



EAST SOOKE RESIDENTS' ROAD SAFETY REPORT: Priorities and Action Plan

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The East Sooke Neighbourhoods Association (ESNA) would like to thank the East Sooke residents who participated in the Road Safety Forum and Workshop, and others who have worked with us to make our roads and highway safer for drivers and pedestrians. Our appreciation is also extended to the special guests who joined us at the Forum and shared information and ideas with our community: Bruce Fogg (Executive Assistant to Premier John Horgan), Mike Hicks (Director, CRD Juan de Fuca Electoral Area), Ryan Evanoff (Operations Manager, Southern Vancouver Island, Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure), Dawn Gilhen (Corporal, RCMP, Sooke Detachment), and David Bigelow (Captain Operations, East Sooke Fire Department). Additionally, we would like to thank Shawn Haley, Area Manager, Roads, Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, for the work he has done and continues to do for our community.

Although ESNA relies on the donation of time from its volunteer directors, there are costs associated with organizing events such as the forum and workshop. We would like to acknowledge the contribution of the CRD Juan de Fuca Electoral Area which provided funding for ESNA through its Grant-in-Aid program.

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

The East Sooke Neighbourhoods Association (ESNA) was incorporated in December 2013 under the Province of BC Society Act. ESNA now consists of 5 volunteer Directors who work cooperatively to assess and respond to the needs and interests of East Sooke residents.

The three main objectives of ESNA are summarized below:

1. To promote positive neighbourhoods and community spirit in East Sooke by organizing and supporting relevant initiatives.
2. To help maintain and enhance East Sooke's unique character and the quality of life it affords to its residents.
3. To maintain a community website that provides information about community services that can be accessed by East Sooke residents, which has the potential to be expanded based on community need and interest.

Shortly after ESNA was established it received a contribution from the Juan De Fuca Electoral Area Grant-in-Aid program. This contribution assisted ESNA to establish the East Sooke Services website (eastsooke.ca) which provides information on health, volunteer, emergency and other services that can be accessed by local residents. The funding also allowed ESNA to conduct a survey of East Sooke residents to assess their priorities. The East Sooke Survey was mailed to all of the 636 households in East Sooke. Residents had the option of filling out and returning the paper version of the questionnaire or completing it on-line. Almost 20%, or 123, households returned their survey for a 19.3% response rate.

The survey identified 6 major areas of concern, one of which was Health and Safety.

In the area of Health and Safety, a majority of East Sooke residents indicated that road safety was one of their top priorities.

Sixty percent (60%) of the respondents thought there was a high need for road safety and an additional 18% thought there was a moderate need in this area. Specific areas of concern, based on the survey and subsequent conversations with residents, include:

- Safety of the intersection of Highway 14 and Gillespie Road. Residents highlighted the danger involved in making turns onto Gillespie Road when driving from Langford, and turns going to and coming from Sooke at Gillespie Road.
- Other concerns about this intersection were poor lighting, excessive speed of drivers on Highway 14, and poor visibility at the intersection.
- Driver behaviour: tailgating, speeding, not staying in their lane.
- The narrow width of East Sooke Road and the risk to car and truck drivers, cyclists and

pedestrians.

- Poor lighting on East Sooke Road and on Highway 14.
- Absence of a warning on East Sooke Road when Fire Trucks are dispatched.

In response to the survey, ESNA entered into a dialogue with the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MoTI) through its local area manager. This collaboration, and the work MoTI was engaged in as part of its regular maintenance schedule, resulted in a number of improvements to East Sooke Road from 2015-2017. However, residents continued to express concerns about the safety of East Sooke Road to ESNA directors and on the community FaceBook page. Some of these concerns related to the infrastructure and others related to factors controlled by the drivers, including their speed and dangerous behavior like tailgating and crossing the centre line.

Improvements to Highway 14 have been needed for many years according to local residents, business owners from Sooke and East Sooke, and local governments including the Juan de Fuca Electoral Area and the District of Sooke. In particular, the junction of Gillespie Road and Highway 14, which residents must travel through in order to enter or leave East Sooke, was seen as problematic. ESNA was aware that discussions between MoTI and the Provincial government were underway to improve Highway 14 and the Roche Cove Bridge that is situated on Gillespie Road. Concerns were expressed by East Sooke residents about the importance of consulting them before the improvements were implemented so the hazards that residents had experienced could be taken into account.

Given the many issues and stakeholders involved in infrastructure improvement and in road safety generally, ESNA offered to facilitate a Road Safety Forum in February 2018. Over 75 people attended the Forum along with invited guests from the Juan de Fuca Electoral Area, Premier's Office, RCMP, MoTI, and East Sooke Fire Department. The results from the Forum served as the basis for a Workshop that followed in March 2018 to set specific priorities and an action plan for ESNA and local residents. A plan was made to incorporate key points from the Forum and Workshop into a report that could be shared with other organizations, governments and government departments. This report highlights facts, describes problems and proposes solutions that were brought forward during the Forum and Workshop. On behalf of the community, ESNA hopes this information will be considered by key stakeholders responsible for funding, planning and improving our roads.

SECTION 2 – The Rural Municipality of East Sooke and Neighbouring Communities

Geography

East Sooke is situated on the south side of the Sooke Basin and the south end of Vancouver Island, British Columbia, Canada. It is one of several communities that form the Juan de Fuca Electoral Area, which is an unincorporated rural Electoral Area under the jurisdiction of the Capital Regional District. Much of East Sooke is a peninsula. Over half of its land mass is designated parkland that includes East Sooke Regional Park (1433.9 hectares), Roche Cove Regional Park (162.6 hectares) and Matheson Lake Regional Park (157 hectares).¹

The community of East Sooke can be accessed via Gillespie Road off of Highway 14 and East Sooke Road off of Rocky Point Road (Metchosin). A succinct description of the Gillespie Road access to East Sooke,

¹ Capital Regional District. Available at <https://www.crd.bc.ca/parks-recreation-culture/parks-trails>

and the classification of East Sooke roads, is provided in the draft East Sooke Official Community Plan 2018:

“Two main roads service East Sooke: Gillespie Road and East Sooke Road. Gillespie Road acts as the main north-south link between East Sooke and Highway #14. The 2.8 kilometre length of Gillespie Road within the Plan area is winding and narrows at one point to a one-lane bridge over Roche Cove ... Both East Sooke and Gillespie Roads are classified by the Province as “Rural Collector” [roads] from which direct access to individual properties are minimized. All other roads in East Sooke are classified as “Rural Local”.

East Sooke’s closest neighbouring community via Gillespie Road is Sooke. In addition, Sooke also includes the development of Silverspray that is situated at the end of East Sooke Road going west, on the westernmost point of the East Sooke peninsula. Via East Sooke Road to the east are the communities of Sc’ianew First Nation and the District Municipality of Metchosin.

Population and Visitor Information

East Sooke had a total of 1,549 residents in 2016². Detailed demographic information is only available from 2011 and is presented below in Table 1.

Table 1: East Sooke Demographics in 2011³
Population in 2011 = 1465

Age Range	Percent
Under 10	8.2
10-19	10.9
20-29	10
30-39	9.2
40-49	17.1
50-59	21.5
60-69	14.7
70-79	6.8
80+	1.7

The age breakdown indicates that there are many school aged children living in East Sooke. These children use school buses that must negotiate the twists and turns of East Sooke Road and travel through the junction of Gillespie Road and Highway 14 on a twice daily basis.

In addition to the population of East Sooke, road traffic is affected by four other population related factors: (1) the location of East Sooke Regional Park and the Roche Cove and Matheson Lake Regional

² Personal communications with Director Mike Hicks, Juan de Fuca Electoral Area, 2018.

³ Draft East Sooke Official Community Plan, Bylaw No. 4000, 2018.

Parks within the East Sooke boundary; (2) the development of the westernmost point of land that was formerly part of East Sooke, but was annexed in 2004 to the District of Sooke; (3) growth in general in the West Shore communities; and (4) closures of roads leading to Sooke and other communities that require detours on East Sooke Road and Gillespie Road.

In their 2015 Annual Report, the CRD Parks and Environmental services provided information on the number of visitors to East Sooke Regional Park.

In 2015, 163,931 people visited East Sooke Regional Park, traveling to the Park via Gillespie Road or East Sooke Road.

Unfortunately the figures for the Roche Cove and Matheson Regional Parks were not provided. Suffice to say, the high number of visitors to the parks has a significant impact on the traffic volume of the community of 1549 residents especially during the spring, summer and fall months. With population expansion in the West Shore area, even in winter months there is a higher traffic volume to the parks and this can be expected to continue.

In 2004 the westernmost point of land in East Sooke, known as Silverspray, was annexed to the District of Sooke. Silverspray is a mixed development that aims to create a residential community and destination resort. One component of Silverspray is the SookePoint Ocean Cottage Resort. In the District of Sooke Minutes of a Public Hearing held on June 27, 2016, reference is made to the “potential for 800 persons living full time or visiting this [SookePoint] development and its facilities at a given time”⁴. While it is not the intent of this report to provide details on the plans for this portion of the peninsula, it should be noted that:

East Sooke Road and Gillespie Road will experience a significant increase in traffic volume when the SookePoint development is completed.

This needs to be factored into planning for road infrastructure and road safety.

Growth of the West Shore communities is an important factor to consider when planning infrastructure development in any of the West Shore communities.⁵ In a 2014 study prepared for the CRD by Urban Futures, it was estimated that the population of the West Shore communities will grow by 83%, from 70,288 people in 2011 to 128,834 people by 2038.⁶ As the population grows, so does the traffic volume and the risk of accidents.

⁴ District of Sooke. Minutes of Public Hearing held on June 27, 2016.

⁵ “West Shore” includes Langford, Colwood, Highlands, Sooke, Metchosin and the Juan de Fuca Electoral Area

⁶ Urban Futures. Regional, Sub-regional and TAZ-level Projections for the CRD. 2014

Detours to and from Sooke and communities beyond Sooke involve the use of East Sooke and Gillespie Roads, as well as the Gillespie Road and Highway 14 junction. The 2016 Census indicates that the population of Sooke was 13,001 in 2016. This represents a 14% increase over the 2011 population⁷ and Sooke continues to grow. ESNA does not have information on the number of cars that travel on East Sooke and Gillespie Roads when required for the purpose of a detour but it is significant and affects all of the feeder roads along the way.

Via East Sooke Road to the east are the communities of Sc'ianew First Nation and the District Municipality of Metchosin. These communities have populations of 255⁸ and 4708⁹ respectively. Their impact on the traffic on East Sooke and Gillespie Road is not known.

SECTION 3 – Road Safety: East Sooke Priorities and Proposed Solutions

ESNA's consultations with community members as well as the extensive consultation done by the Juan de Fuca Electoral Area during the preparation of the draft 2018 Official Community Plan (OCP) have firmly established that road infrastructure and safety are top priorities for residents. In addition to East Sooke residents who were consulted during the development of the OCP, other organizations were also consulted. Of these organizations, Island Health specifically referenced their support for improved road safety in East Sooke in their letter to the CRD¹⁰:

“Island Health would like to echo this sentiment [regarding the need for road safety improvements] and strongly encourage the Ministry of Transportation to address this intersection and main thoroughfare roads.”

This section of the report elaborates on the specific areas of concern, providing information from other sources where possible. Solutions that were proposed are also presented for consideration. It should be noted that none of the people who attended the meetings, with the exception of the MoTi representatives, considered themselves “experts” on infrastructure development. The suggestions that were made were based on common sense and lived experience traveling on local roads as drivers, cyclists or pedestrians and on observations of other people in these situations.

The Gillespie Road and Highway #14 Junction

The intersection of Gillespie Road and Highway 14 is a “T” junction. For drivers going to East Sooke off of Highway 14, they can either make a left or right turn off Sooke Road followed by two sharp turns on Gillespie Road in opposing directions. The photographs that follow provide a visual description of the Gillespie Road and Highway #14 junction, and highlight the problems it poses for vehicular traffic. The first photo shows traffic coming from the Sooke side of the junction towards the uncontrolled

⁷ Statistics Canada. “Census Profile, 2016 Census. Available from: <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?lang=e>.

⁸ Province of BC. Available at: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/natural-resource-stewardship/consulting-with-first-nations>.

⁹ Statistics Canada. Census Profile, Census 2016. <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?lang=e>.

¹⁰ Abstracted from letter from Island Health to the CRD as part of Island Health's review of the Draft East Sooke Official Community Plan, Bylaw No. 4000, 2018.

intersection and the sharp right hand turn into East Sooke. People traveling from Sooke to East Sooke have the advantage in that they have a short right turning lane immediately prior to the junction. However, signage is poor and it has been noted that there is a sign on the Sooke side of the intersection that indicates Gillespie Road is the next turn, but this sign is small and not easily seen, especially after dark.



When drivers leave Gillespie Road to drive west towards Sooke, they must cross one lane of traffic and enter the westbound lane, and both lanes can be extremely busy at certain times of the day. Making the left hand turn is also compounded by the lack of a clear turning lane on Gillespie Road and the potential for limited visibility of cars coming around a sharp corner from the Langford side of the junction. Residents report that in order to avoid this left turn they have changed their shopping habits. Some residents have stopped going to Sooke altogether and no longer patronize Sooke stores, restaurants or services.

The second photo is taken from the opposite (Langford) side of the junction and demonstrates the complex nature of the junction including the lanes, traffic flow, curves of the roads and angle of the turn. Cars leaving the Langford side of the junction from Highway 14 towards East Sooke are provided with a turning lane, but the traffic coming eastbound from the Sooke side of the junction, even if going the recommended speed, approach quickly and are visible for only seconds. During this short interval East Sooke bound drivers' only option is to accelerate very quickly to make the turn onto Gillespie Road. After the sharp left turn onto Gillespie Road, drivers must make an immediate sharp right turn on Gillespie Road, followed almost immediately by a sharp left turn as they continue along the Road. In the evening, in the rain, in the winter time, and in the morning and afternoon rush hours these manoeuvres are extremely challenging.



Vehicles turning right off Gillespie Road towards Langford must deal with the uncertainty of whether or not there is one or two (right and/or left) turning lanes, limited visibility due to the physical location of the junction at a curve in Highway 14, and the speed of oncoming traffic.

In all of the above scenarios, vehicles such as school or Transit buses and trucks that cannot quickly accelerate must wait until there is a break in traffic to safely negotiate this junction, or take a chance that the oncoming traffic will slow down when they see them begin to negotiate the turn. The latter choice obviously puts them and their passengers at risk. During peak rush hours where there are very few gaps between cars, this junction can be hazardous.

Concerns about the East Sooke Road and Gillespie Road junction are often mentioned in conjunction with the problems that exist a few hundred yards away and include the part of Highway 14 that runs along 17 Mile Pub, between the bus stops situated on both sides of the Highway. The dangers to pedestrians of crossing Highway 14 to get to the bus stop from the parking lot are well known. Vehicular traffic going to East Sooke from the Pub parking lot must quickly enter a fast moving lane of traffic and then immediately prepare for the sharp left turn onto Gillespie Road. Vehicular traffic going to the pub, liquor store or parking lot from East Sooke must cross the lane of oncoming traffic, while worrying about vehicles coming up quickly behind them around a curve in the road – a curve that gives other drivers limited time to stop.

BC Transit Bus 61 serves the bus stops on either side of Highway 14 at 17 Mile Pub. These buses deliver students to postsecondary schools in Langford and Sooke, and serve as a major source of transportation for East Sooke and Sooke residents to Sooke, Langford and Downtown Victoria. Bus 64 which is a smaller feeder bus, serves East Sooke specifically. Earlier this year, BC Transit increased the number of

round trips Bus 61 makes to allow for an hourly service from 9 am to 6 pm¹¹. This increase was attributed to the demand for service, which given the anticipated growth in the West Shore, is expected to continue. It is hoped the increased use of BC Transit will encourage BC Transit to target road safety on this stretch of Highway 14 as a top priority.

At the Forum and the Workshop that followed, a number of solutions were proposed to remedy the dangerous nature of the Gillespie Road and Highway 14 junction all of which point to the need to carefully design the roadway. Residents' suggestions are to:

- Control traffic at the junction, and slow it down on Highway 14 as it approaches the intersection either through traffic lights, a traffic circle, or flashing signs.
- Clearly define the turning lane(s) that controls right and left turns from Gillespie Road onto Highway 14.
- Improve visibility, especially around the bends approaching Gillespie Road. This could involve improved lighting, cleared vegetation, and/or the installation of retroreflective safety devices.
- Improve the safety of pedestrians, bus travelers and drivers crossing Highway 14 at 17 Mile Pub. This could include a cross walk or bridge that ensures pedestrian and bus traveller safety, road widening and flashing signs.
- Where possible, reduce the curves in the road.

The MoTI representative at the Forum reported that the bus stops are now being redone on Highway 14 near 17 Mile Pub to allow buses to pull off road. LED style lights are going in at Gillespie Road and Connie Road, LED chevrons are to be put in at Gillespie Road and at that other planned improvements at the Gillespie intersection include vegetation removal, painting, new lighting and signs.

The importance of conveying all of our concerns to MoTI, to the School District and its bus drivers, and to BC Transit in order to ensure that any plans that are made reflect the concerns of the East Sooke community was highlighted at the Forum and Workshop. Ensuring the safety of our residents, especially children and youth who use school buses and local transit to get to and from school on a daily basis, is our top priority.

Safety on East Sooke Road

East Sooke Road is a winding rural collector road that is the only road in and out of the west side of the community. The road consists of two narrow lanes (one in each direction) with limited shoulders, and small hills that at times limit drivers, pedestrians' and cyclists' ability to see oncoming traffic until it is almost upon them. The middle line was painted in 2015 but the paint has faded in many areas. The road is mostly unlit and there are no centre road reflective devices. The land on the side of the road is heavily treed, limiting sight lines.

East Sooke Road is mostly used by local drivers, visitors to the area and especially to East Sooke Regional Park, and school and transit bus drivers. It is also used by truck drivers who frequently have heavy loads. Residents expressed concerns about trucks and trailers driving at high speed, crossing the middle lines, tearing up the edge of the road, and stopping or parking at the side of the road. Although there is lots of vehicle traffic, there is little pedestrian or cyclist traffic on the road which is attributed by

¹¹ Goldstream News Gazette. December 15, 2017.

residents to the fact that people are afraid to walk or ride along the road; however people do walk and cycle on the road at considerable risk.

In addition to the challenges of the road itself, residents reported that drivers' misconduct, including speeding, running stop signs, crossing the centre line, and tailgating, is a major problem on East Sooke Road. In recent months, reports of these behaviours have appeared on the community FaceBook page. Some residents also highlighted the number of alcohol bottles thrown on the roadside and the need to reduce the number of drivers who were under the influence of a substance.

Specific parts of the road were perceived to be more dangerous than others:

The area around Anderson Cove was described as one of the most dangerous stretches of East Sooke Road.

The Anderson Cove area serves as an access point for the Anderson Cove entrance to East Sooke Regional Park where some of the 163,931 visitors start their park visit. The entrance to the park has a parking lot and bus stops, the latter of which leave little room for people to stand at them. The Anderson Cove part of East Sooke Road is also the site of a boat launch on the ocean side. Residents living adjacent to this stretch of East Sooke Road report frequent "minor" accidents, with people sliding off the road especially during rainy or winter days. These accidents usually go unreported although local residents may be called upon to provide assistance.

The intersections where smaller roads feed into East Sooke Road were also identified as problematic, mostly due to poor visibility of oncoming traffic caused by dips and small hills along the road.

Access to/from Coppermine Road, which has smaller lots and more people living there, is a concern because of poor visibility as does the second entry to Seagirt Road heading west.

Solutions proposed to improve East Sooke Road itself were:

- widen and restructure the road around Anderson Cove.
- paint the centre line with a long lasting solution and add reflective devices.
- place additional signage at Anderson Cove to warn people about the dangerous curves, the potential of cars on the road in the summertime when boats are being launched, the intersection with the Park parking lot, and the poorly situated bus stops.
- change the bus stop locations at Anderson Cove.
- add lights at key intersections.
- add mirrors at key intersections.

At the Forum there was a general consensus that East Sooke Road was too narrow for the volume of traffic it carried, but there were differences of opinion as to the benefits of widening it in more areas

than those specified above. Concerns were expressed that a wider road might encourage speeding and adversely affect the rural character of the community.

It should be highlighted that the Official Community Plan for East Sooke included recommendations to create a trail system that could be used for safe foot and bicycle traffic. This was included in the earlier OCP and would serve to improve road safety for pedestrians and cyclists.

In terms of road improvements specifically, at the community Forum, the MoTI representative explained that MoTI had a maintenance schedule for all of its roads, and a limited budget. Parts of East Sooke Road were improved and chip sealed in 2015. New signage has been installed in some areas that were identified by the community as posing a risk for drivers, and there is a plan to add to these signs.

The planned improvements to Roche Cove Bridge were presented to East Sooke residents by MoTI. Of interest, the bridge did not come up as a major concern by residents but was seen to pose a problem primarily when Gillespie Road was being used as a detour during a problem on Sooke Road.

The following solutions were proposed to address dangerous driving:

- increase the police presence in East Sooke with clear consequences for dangerous driving. East Sooke residents also asked if there was a mechanism for them report dangerous drivers to the RCMP when officers were not in the community.
- have the Commercial Vehicle Safety and Enforcement team monitor truck driver loads and driving behaviour in East Sooke.
- increase the number of road signs with clear direction to drivers to slow down, stay in their lanes, note that particular areas are high collision areas, and be aware that there are dangers ahead.

Since the February Forum, there has been a noticeable increase in the RCMP presence in the community. ESNA looks forward to working with the RCMP to address the above concerns. With respect to the third bullet, the Director of the Juan de Fuca Electoral Area offered assistance to pay for unofficial signs that could be placed on the edge of residents' property.

SECTION 4 – Next Steps

It should be noted that at the time this report was being prepared, the Highway 14 Corridor study was being conducted. It is ESNA's understanding that the Corridor study will provide detail on the improvements that are being planned along the corridor, extending to Port Renfrew. As MoTI indicated, the improvements will be extensive. It is not clear to ESNA what additional improvements, if any, will be made specifically to the Highway 14 and Gillespie junction, including the area around 17 Mile Pub, other than those described on page 9 (above), or if the concerns of the East Sooke community will be addressed.

In terms of East Sooke Road specifically, the RCMP have expressed a willingness to work with the community to address the issues that were identified. In addition, The Director of the Juan de Fuca Electoral Area offered to pay for road signs that could be placed on the edge of residents' property. Residents have come forward who are willing to have signs posted on their private property and recommendations are being prepared for the Electoral Area. Unfortunately, the dangers of the

Anderson Cove segment of the road are still an outstanding issue, as are the intersections where smaller streets join East Sooke Road. To this end, ESNA intends to:

- continue to seek an opportunity to provide input to MoTI and the provincial government regarding our concerns about the Gillespie Road and Highway 14 junction.
- continue to work with the RCMP regarding road safety and dangerous driving.
- support community volunteers to alert the School District and BC Transit to the dangers experienced by passengers who ride their buses, and seek their support as we advocate on behalf of these riders.
- arrange for local signage with the support of the Juan de Fuca Electoral Area.
- continue to advocate for improvements to the road, bus stops and boat launch around Anderson Cove.
- continue to advocate for visibility aids at key intersections in East Sooke.

ESNA joins East Sooke residents in advocating for a collaborative approach to decision making that ensures that our community, visitors to the Regional Parks, and Sooke residents living at the westernmost tip of East Sooke Road will be safe on our roads.