

West Kelowna Transmission Project

Community consultation report | May 2026



Executive summary

We invited community members in Westbank First Nation, West Kelowna and Peachland to hear an update on the West Kelowna Transmission Project in early 2026.

We're strengthening the transmission network that delivers clean, reliable electricity to Westbank First Nation, West Kelowna, Peachland, and surrounding areas. We'll upgrade Westbank Substation in West Kelowna and build a new transmission line connecting it to FortisBC's Recreation Substation in Kelowna.

We invited community members to hear about potential route options between West Kelowna and Kelowna, focusing on route options between Westbank Substation on Shannon Lake Road and Highway 97. In February 2026 we held an open house in West Kelowna, followed by a virtual open house in early March 2026.

We'll hold open houses for other segments of the route later in 2026.

During the community engagement, key themes from participant feedback were:

- The transmission line is necessary to provide a secondary source of power for West Kelowna.
- Underground transmission lines are preferred by residents.
- Options 2a and 2b are not preferred by residents of Shannon Lake neighbourhood.
- Residents are concerned about a loss of roadside vegetation due to right-of-way clearing.

See below for more detail on what we heard from the community.

We'll consider this feedback as we identify a preferred route option by the end of 2026.

As our project moves forward, we'll continue to provide updates and identify opportunities for stakeholders and the community to share additional feedback.

Background

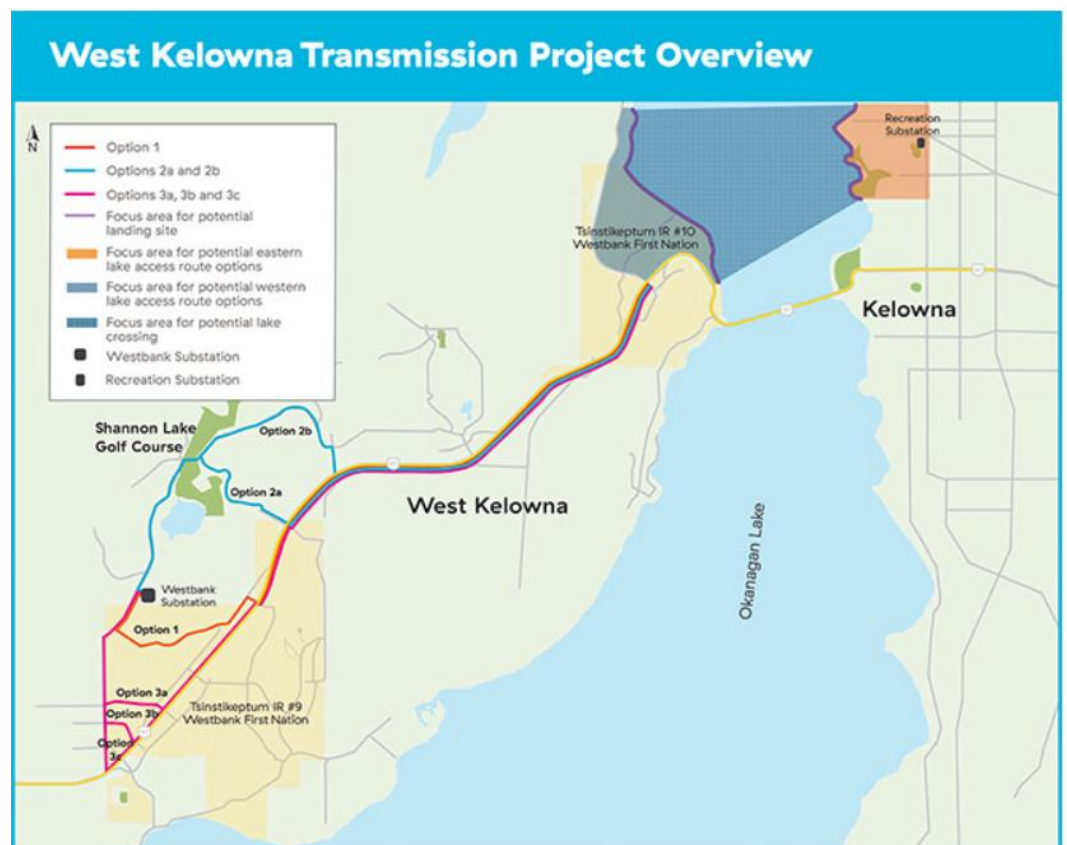
We're planning to interconnect our grid in West Kelowna with FortisBC's network in Kelowna. This will create a redundant power supply for nearly 26,000 BC Hydro customers in Westbank First Nation, West Kelowna, Peachland, and surrounding communities.

Currently, power to our substation in West Kelowna is supplied by a single 138-kilovolt transmission line from Nicola Substation near Merritt. It runs through rugged, remote terrain that's susceptible to wildfires.

In September 2024, we decided that an interconnection to the FortisBC system in Kelowna is the leading alternative for the West Kelowna Transmission Project.

Now we're studying route options between our Westbank Substation in West Kelowna and FortisBC's Recreation Substation in Kelowna.

- The first segment of the route goes from Westbank Substation on Shannon Lake Road to Highway 97.
- The second segment goes from Highway 97 to the western lakeshore.
- In designing the third segment, we'll determine a preferred location to cross Okanagan Lake.
- The fourth and final segment will be owned by FortisBC. We're supporting FortisBC as they plan a route between the eastern lakeshore and Recreation Substation.



During this community engagement, we sought public input on the first segment: six potential route options through West Kelowna and Tsinstikeptum IR #9. We're working with syilx Okanagan Nation, Westbank First Nation, the City of West Kelowna, FortisBC, and the City of Kelowna to define routing options.

To decide on a line route option, we'll compare the options considering:

- Input from Westbank First Nation
- Input from syilx Okanagan Nation
- Feedback from landowners, communities, other interested parties, the public, and specialists in various fields
- Impacts on the natural and human environments
- Reliability and safety risks
- Cost to build the line

We'll work to identify an option that best balances these considerations.

We plan to identify a preferred route option for all segments by the end of 2026.

WORKING WITH FIRST NATIONS

BC Hydro acknowledges our presence on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded *tr̓n xʷúla?xʷ* (land) of the syilx Okanagan Nation. The West Kelowna Transmission Project is being developed in collaboration with the syilx Okanagan Nation.

Through a new relationship model based on mutual respect and collaboration called the Enduring Relationship, BC Hydro is committed to working with the syilx Okanagan Nation on projects within Okanagan territory and to ensuring that impacts to Aboriginal rights and/or title are identified and addressed.

Specifically, BC Hydro is working with a Project Review Committee comprised of Okanagan communities and led by Westbank First Nation to better understand and address the environmental, cultural, and socioeconomic impacts of the West Kelowna Transmission Project and to make shared decisions about routing.

What we did

In February, we invited stakeholders and the community to learn about this project.





Communication	
Notification	To ensure the community knew about our consultation opportunities, we invited participation by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A postcard mailout to ~26,000 addresses in Westbank First Nation and West Kelowna; ○ Radio, print, online news, and geotargeted Facebook advertising; ○ Social media posts shared through City of West Kelowna channels; ○ Updates to the project website; and ○ Notifying subscribers to our project newsletter.
Information sharing	We developed display boards and a PowerPoint presentation to use during this engagement. The materials highlighted what we are doing and why, the proposed route options, how we will decide on a preferred route option; and ways to provide feedback. We continue to maintain a webpage that shares information about this project at bchydro.com/wktp .

We offered stakeholders and the community several ways to share their feedback.

Engagement	
In-person open house	<p>Participants were invited to tour presentation boards that included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ an explanation of the need for the project ○ considerations in selecting a transmission line route ○ maps to help participants visualize and understand the potential route options ○ a chart comparing different objectives for the potential route options ○ visualizations of steel monopoles; and ○ project timeline. <p>Project team members, along with representatives from Westbank First Nation and FortisBC, were available to answer questions and note participant feedback, and participants were invited to complete written feedback forms and an online survey.</p>
Virtual open house	<p>We developed a slide deck that was presented during this engagement that covered the same content as the in-person open house presentation boards.</p> <p>There was a question-and-answer period after the presentation where stakeholders could speak to project team members.</p>
Survey	<p>We created an online survey where respondents could share their feedback on the six potential route options, indicating a preference and why, and providing space for any additional comments. The survey was open from February 25 to March 31, 2026.</p> <p>A QR code to the survey was displayed at the two open houses and a link to the survey was posted on the project webpage. We also sent a reminder to the project's mailing list on March 19, 2026.</p>
Email	<p>Stakeholders and community members were invited to contact us by email at projects@bchydro.com.</p>

How we connected with participants

Community members shared their input with us through several channels.

How participants reached us			
In-person open house	Virtual open house	Feedback forms	Online survey
 <p>February 25, 2026 4 p.m. – 7 p.m.</p>	 <p>March 5, 2026 6 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.</p>	 <p>in-person and via email to projects@bchydro.com</p>	 <p>February 25 – March 31, 2026</p>
<p>~200</p> <p>attendees</p>	<p>52</p> <p>attendees</p>	<p>34</p> <p>feedback forms received</p>	<p>1,214</p> <p>responses recorded</p>

What we heard

Community input on the project was received at the open houses and community meetings, as well as through feedback forms, an online survey, emails and by phone. Feedback fell into 16 different themes:

Residential property impacts
391 mentions

Most direct route
239 mentions

Visual impact
147 mentions

Environment
107 mentions

Loss of vegetation
96 mentions

Build underground
68 mentions

Keep costs low
56 mentions

Parks, schools and recreation
47 mentions

Construction impacts
47 mentions

Project schedule
29 mentions

Health concerns
29 mentions

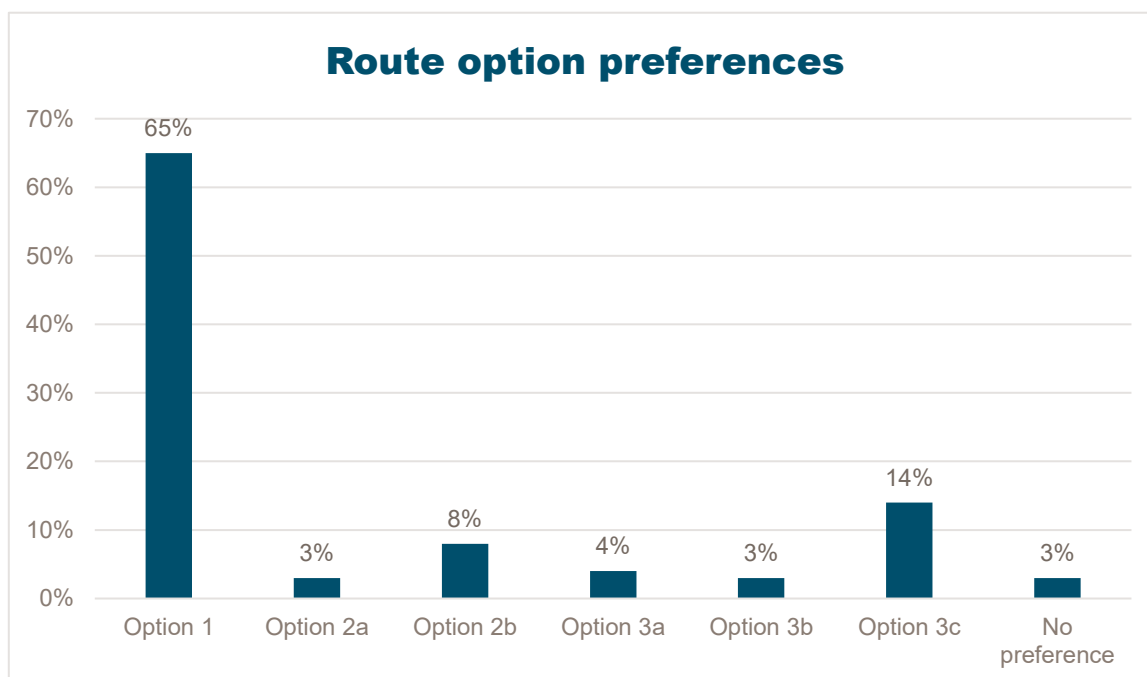
Wildfire risk
26 mentions

First Nations impacts
21 mentions

Community engagement
14 mentions

Maintenance
14 mentions

Noise
7 mentions



What participants told us – key themes

<p>They would prefer the line be built away from residential areas</p>	<p>Across the feedback, residents consistently expressed deep concern that several proposed routes – especially Options 2a and 2b – would run transmission lines through established neighbourhoods, private property, and areas with natural beauty. Many respondents fear property devaluation, loss of neighbourhood character, and the visual intrusion of transmission poles near homes. Others emphasize that these routes would pass through family-oriented neighbourhoods, creating both aesthetic, noise, and health concerns.</p> <p><i>“Regardless of how hard you try to minimize impacts to residents, you are going to leave a huge ugly scar when the line is completed through all of those beautiful neighbourhoods.”</i></p>
<p>People prefer the most direct route</p>	<p>Many people said the preferred route should be the most direct path from the Westbank Substation to Highway 97, arguing that a shorter alignment reduces construction time, minimizes cost and improves access for long-term maintenance.</p> <p><i>“Pick an option that is the least disruptive to people and animals’ habitat, the most direct, with less cost. Glad this is happening though.”</i></p>
<p>Environmental impacts should be minimized</p>	<p>The community expressed concern that several proposed routes would cause significant ecological disturbance, particularly where they cross or border creeks, wetlands, and wildlife habitat. Several comments highlight that forested areas provide important habitat for deer and other wildlife, and that a new transmission corridor would fragment ecosystems and reduce biodiversity. Overall, respondents want route planning to avoid sensitive natural areas and to minimize impacts on streams, wildlife, and interconnected ecological systems.</p> <p><i>“The construction required to do this job will greatly impact wildlife. Wildfires in 2023 already devastated a lot of this habitat, so impacting this territory further is detrimental to our ecosystem.”</i></p>
<p>There’s concern about a loss of vegetation and impacts to parks</p>	<p>The removal of trees and loss of forested areas associated with several of the proposed routes is a significant concern for many people we heard from. People worry that the project will require clearing mature forest and degrading the character of neighbourhoods that were intentionally designed to preserve green space. There is a strong desire to protect natural areas – such as Shannon Lake Regional Park and Terravita trails – avoid unnecessary clearing and prevent long-term changes to community green spaces.</p> <p><i>“These options are going to ruin one of the things we all love most about this area - nature, trees, beautiful neighbourhoods.”</i></p>
<p>Underground power lines are preferred</p>	<p>A number of people expressed a clear preference for underground transmission lines, viewing them as a way to avoid the visual, environmental, and residential impacts associated with overhead poles. People noted that undergrounding would prevent the loss of trees, reduce disruption to neighbourhoods, minimize the risk of causing wildfires, and avoid an industrial look in a natural area.</p> <p><i>“I understand above-ground power lines are less expensive, but they are much more invasive. If we consider long-term cost and impact, underground definitely makes sense.”</i></p>
<p>They understand the need for the project and would like to see it completed on time and on budget</p>	<p>Participants feel the project is necessary to improve electrical reliability and provide redundancy for West Kelowna. Several people expressed frustration that the community has waited this long for a secondary power supply and emphasized the importance of moving forward without further delays. People who hold this view tend to prioritize efficiency, direct routing, and cost-effectiveness so the project can be completed as quickly as possible.</p> <p><i>“Get this done. This is not about side issues but providing our communities with redundancy.”</i></p>

<p>They are concerned about construction impacts</p>	<p>Many respondents worry that construction will significantly disrupt neighbourhoods, especially around schools, walking routes, and local trails. Comments highlight fears about prolonged road closures, heavy equipment near children, and the loss of natural corridors used for recreation and daily travel.</p> <p><i>“Shannon Lake Road is an arterial road and the amount of construction during the placement of the line would be incredibly destructive to those living in the Shannon Lake neighbourhood.”</i></p>
<p>Consulting First Nations and engaging local and provincial governments is important</p>	<p>Some respondents emphasized that meaningful consultation with First Nations, along with coordination across local and provincial governments, is essential before any route is selected. Comments reflect expectations for respectful engagement, transparency, and collaboration with First Nations and the City of West Kelowna.</p> <p><i>“Agreements and collaboration with Westbank First Nation should start early to facilitate option 1 routing.”</i></p>

Next steps

The responses we have received from the community are helpful at this planning stage and will assist us in identifying, minimizing and mitigating impacts to the community.

Feedback from the public is one of the objectives that we'll compare when deciding on a line route option. Other objectives are:

- Input from Westbank First Nation and syilx Okanagan Nation
- Feedback from the cities of West Kelowna and Kelowna
- Feedback from landowners, other interested parties, and specialists in various fields
- Impacts on the natural and human environments
- Reliability and safety risks
- Cost to build the line

We'll work to identify an option that best balances all these considerations. We know there will be trade-offs and we'll work to minimize and mitigate potential impacts.

We plan to identify a preferred route option by the end of 2026. We'll share the route with the community on the project webpage, an email to project newsletter subscribers, and through local governments and key stakeholders.

As our project moves forward, we'll continue to provide updates and identify opportunities for stakeholders and the community to share additional feedback.

STAY INFORMED

You can find the latest information about this project and sign up to receive information about future consultation opportunities on our project webpage: bchydro.com/wktp.