congestion and safety. They want to avoid reducing car lane widths or adding barriers that could make it difficult for emergency vehicles to navigate. Some requested better traffic calming measures, such as speed humps and improved crosswalks. Some participants identified traffic flow and congestion concerns on Esquimalt Road, Tillicum Road, and Lampson Street.

Safety concerns: Some participants had worries about the safety of people who walk, bike and drive, especially vulnerable groups such as children, seniors and people with mobility challenges. Some viewed barriers separating bike lanes from car lanes as dangerous, and they had concerns about visibility at intersections and crosswalks.

Public transportation: Some participants felt that changes would make it more difficult for buses to navigate and pick up/drop off passengers, leading to slower bus services and further congestion.

Infrastructure and aesthetics: Some participants requested the removal of overhead utility wires and the addition of planted medians. Some called for improvements to existing infrastructure rather than new projects.

Current state of Esquimalt Road: Some participants believed that Esquimalt Road is already in good condition and does not require any updates. They feel the existing infrastructure, including planted medians and painted bike lanes, is sufficient. Some participants felt that the current infrastructure needs to be improved. However, others felt new changes are unnecessary and costly.

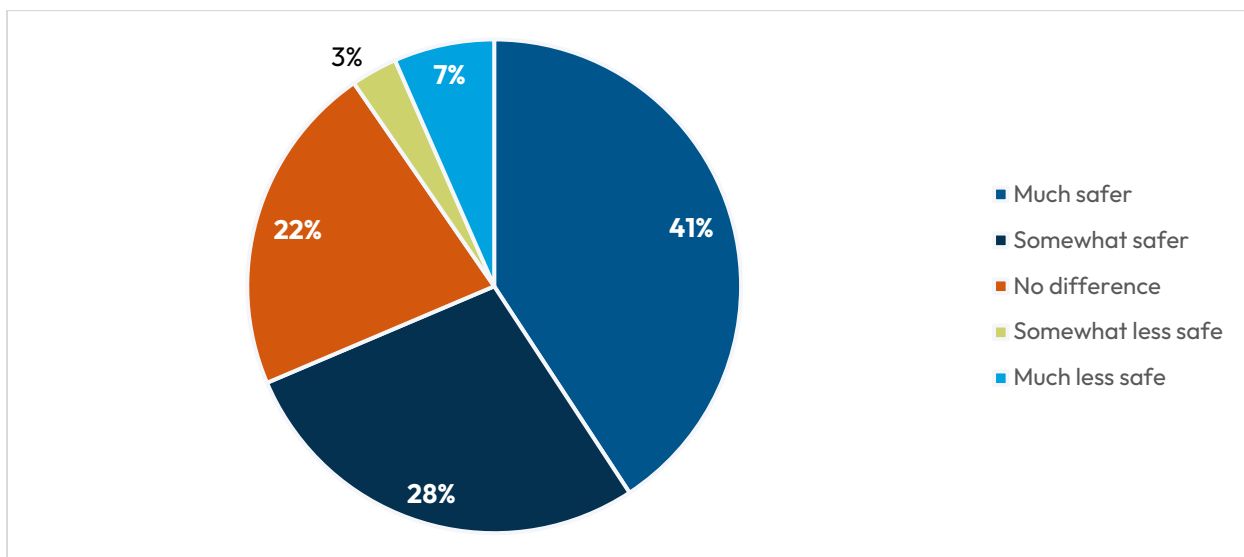
Focus on sidewalks and utilities: Some participants requested improvements to sidewalks and utilities, such as sanitary and storm systems. They also identified wider sidewalks and better pedestrian accessibility as priorities.

Bike lane preferences: While some supported bike lanes, they prefer simple ones (e.g. white lines, without green paint). Some had concerns about excessive road measures such as speed bumps. Some participants called for physically separating bicyclists from pedestrians and better-designed crossings.

Safety and comfort through design

Protected bike lane

The design included a protected bike lane along Esquimalt Road from Dominion Road to Joffre Street. We asked people to what degree the design of the protected bike lanes makes them feel safer and more comfortable walking, cycling, and rolling through the Esquimalt corridor. Most participants (**total of 69%**) felt the protected bike lane design would make them feel generally safer.



395 responses

Other

Participants were given the option to select 'other' if they wished to elaborate on their responses. Below are some of the key themes that emerged from their explanations:

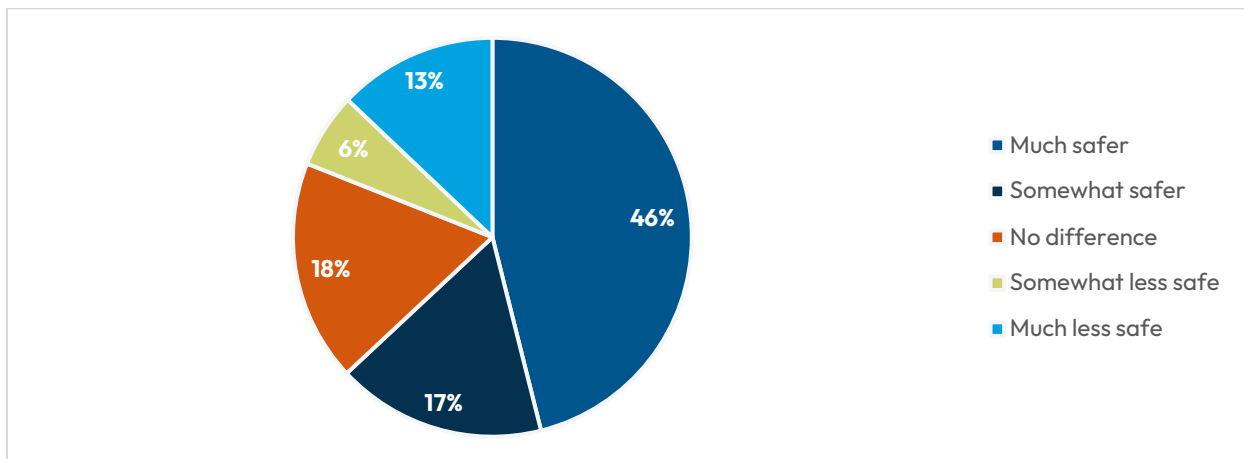
- **Safety concerns:** While some believe that protected bike lanes could improve cyclists' safety, others feel that they create a false sense of security. Some participant's concerns include cars turning corners, the loss of lanes, and the difficulty emergency vehicles may face navigating through traffic due to barriers. Some feel that protected lanes may not be safer for drivers, cyclists, or pedestrians.
- **Preference for painted bike lanes:** Some prefer painted bike lanes over protected ones. They believe they are sufficient and feel that protected lanes are restrictive and make it harder to move around obstacles, a particular issue on busy roads like Esquimalt Road.

- **Traffic flow and congestion:** Some participants had concerns about the impact of protected bike lanes on traffic flow, especially during rush hours, construction, and making it difficult for cars to pull over for emergency vehicles.
- **Alternative routes:** Some suggest using less congested roads, such as Lyall Street, for bike lanes, believing it would help reduce congestion on already busy roads.
- **Infrastructure maintenance:** Some participants had concerns about maintenance, including street sweeping, debris buildup, and challenges for garbage and recycling trucks, as well as delivery vehicles, which may struggle to navigate around the barriers.
- **Business impact:** Some participants expressed concern about the potential loss of parking spaces and its effect on local businesses. Some participants felt that removing parking could make accessing shops and services harder for those with mobility issues.
- **Cyclist behavior:** Some participants observed cyclists not following road rules. They felt that protected bike lanes might encourage more reckless cycling behavior.

Multi-Use Crosswalk and Pedestrian and Bike Activated Flashing Lights

The design includes new multi-use crosswalks with pedestrian and bike-activated flashing lights at Dunsmuir Road/Dominion Road/Esquimalt Road and Macaulay Street/Esquimalt Road.

We asked people how safe and comfortable they would feel crossing Esquimalt Road with new multi-use crosswalks. Most participants (**total of 63%**) felt that new multi-use crosswalks with activated flashing lights would make them feel safer.



Other

Participants were given the option to select 'other' if they wished to elaborate on their responses. Below are some of the key themes that emerged from their explanations:

Current infrastructure: Some participants felt the infrastructure on Esquimalt Road is adequate.

Safety concerns: Some participants are concerned about sharing crosswalks with cyclists and suggest separate crossings for bikes and pedestrians.

Traffic flow and congestion: Some are concerned that adding protected bike lanes or more crosswalks on Esquimalt Road could worsen traffic congestion, especially during rush hours or construction. They also worry that emergency vehicles need space to pass through.

Traffic calming: Some participants called for better traffic calming measures, like raised intersections, clearer signage, and sensor-activated flashing lights. They want to enhance safety for pedestrians, cyclists, and people with mobility challenges, particularly at intersections along Esquimalt Road.

Parking: Some participants are concerned about the loss of parking along Esquimalt Road, especially as it could affect access to local businesses and services for those with mobility issues.

Alternative routes: Some suggest using quieter roads like Lyall Street for bike lanes, believing it would be safer and help reduce congestion on Esquimalt Road.

Additional Improvements Needed by Location:

We asked people if there were any specific locations along Phase 1 of the Esquimalt Road corridor where they think additional improvements are needed that aren't included in the proposed improvements. They described what changes they suggested and at what specific locations.

Esquimalt Road

- **Sidewalks and Utilities:** Improve sidewalks and utilities such as sanitary and storm systems in all areas.
- **Pedestrian Signals:** Better signals for pedestrians crossing at the 800 block of Esquimalt Road.

- **Bike Lanes:** Install bike lanes behind bus stops rather than in front and use Dutch-style “diamond” intersections to increase visibility and protection for cyclists.
- **Parking:** Maintain parking availability in front of businesses and consider the future need for street electric charging stations.

Locations mentioned not included in the project area:

Head Street

- **Sidewalks and Utilities:** Improve sidewalks and utilities is needed.

Admirals Road and Lampson Street

- **Bus Stops:** Move the bus stops at Esquimalt/Admirals and Esquimalt/Lampson to avoid conflicts with vehicles having an advance left turn.
- **Sidewalks and Utilities:** Improve sidewalks and utilities.

Lampson Street

- **Sidewalks and Utilities:** Improve sidewalks and utilities.
- **Road Widening:** Widen the road slightly and shift the sidewalk to accommodate all users.

Tillicum Road and Gorge Road

Crosswalks: Address backups and improve crosswalks to reduce congestion and enhance safety.

Dominion Road/Rothwell Street

Crosswalks: Improve sightlines at crosswalks to enhance safety.

Military Base

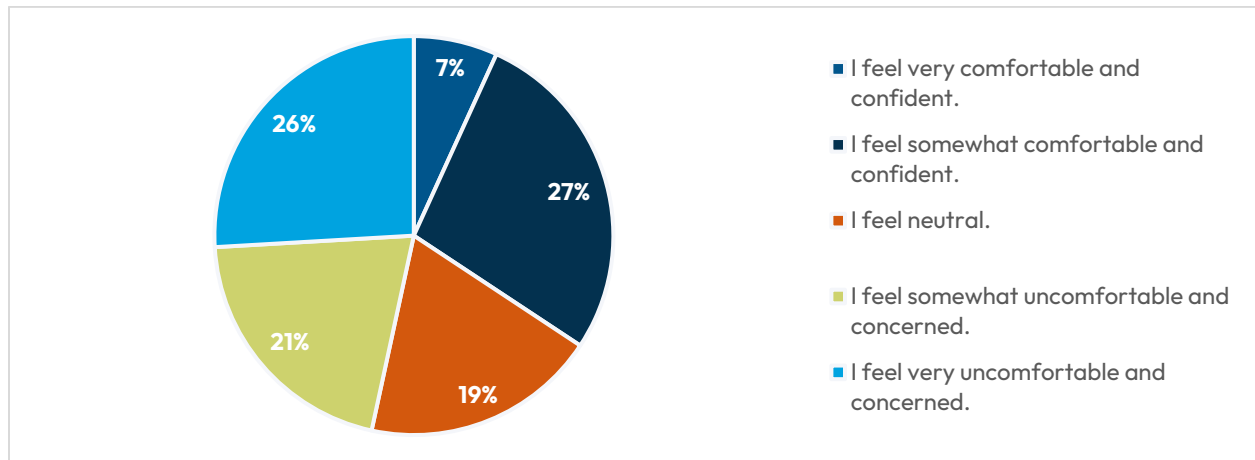
Traffic Flow: Account for population density and traffic to and from the military base.

Schools

Sidewalks and Utilities: Improve sidewalks and utilities near the two schools by Head Street and Esquimalt Road.

Your level of comfort and making your experience better

We asked how comfortable people feel walking, riding a bicycle, or using other mobility devices (e.g., wheelchair, scooter, etc.) near traffic on Esquimalt Road from Dominion Road to Joffre Street in its current state. Some felt comfortable and others did not feel comfortable nor confident.



382 responses

Other

Participants were given the option to select 'other' if they wished to elaborate on their responses. Below are some of the key themes that emerged from their explanations:

Cyclist safety: Some participants said that Esquimalt Road feels unsafe for cycling due to vehicles drifting into bike lanes and speeding. Some expressed concerns about how close cars come to cyclists, especially near bends or intersections.

Risk of "dooring": Some participants said they worry about getting "doored" when bike lanes run too close to parked cars. Some said that this creates stress and a sense of vulnerability for cyclists.

Lack of physical separation: Some participants said they wish there were protected bike lanes to keep cyclists safe from vehicles. Some felt the painted lanes currently offer little security, and protected lanes would provide a better barrier.

Avoiding main roads: Some participants said less experienced cyclists or those with children avoid Esquimalt Road entirely, preferring side streets or flatter routes. Parents do not feel it is safe for kids to ride on the main road.

Pedestrian crossings: Some participants said that crossing Esquimalt Road is risky, particularly between Head and Robert streets. Some observed that cars often fail to stop at crosswalks, and poor visibility increases the danger.

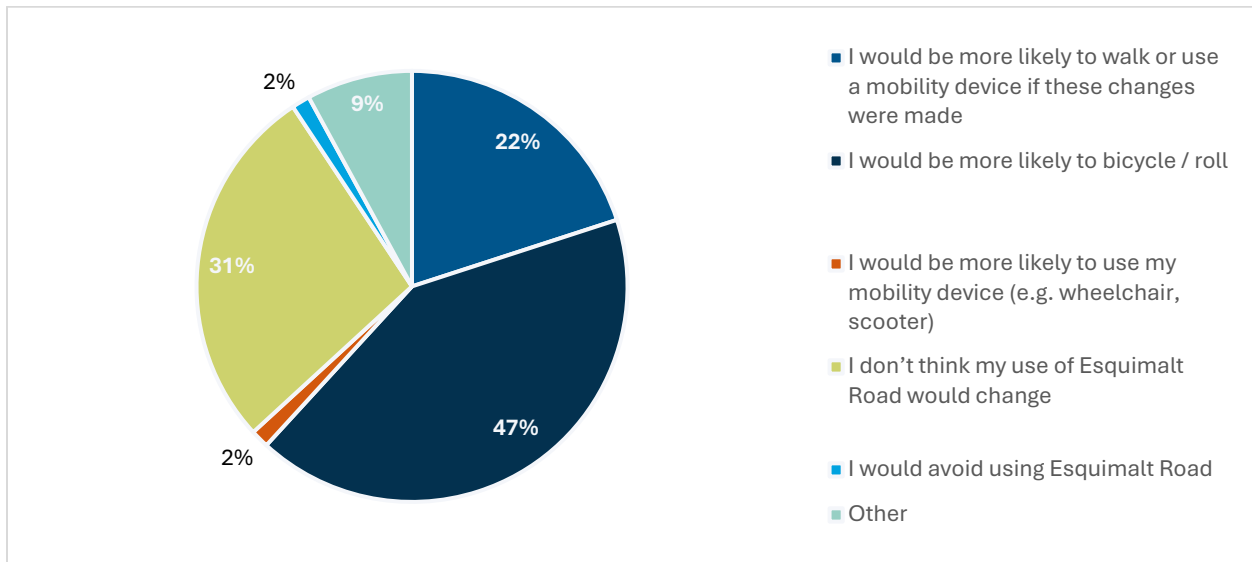
Narrow sidewalks: Some participants said the sidewalks are too narrow, making it difficult for people using mobility aids or walking with strollers. They also mentioned obstacles like lamp posts further constraining the space.

Intersection safety: Some participants said that intersections like Dunsmuir and Head Street are dangerous, both for cyclists and pedestrians. Some felt that the sharp bends and fast-moving traffic make them feel particularly unsafe.

Difficulties for mobility devices: Some participants said that people using wheelchairs, scooters, or other mobility devices struggle with narrow sidewalks and poorly designed curb cuts. They called for more accessible infrastructure, including wider sidewalks and better crossings.

Future change in trips

After the proposed improvements are completed, we asked how people would feel their active (e.g., bus, bike, walking, rolling) trips change. Almost half of participants would be more likely to bicycle or use a rolling device.



395 responses

Other

Some participants (9%) expressed their concerns and worries about the proposed design features. Here is a summary of their feedback:

Safety for cyclists: Some believe the proposed improvements, such as protected bike lanes, will make cycling safer by providing better separation from motor vehicles and reducing the risk of crashes. Parents are especially supportive, feeling these changes will make it safer for their children to bike on Esquimalt Road.

No change in behavior: Several participants mentioned that the improvements won't alter their habits.

Additional thoughts

We asked if people had any other comments about the project. They said the following:

What People Liked

Protected bike lanes: Many people appreciated the addition of protected bike lanes, especially on Lampson Street and the proposed ones on Esquimalt Road. They felt these lanes would improve cyclists' safety and encourage more people to bike.

Safety: There was positive feedback on efforts to improve pedestrian and cyclist safety, including better crosswalks and signals.

Community engagement: Some participants expressed gratitude for the opportunity to participate in the survey and provide their input on the project.

Concerns

Traffic congestion: Some were worried about the potential for increased traffic congestion due to the addition of bike lanes. Some participants worried this would lead to longer travel times, increased pollution, and stress.

Parking availability: Many were concerned about reducing parking spaces, especially in downtown areas. They felt this would negatively impact businesses, residents, and visitors and could lead to parking overflow into residential streets.

Emergency and commercial vehicles: There were concerns about the ability of emergency and commercial vehicles to navigate the tighter spaces created by the bike lanes. People worried that this could hinder emergency response times and delivery services.

Taxpayer money: Some participants felt the project was a waste of taxpayer money, especially given the high taxes and the need for essential infrastructure improvements. They questioned the relevance of the Active Transportation Plan and the prioritization of bike lanes over other needs.

Suggestions for Improvements

Alternative routes for bike Lanes: Several participants suggested using side streets or less busy roads for bike lanes instead of major traffic corridors like Esquimalt Road. They felt this would have less impact on traffic and businesses.

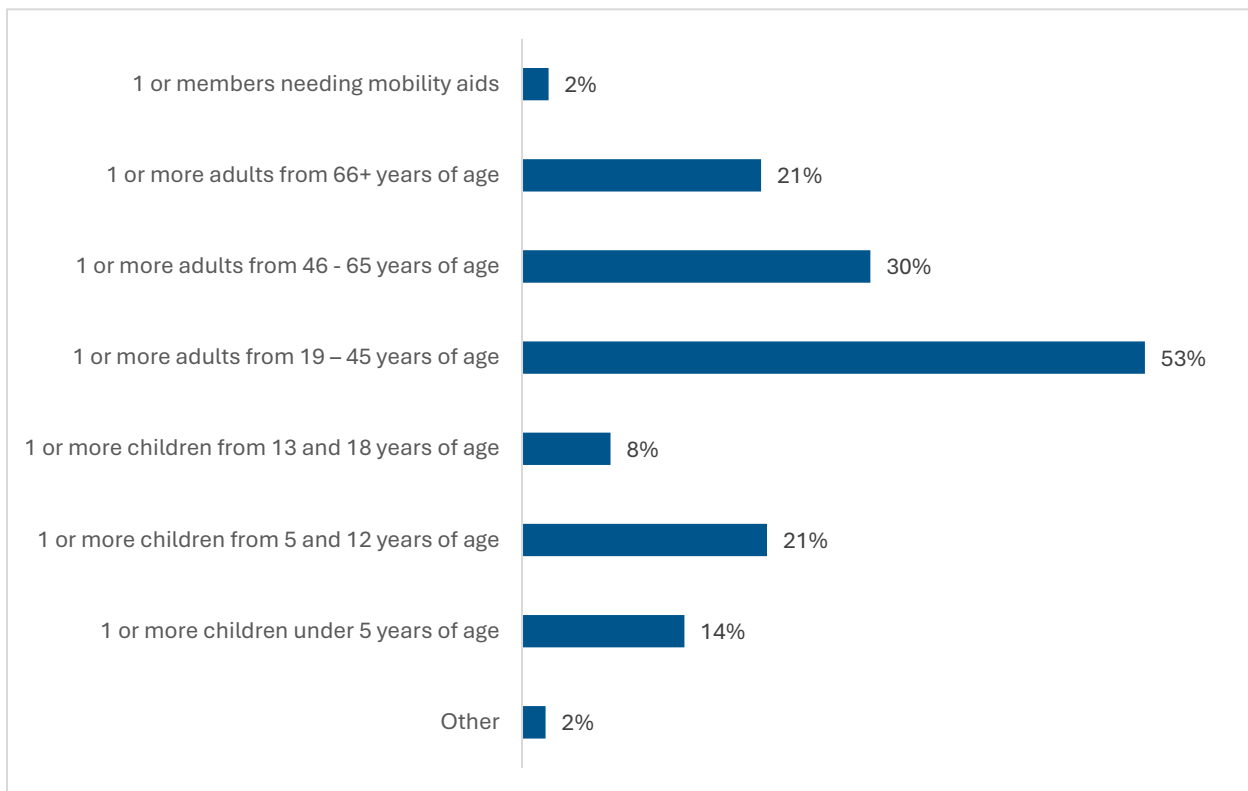
Parking solutions: Participant suggested creating reservable street parking micro-lots, encouraging businesses to offer overnight parking, and using vacant land for longer-term residential parking.

Balancing needs: Some highlighted the importance of balancing the needs of cyclists, pedestrians, and drivers. They suggested maintaining some parking spaces, ensuring safe crossings, and considering the needs of seniors and those with disabilities.

Who We Heard From

Household

We asked people to describe who in their household will use this corridor by selecting which age groups are represented in their household. Over half of the participants had one or more adults from 19 to 45 in their household.

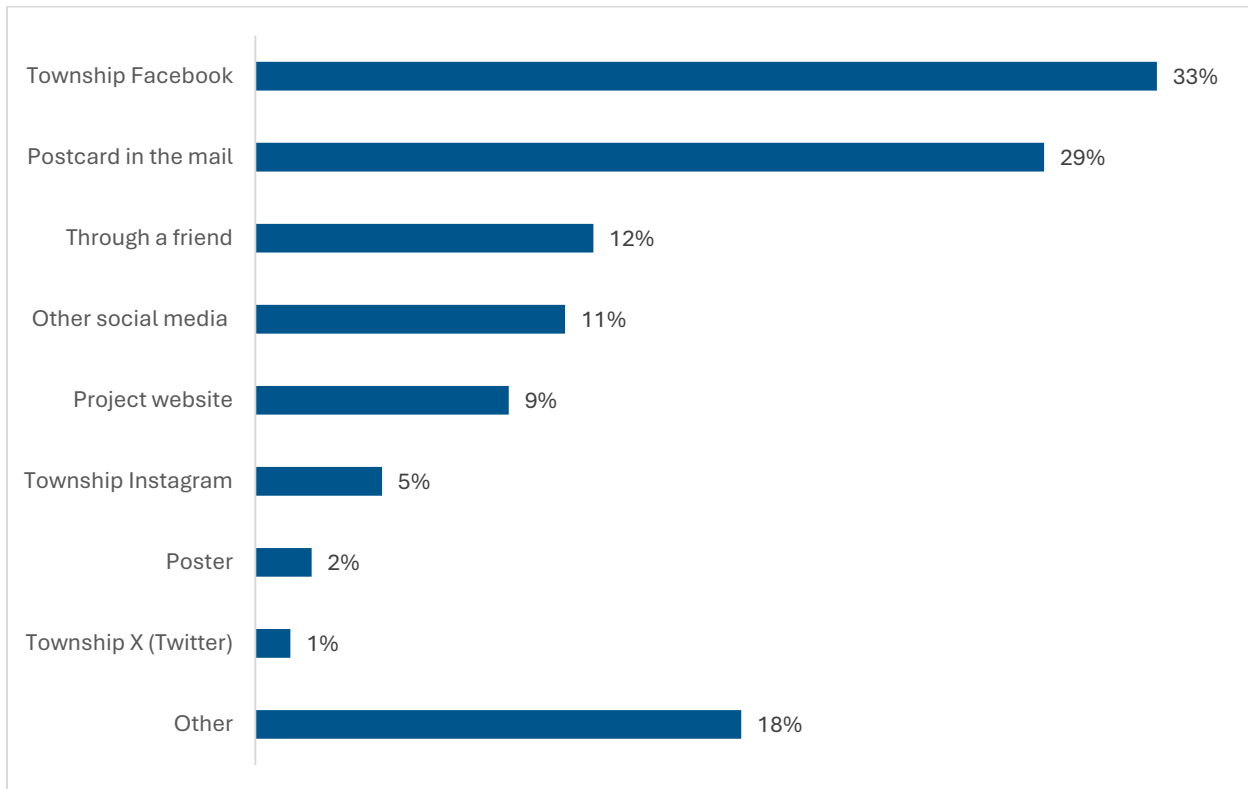


Other

- Do not have children in their household

How people heard about the survey

We asked how participants heard about the survey. Over half of the participants heard about it through the Township's Facebook page and a postcard sent by the Township.



Other

- Township email and newsletter
- Township engagement event
- Community signage
- Mayor's Facebook page
- Esquimalt Community Connection communications
- Esquimalt Recreation newsletter
- Capital Bike and cycling organizations' email notification

- Other businesses in the area
- My school's communications (e.g., PAC newsletter)

Additional Feedback

We also received emails from a few community members. The following is a summary of what we heard:

Emergency vehicle access: Barriers on the road might make it harder for drivers to pull over for emergency vehicles, which could slow down response times in emergencies like crashes or fires.

Traffic mix: This road is used by many different types of drivers, including commuters, parents dropping off kids at school, seniors, shoppers, delivery trucks, and maintenance vehicles. Most of the feedback shows that cars are the main way people get around on this road.

Parking and local business impact: The barriers have reduced the number of parking spots, which could hurt local shops and businesses because it makes it harder for customers to visit.

Preserving the community lifestyle: Many people want to keep the road as it is to protect their current way of life in the community.

How your feedback will be used

We have completed the first round of engagement. The Project Team will review all the feedback to inform their technical analysis and develop the final design before beginning construction. In Winter 2024, we will be engaging people on phase 2 of this project.

Next steps

Engagement in Phase 2 (Joffre to Canteen) is still in development. It includes engagement on potential routing options (Esquimalt Road versus off-corridor/neighborhood bikeways). The second phase of engagement will take place soon. Stay tuned!

For more information, go to engagingsquimalt.ca/esquimaltroad