



Traffic Bridge Public Consultation
Preliminary Summary of Results
July 2010

Traffic Bridge Public Consultation – Preliminary Summary
of Results from Open House Comment Form and, Online
Forum Survey

Traffic Bridge Needs Assessment Study

Prepared for

Stantec and the City of Saskatoon

Submitted by

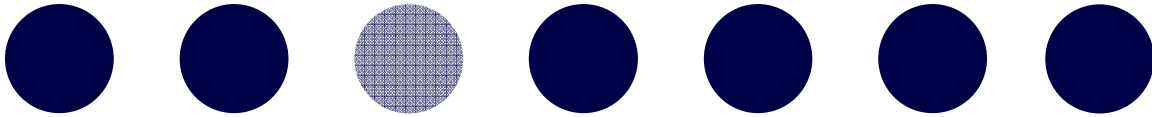


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Executive Summary

Fast Consulting was retained by the City of Saskatoon and Stantec to conduct the public consultations for the Needs Assessment Study of the Traffic Bridge. On June 22nd, 2010 Fast Consulting and Stantec organized and facilitated the first of three public consultations at Nutana Collegiate Library. Saskatoon residents were able to attend the come and go open-house between 6:00pm and 9:00pm. There was representation at the open-house from Stantec and the City of Saskatoon to help answer any questions about the Traffic Bridge, while Fast Consulting was there to facilitate the process.

The open-house was facilitated to obtain effective community engagement designed to be inclusive in terms of involvement, balanced and open in terms of process, and effective in terms of outcome. An estimated 250 to 300 people attended the open-house; approximately 125 people completed the on-site survey and comment sheet. Approximately 25 boards with information about the Traffic Bridge study were set up for viewing by people at the open-house, and 7 comment boards were set up at the open-house to allow people to share their opinions by writing them down on 4x6 sticky notes and attaching them to the boards. At any given time, there were 20 to 30 people in the library creating an undercurrent of discussion, enabling people to read the comment boards and share their opinions. By the end of the evening, the boards holding the sticky note comments were full. These boards are available for viewing in the 3rd floor lobby of City Hall, by the north elevator.

In addition to the open-house, an online community forum was developed to mobilize a broad range of opinions and engage as large a group of the public as possible. The online community forum was available from June 23rd, 2010 and extended to the end of July. It hosts comments and views from approximately 240 visitors. In addition to these comments, approximately 420 surveys were also completed at the online forum, which demonstrates the success of this forum as a means of providing an access point for people to share their opinions on their own schedule/time.

Both the open-house and online community forum appeared to be well received by Saskatoon residents. There were several positive comments from people regarding the process and how

they felt it enabled them to learn about the Traffic Bridge study and provide their opinions and feedback in a more meaningful manner.

Usage

- The majority of respondents (72%) say they are using the Traffic Bridge at least weekly, with approximately 37% of respondents saying they use it daily. Respondents are using the Traffic Bridge for driving, walking and cycling.
- Whether respondents are using the bridge as a motorist, pedestrian, or cyclist additional comments indicate that the majority (53%) agree it is a “linkage” for both east and west sides of the river. More specifically, respondents say the Traffic Bridge is a link to River Landing, the Farmer’s Market, Persephone Theatre downtown, a walking connection to Meewasin Trails, and work.

Importance

- The vast majority (90%) of respondents agree it is important to them for the Traffic Bridge to continue to serve as a linkage for pedestrians and cyclists to River Landing and the riverbank walkway systems. The importance for motorists to continuing using the bridge varies from 40% thinking it is important to 33% thinking it is not important; 25% are neutral.
- Additional comments indicate that respondents would like motorists to continue using the Traffic Bridge but they do not think it is necessarily critical, which may explain why one-quarter (25%) gave neutral responses.
- Compared to the other options, respondents think it is less important to use the Traffic Bridge for public transit. A fairly large percentage of respondents (36% to 40%) are neutral. Additional comments indicate that many respondents have a difficult time envisioning the concept of transit on the Traffic Bridge.

Impact of Closure

- Respondents were divided on their reactions to the closure of the Traffic Bridge for repairs in 2005/2006. Many “loved it”; many others found it “highly inconvenient”. This fairly illustrates the bridge’s two distinct user groups: drivers and pedestrian/cyclists.

Strengths and Challenges

- When given an opportunity to voice any concerns they might have about using the Traffic Bridge, few respondents identify structural safety. Overall, respondents trust the City’s assurance that the bridge is safe. The chief concern is the narrowness of the bridge. “Too narrow” is a common refrain among those driving across the bridge. Many respondents

say the bridge is also too narrow to comfortably accommodate both pedestrians and cyclists.

- Respondents list a wide variety of strengths, but two attributes are mentioned repeatedly:
 1. The first is the bridge's function as a "link" between the city's east and west sides of the river. This connection, both physical and historic, looms large in the public mind.
 2. The second is the history and/or heritage of the Traffic Bridge. "Saskatoon would not exist as we know it without this bridge. Its heritage, its history, and beauty are its strengths."

Value Most

- Respondents value many different things about the Traffic Bridge. Comments range from "I like its age, history, steeliness, blackness, design" to "boardwalk feeling, love that for walking" to "the symbolic nature of bridging communities". Here again, the bridge's role as a "link" between east and west riverbanks is an important issue.

Vision and Goals

- Respondents are torn on the issue of how the bridge should be rehabilitated. For 33%, the first choice would be for a pedestrian/cyclist bridge only. "Be proactive and make ONE bridge in our city a pedestrian and cyclist bridge," reflects the tone of many respondents' comments. Another 31% of respondents, however, say their first choice would be to rehabilitate the existing bridge in its current usage. "We can't ignore that vehicles are an important mode of transport even as we try to encourage more walking and cycling."

Concluding Remarks

From the first of three public consultations around the Traffic Bridge - it is clear that the majority of people from the public open-house and respondents to the survey hosted as part of the online forum would like to see the existing Traffic Bridge rehabilitated.

In terms of how the bridge should be rehabilitated, respondents are divided between a pedestrian/cyclist bridge only, or rehabilitating the existing bridge to its current usage which includes vehicular traffic as well as pedestrian and cyclists. A small percentage of respondents would like a new bridge and very few support demolition of the existing bridge with no replacement. There is also limited support for rehabilitating the bridge for transit.

The public consultation also focused on finding out more about the values Saskatoon residents associate with the Traffic Bridge in order to facilitate the development of design solutions that are aligned with these values and issues. There are rational elements to what

people tell us is important to them relative to keeping the bridge, and issues and values that are more 'emotional', but of equal importance to them.

Rational values include values such as safety, convenience, linkage and tourism (a rare example of a truss bridge). When people are commenting on safety, they are generally referring to concerns they have with the narrowness of the vehicular lanes on the bridge, or the safety of pedestrians and cyclists sharing the same narrow walkway. But they are also referring to their sense that although the bridge is old, they assume that it is a safe bridge unless a civic engineering assessment tells them differently.

Convenience is in reference to the access the bridge provides to the city's downtown core as well as River Landing, including the Farmer's Market, Persephone Theatre, Meewasin Trails, etc. This convenience factor is sometimes described by people in terms of the important role the bridge plays in linking the east side of the city to the downtown and the River Landing development. Keeping in mind that regular users of the Traffic Bridge are proportionately overrepresented in the open house and survey results, for many residents the Traffic Bridge is convenience for them relative to where they live.¹

The emotional values that run through many of the comments are of equal or perhaps even greater importance to residents than some of the other responses. These values are also related to linkage, but linkage of the present with Saskatoon's past and the pivotal role that the first bridge played in linking and amalgamating the towns of Saskatoon, Nutana and Riversdale. Residents that prefer to see the Traffic Bridge continue to exist suggest that they like its 'human scale'; that is, it's a small bridge that is close to the river that it spans.

There is also, for many of the participants in the open-house and online forum, a sense of 'character' that the bridge encapsulates for them. Comments around the character of the bridge are differentiated from heritage comments in that they speak to the individuality of the Bridge, its unusual truss construction and 'authenticity', the quirkiness of its narrow lanes and the memories that people associate with their first time driving on it.

The emotional values that people attach to the Bridge, might be values that apply to those residents of Saskatoon that use it infrequently, if at all, but subscribe to an inherent desire to see it remain as part of the cityscape. The impact of traffic on other bridges resulting from taking the Traffic Bridge out of service for an extended period of time in 2005 may also have an underlying influence on the opinion of the importance of the bridge from residents who do not necessarily use it regularly.

¹ 44% of the people that attended the public open-house at Nutana Collegiate and 36% of respondents to the online survey option indicate that they use the Traffic Bridge on a daily basis.

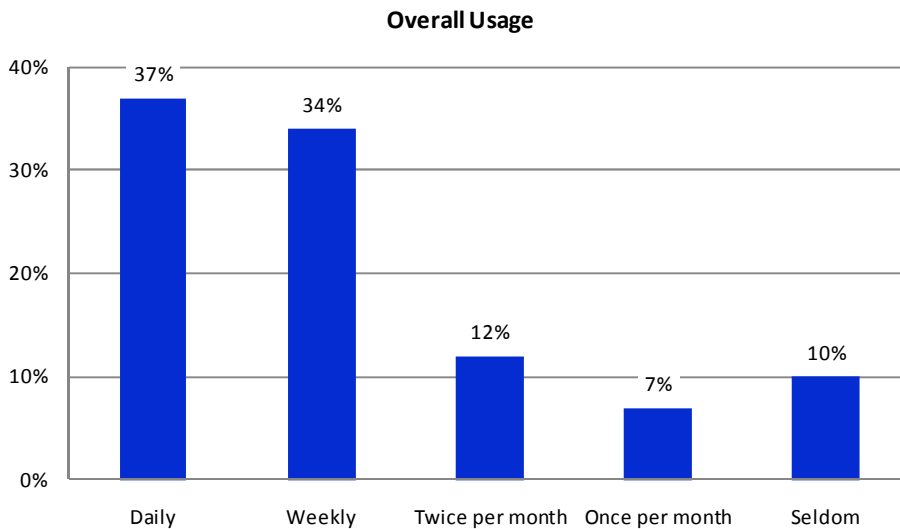
Results from Open House Comment Form and Online Forum Survey

The charts in this document summarize the quantified feedback from the comment forms filled out by 125 of the almost 300 people who attended the Traffic Bridge Study public open-house on June 22nd, as well as 420 respondents who completed the survey hosted on the Traffic Bridge online community forum between June 23rd and July 15th (2010).

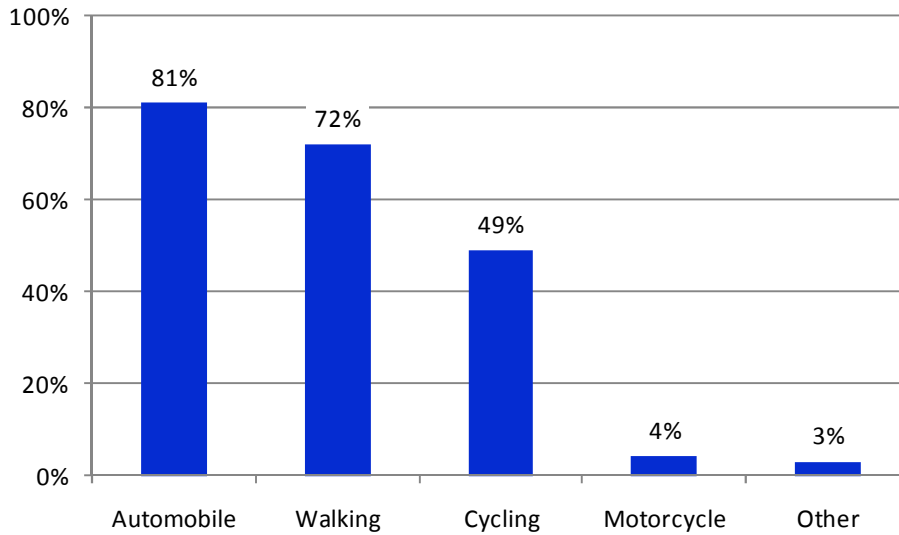
In addition to the hundreds of written comments people provided us from the public open house and the comments section of the online survey, almost 200 comments and opinions were posted to the online community forum. The online community forum comments are not summarized in the survey charts, although many of the questions they responded to are the same as the survey questions. The online forum discussion was also reviewed by the design team as part of their consideration of design options for the Traffic Bridge. Discussions can be read by visitors in their entirety at www.saskatoontrafficbridgeforum.ca

Usage

Q. How often do you use the Traffic Bridge?

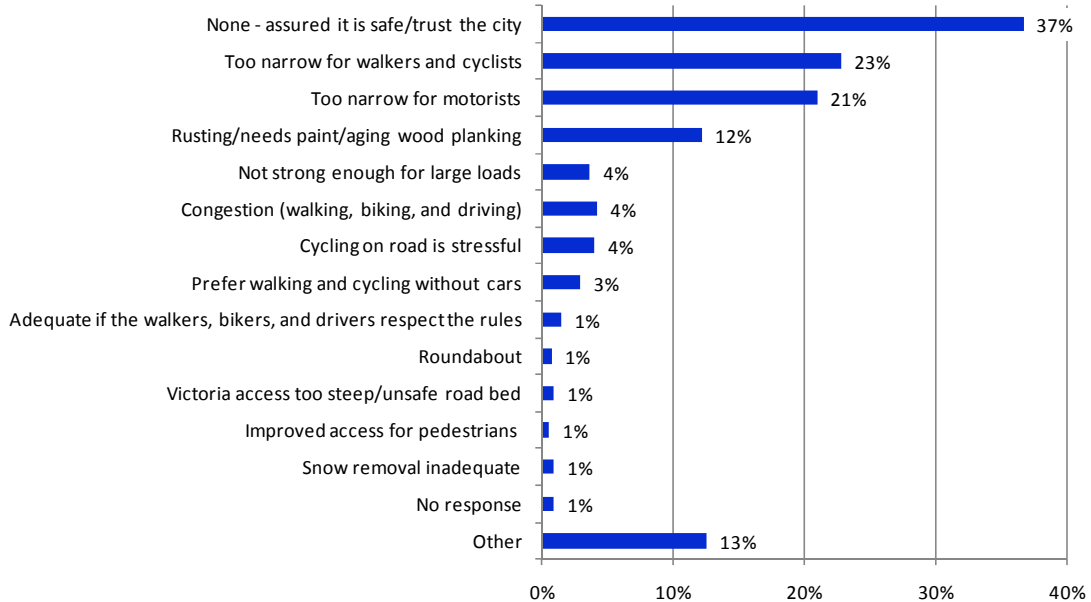


Q. What do you use the Traffic Bridge for?



Note: Chart total is more than 100% due to multiple responses.

Q. Do you have any concerns driving or walking/cycling across the Traffic Bridge in its current condition?



Note: Chart total is more than 100% due to multiple responses.

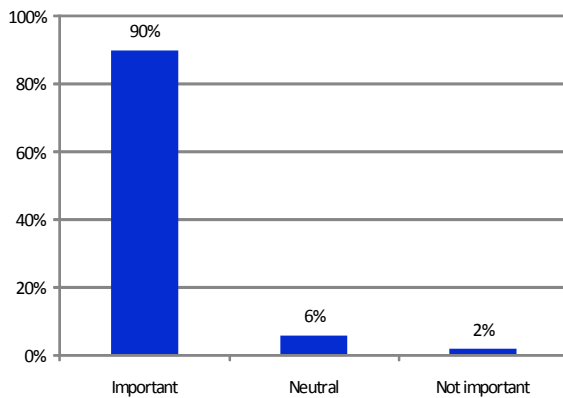
Importance

Q. How important is it that...?

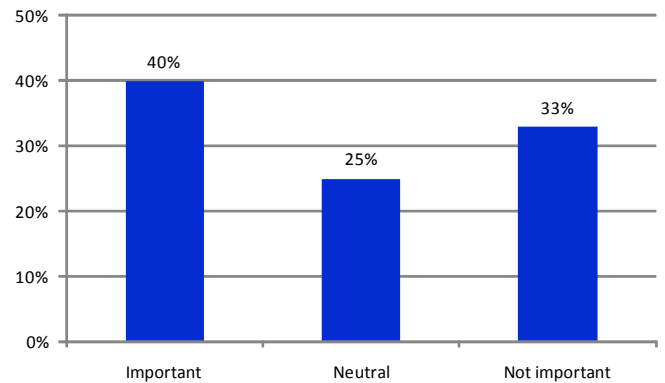
- Motorists continue to use the Traffic Bridge;
- The Traffic Bridge serves as a linkage for pedestrians and cyclists to River Landing and the riverbank walkway systems; and
- Transit is able to use the Traffic Bridge.

The charts below illustrate the overall responses from both the online and open-house surveys combined (N=548).

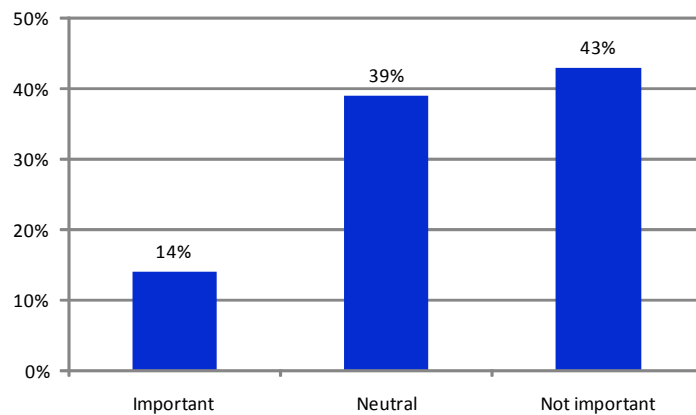
Pedestrian and Cyclist Linkage to River Landing and Walkways



Motorists Continue to Use the Traffic Bridge

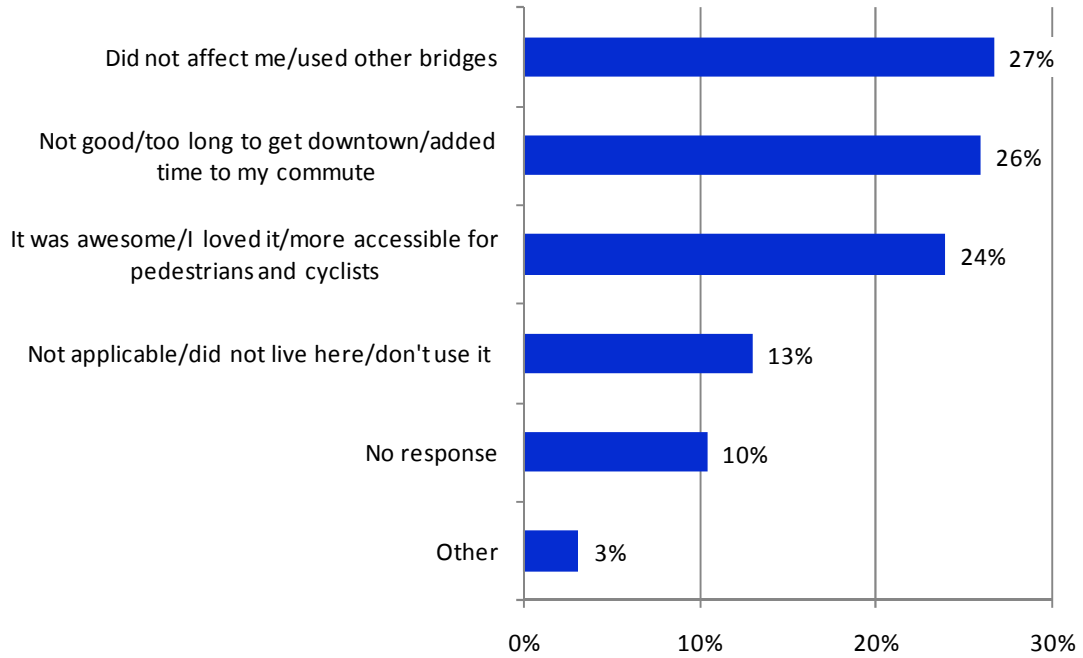


Transit Usage



Impact of Closure

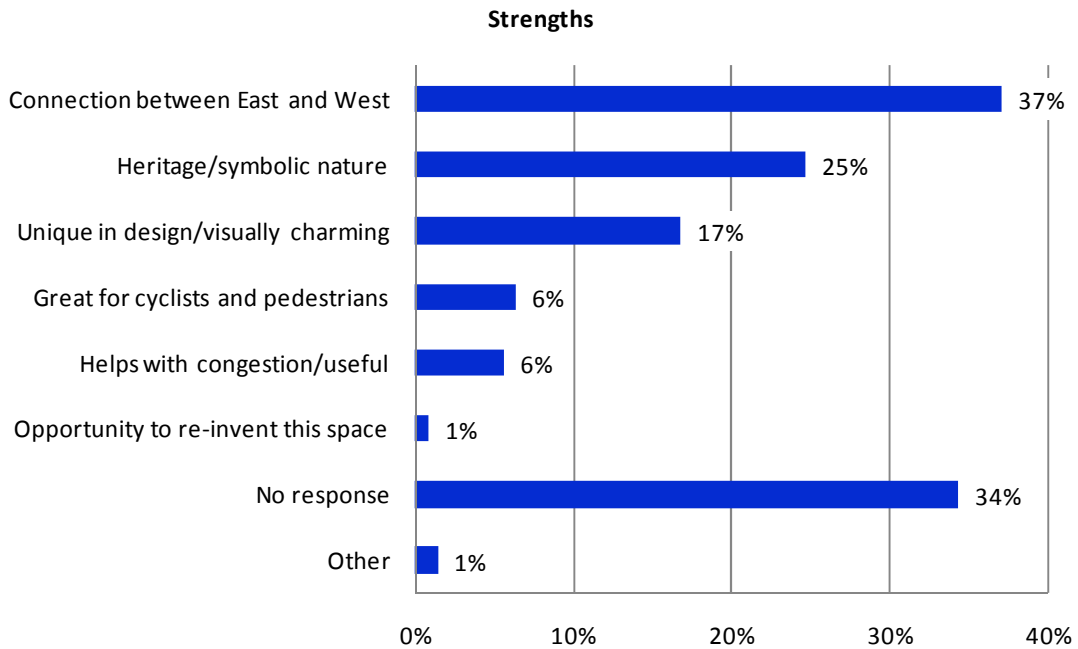
Q. The Traffic Bridge was closed to motor vehicles for approximately one year in 2005/2006 but remained open for pedestrians and cyclists. How did this closure affect you?



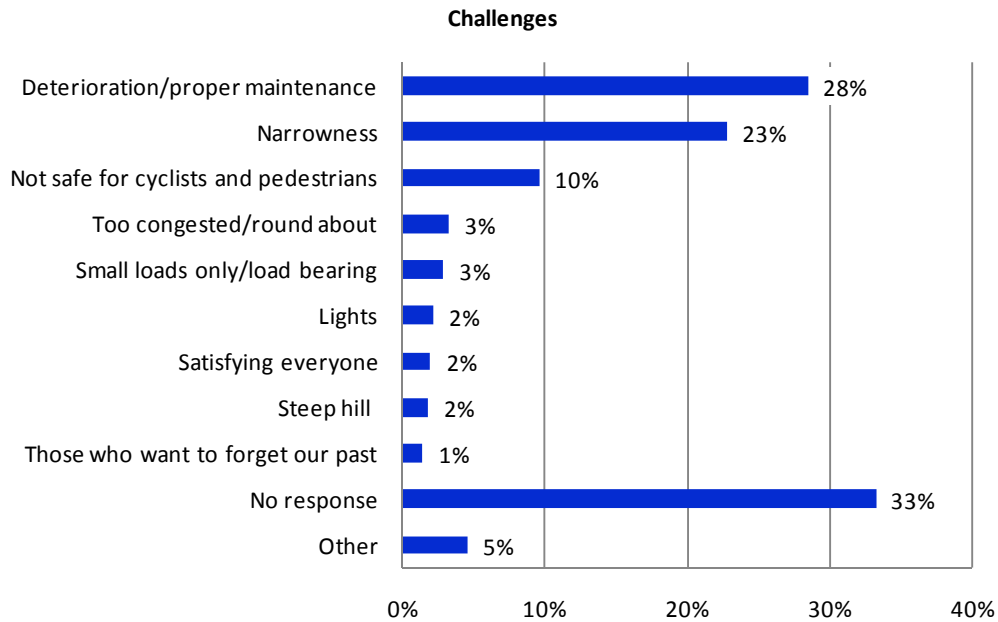
Note: Chart total is more than 100% due to multiple responses.

Strengths and Challenges

Q. What are the strengths and challenges of the existing Traffic Bridge?



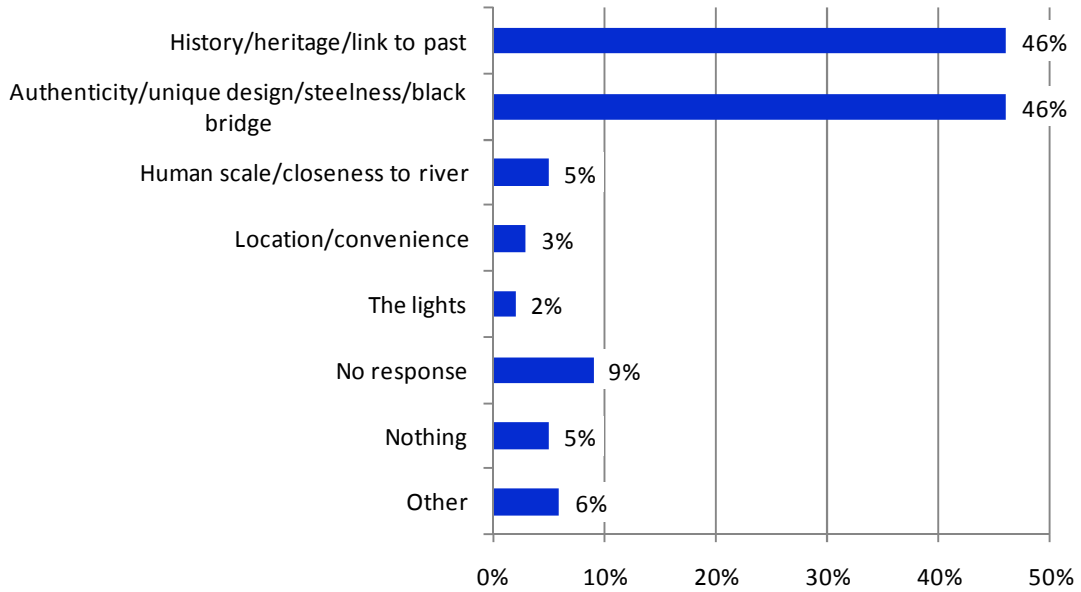
Note: Chart total is more than 100% due to multiple responses.



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Value Most

Q. What do you value most in the Heritage, design, and structural aspects of the existing Traffic Bridge?

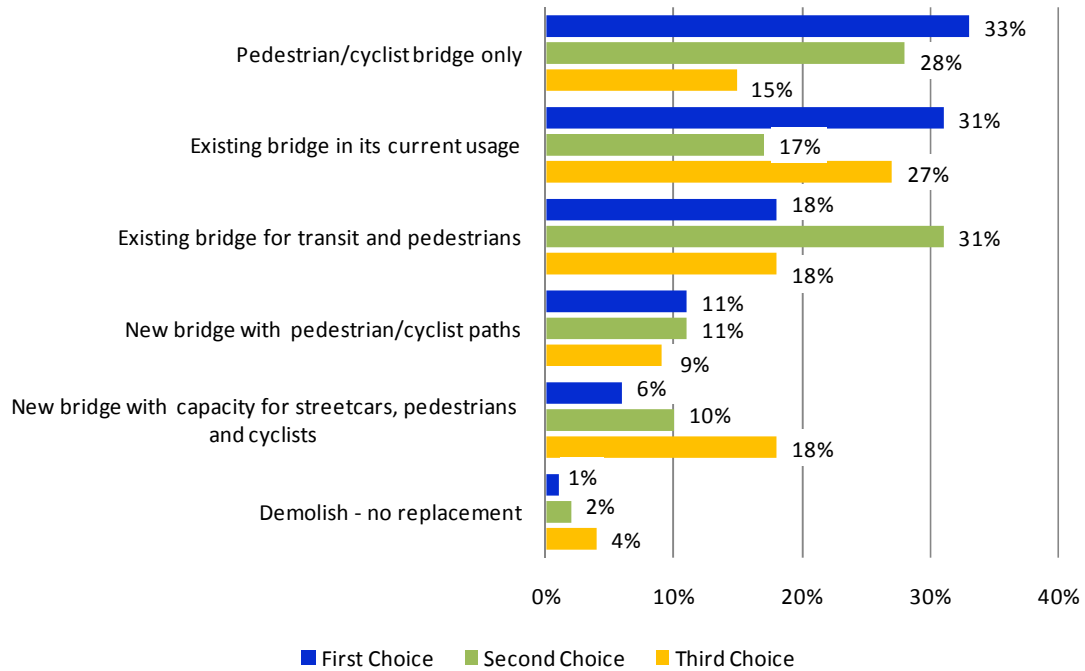


Note: Chart total is more than 100% due to multiple responses.

Vision and Goals

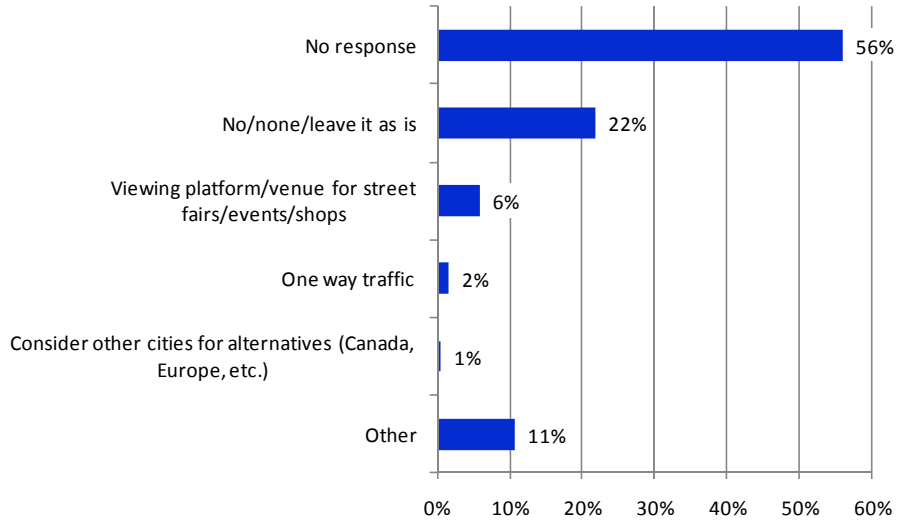
Q. Of the different Traffic Bridge options to be investigated, please indicate your 1st, 2nd and 3rd choices. Mark any that you consider unacceptable with an “x”?

The charts below illustrate the overall responses from both the online and open- house surveys combined (N=548).



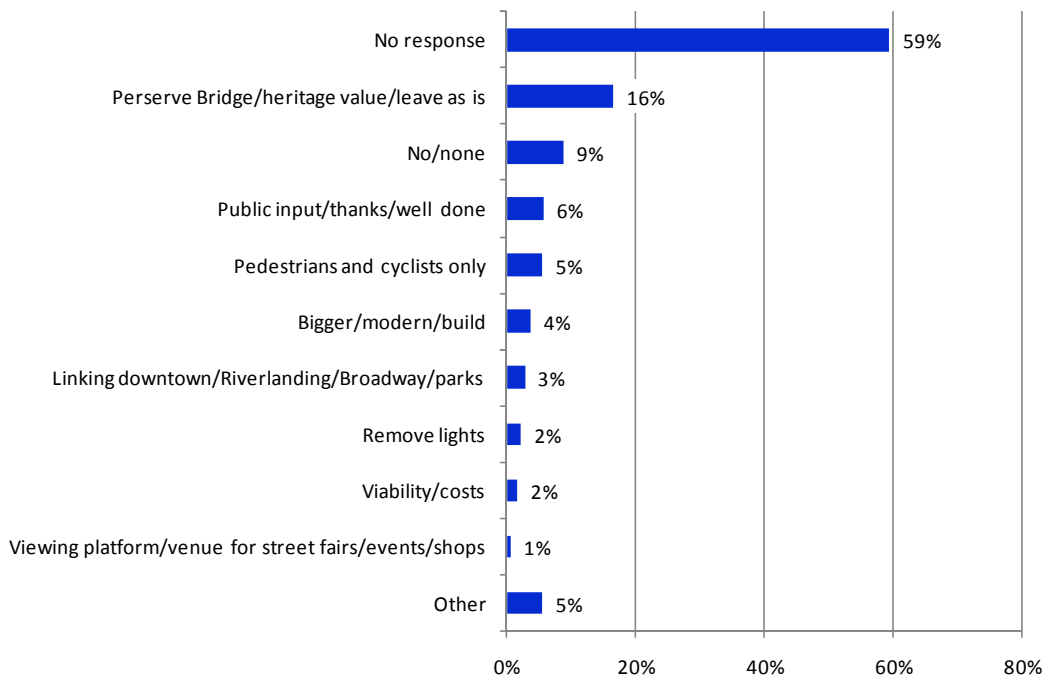
Conclusion

Q. Do you have any other alternatives for the Traffic Bridge you would like the City to consider?



Note: Chart total is more than 100% due to multiple responses.

Q. Given that the Bridge will require work within the next 20 years, we will be developing concepts and options based on the structural and traffic assessment, and the public input received at the Open Houses. Please describe what's important to you to help guide this process?



Note: Chart total is more than 100% due to multiple responses.