

Frequently Asked Questions

Iona Projects – Engagement on Proposed Barge Berth Locations

Updated May 15, 2024

1. Why is Metro Vancouver considering a barge berth?

Construction of the new Iona Island Wastewater Treatment Plant will require a significant amount of sand and construction materials. The project site is currently only accessible via one two-lane road that is also used by major industries, businesses, and nearly 370,000 annual recreational users to Iona Beach Regional Park. The project needs to consider alternate transportation methods to bring materials to the site to improve transportation efficiency and safety for road users on Sea Island and throughout the region.

The project team identified using barges and surrounding waterways to transport materials as a safe and efficient means of transporting materials. In order to facilitate barge transportation, a new barge berth is required because adequate facilities do not exist on Iona Island.

Using barge transportation opens up additional access to the project site and significantly reduces truck traffic destined for the project and as a result, the amount of trucks required through the region. Use of barge transportation will reduce truck traffic destined for the project by approximately 500 dump trucks per day.

Not only does barge transportation improve transportation efficiencies and traffic volumes through the region, it also has a considerable reduction in greenhouse gas emissions for the transportation of materials to the project site.

2. Can the work be completed without barges?

The site location is currently only accessible by one two-way road. As one of the largest projects in the Lower Mainland, project construction requires a significant volume of materials. The road leading to Iona Island is an essential artery for major transportation hubs including the airport, cargo and logistics businesses, local businesses, and recreational access to Iona Island. Given the access constraints and high volume of users who rely on Ferguson Road, identifying alternate transportation options was essential for transportation efficiencies, and the safety of other road users.

Barge transportation is a safe and efficient transportation option that significantly reduces the amount of truck transportation required for the site, prioritizes the safety of all road users, improves transportation efficiency, reduces emissions, and reduces transportation costs.

While truck transportation will still be required for some equipment and deliveries, the project is able to significantly reduce truck transportation requirements if barge transportation can be accessed.

3. Has the location of the barge been decided?

No, the barge berth location has not been finalized. Metro Vancouver is evaluating three potential locations for the barge berth that were determined by an initial assessment. Only one site will be used. The initial assessment identified the following locations based on selection criteria and historical information:

- Site 1: Two kilometers west of the project site at the mouth of the North Arm of the Fraser River
- Site 2: 300 meters east of the project site, across from Deering Island, where a barge berth was used for the construction of the existing Iona Island Wastewater Treatment Plant
- Site 3: Close to the construction site of the new plant, located on the south side of Iona Island in McDonald Slough

Metro Vancouver will review the studies being completed by a third-party consultant and community feedback received to select one location to progress design and construct a barge berth. Selection criteria include xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) interests, community and stakeholder impacts, ecological impacts, functionality, cost, and schedule.

4. How is the community being involved in determining the location of the barge berth?

Metro Vancouver began engagement with the community last September and has continued to receive and consider input over the past nine months. We have been reviewing considerations provided to us through this engagement to make an informed decision on the location for the barge berth.

We welcome community feedback throughout the Iona Projects and are hosting this engagement to provide information specific to the location of the barge berth and provide additional opportunities for community feedback.

In addition to considering input from the community, location selection will consider xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) interests, local businesses, road users, and the environment. Metro Vancouver will need to select an option that balances these interests and regulatory requirements.

5. Have impacted indigenous communities been notified?

Metro Vancouver engages with 14 First Nations about the Iona Projects, and is working closely with xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) whose primary reserve lands are across the Fraser River from the treatment plant.

Updates about the projects including the barge berth have been communicated to the First Nations communities. Priorities identified by xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) that will be considered in selecting the barge berth location include:

- Supporting fish and fish habitat
- Designing ecosystems that support traditional harvesting
- Allowing xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) access for traditional resource use, cultural practices, and knowledge transfer

6. What mitigation measures will Metro Vancouver introduce to reduce noise, air quality, and light impacts and ensure the health of residents is not impacted?

Metro Vancouver is evaluating three potential locations and will select one location for the barge berth. More information about mitigation will be available once a location is selected.

As part of the site selection process, studies are taking place that consider public health, safety, and potential construction impacts. The results of these studies will be made available once complete and will be used to inform the barge berth location, design, and mitigation measures.

It is Metro Vancouver's responsibility to adhere to Transport Canada regulatory standards to ensure safe use of the navigation channel and to ensure safety for employees and nearby residents.

In addition, we will ensure that construction standards for noise, dust, and air quality with the City of Richmond are met. Operational needs and mitigation measures will be confirmed following design and we will provide updates to the community.

7. What is the difference between a barge berth and a barge terminal?

The main difference between a barge berth and a barge terminal is their size and usage. Berths are smaller and used specifically as a docking point to load and unload materials. Terminals are larger and more complex facilities that include storage of materials and cargo, often include multiple berths, connections to road and rail infrastructure, and offices.

The proposed barge berth for the Iona Projects construction will be used to load and unload materials for construction. The design will consist of a dock and in-river piles to securely anchor the barges and a conveyor system to move materials between the barge and the shore.

8. Is there any new information at this engagement session about the barge berth?

The format of this session is the same as previous sessions. As site selection studies and engagement with other interested groups continue, minor updates to the project materials have been made, such as updated renderings, information about options to transport materials from Site 1 to the project site, and refined advantages and constraints/risks for each proposed site.

Contact Us:

Metro Vancouver Information Centre:

We have a dedicated team to answer your questions, listen to concerns, and share feedback with the project team for consideration in project planning.

Phone: 604-432-6200 (Monday to Friday from 8:00 am - 4:30 pm)

Email: ionawwtp@metrovancover.org

Website: metrovancover.org/iona