

## Sunshine Coast bridge plan raises ire in West Vancouver

Highway link would add to traffic crisis, says West Vancouver mayor

[Brent Richter](#) / North Shore News

September 23, 2015 12:00 AM



Horseshoe Bay in West Vancouver. file photo North Shore News

West Vancouver business and community leaders are pouring some salt water on the province's plan to study a highway link to the Sunshine Coast.

Transportation and Infrastructure Minister Todd Stone made the announcement last week, saying the study would look at the costs and benefits of a proposed link, as it relates to tourism and investment on the Sunshine Coast and in Powell River.

Options on the table range from a highway link around Jervis Inlet to direct bridge connections along the coast, according to the ministry.

But a new highway to a new community would only mean more traffic for the North Shore's already choked bottlenecks, according to West Vancouver Mayor Michael Smith.

"I think the whole thing is completely ridiculous. I don't know why they would float this," Smith said.

"Obviously, with the development that would occur on the Sunshine Coast and all the day-trippers that go up there – we already have a traffic crisis on the North Shore. How are those people going to get on and off the North Shore?"

Smith said any such fixed link to the coast should come with a third crossing to Vancouver, though he acknowledged there's little chance of that happening.

"The North Shore is the only part of the entire Metro region that hasn't had additional road capacity – to and from – added in the last 60 years. Every other area – pick an area, and you have new bridges and tunnels and everything else and nothing for the North Shore."

Holly Kemp, president of the Horseshoe Bay Business Association, questioned the costs of such a project.

"It's hundreds of millions if it's not a \$1-billion-plus," Kemp said. "It seems it's a really good diversion away from their existing transportation system, which is in fact the ferries. If they don't have \$200 million to help out the ferry system with the Horseshoe Bay terminal, then where are they going to come up with the hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars it's going to cost to do something like this?"

A proposed fixed link to the Sunshine Coast is something that's been talked about for generations, according to West Vancouver-Sea to Sky MLA Jordan Sturdy, and a number of groups have been asking for a fresh look at the issue

A bridge or highway may end up being cheaper in the long run, he added. "Certainly, looking at existing ferry services relative to an investment that would put in place a fixed link is clearly one of the motivators. There's no question about that," he said.

But, Sturdy added, Smith and Kemp are jumping to conclusions about what the impacts here would be, given that the proposed routes haven't been studied.

"Really, we want to inform the discussion with some factual information and see if there are opportunities that are worth investigating further," he said.

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