

B.C. on the Move: Engagement Meeting Notes

NOVEMBER 13, 2014

10:00

NEW AIYANSH

ATTENDEES/AFFILIATION	Cynthia Gonu, Nisga'a Village of Gitlaxt'aamiks (Formerly known as Nisga'a Village of New Aiyansh) Rueben Gonu, Nisga'a Village of Gitlaxt'aamiks Garrett Davis, Nisga'a Village of Gitlaxt'aamiks Sherry Wright, Nisga'a Village of Gitlaxt'aamiks Keith Clayton, Nisga'a Village of Gitlaxt'aamiks Claude Morven, Nisga'a Village of Gitlaxt'aamiks Brian Tait, Nisga'a Village of Gitlaxt'aamiks Eva Clayton, Nisga'a Village of Gitlaxt'aamiks Keith Tait, Nisga'a Village of Gitlaxt'aamiks/Nisga'a Lisims Government Anthony Moore, Nisga'a Lisims Government Harry Nyce, Nisga'a Village of Gitwinksihlkw Andrew Robinson; Nisga'a Village of Laxgalts'ap
MOTI REPRESENTATIVES	Scott Maxwell, Acting Regional Director, Northern Region, Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MoTI) Randy Penner, Acting District Manager, Transportation, Skeena District Office, MoTI
NOTE TAKER	Selina Bull, Kirk & Co. Consulting Ltd.
KEY THEMES (3-6)	
1) Highways and side roads: Participants agreed that safety on Highway 113 and roads in the area in the area was a prime concern for their communities.	
2) Bridges: All participants agreed that the single-lane bridges should be made into double-lane bridges, especially with the expected increase in wide/heavy-load traffic from upcoming pipeline construction.	
3) Highways and side roads: All participants indicated concerns with the condition of the Cranberry Connector, and expressed a need for better, year-round maintenance to increase accessibility.	
4) Highways: Participants agreed that the highway maintenance class of Highway 113 (the Nisga'a Highway) should be increased from its present Class C to Class B or A.	
5) Investment in communities: Participants all expressed concern that the government's investment in their communities was not equal to the resources that have been extracted from the area. They expressed frustration at this unequal distribution of resources.	
CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants agreed that a major challenge for their region is that the Ministry's investment seems to be centered mainly in the south of the province. However, they noted that the province reaps most of its benefits from the north, and that this activity has taken its toll on the region's infrastructure. The Nisga'a Village of Gitlaxt'aamiks noted that the Nass Valley is like the "Serengeti of the North." The participant indicated that the Ministry should also consider it thus and should start taking the major concerns of the Nass Valley seriously. Nisga'a Lisims Government noted that it seems as though the only time that the government seems concerned with infrastructural issues in the Nass Valley is when they are highlighted by tragic occurrences in the papers. A participant from the Nisga'a Village of Gitwinksihlkw noted that it was a good and timely opportunity to address the major infrastructural issues of the area in advance of the imminent and major resource development projects. A participant from the Nisga'a Village of Gitlaxt'aamiks noted that there had been some concerns with the construction of the Northwest Transmission Line in terms of construction workers and contractors driving unsafely, and noted that there were not enough RCMP to enforce traffic laws. The participant indicated that similar concerns might be a challenge for upcoming resource development construction. 	
MOVING FORWARD – STRATEGIES	
1) Moving People and Goods Safely and Reliably	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A participant from the Nisga'a Village of Laxgalts'ap noted some safety concerns in terms of maintenance and capacity in the area. The participant noted problems with maintenance (grading) of unpaved roads in the area, especially the Cranberry Connector Road. As a first responder, he also noted a safety concern that, because the roads are uneven, the ambulance often has to travel throughout most of the area at a reduced speed (50-70 km/h) so that the patient does not get jarred. He noted one spot that was particularly bad on the road to Gngolx, where the road drops and there are water erosion problems. (Other participants agreed with the concern of water erosion, sometimes from collapsed culverts, on the roads in the area.) He indicated that there is heavy trucking traffic going into Kitsault now, but there has been no investment made into this road. This participant also noted that safety concerns with bridges were not limited to bridge decking but also included capacity. He indicated that all the single-lane bridges in the area should have been replaced by double-lane bridges by now. Other participants strongly agreed that single-lane bridges are a major safety concern in the area. A participant he Nisga'a Village of Gitlaxt'aamiks noted a concern with the highway maintenance standard Class of Highway 113. As a Class C highway, the participant noted that it is a low priority for maintenance. This is a concern for business development and for the transport of dangerous goods. She also urged the Ministry to consider better maintenance or upgrades for the Cranberry Connector, since it is the major alternate route to Highway 16. She indicated that weather 	

	<p>events that are likely to close the highway are probably going to increase, and that this should be a consideration when looking at the Cranberry Connector. Others agreed that this route was critical to the movement of people and goods (especially food) to and from their communities in the event of a disaster that closes Highway 16.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A participant from the Nisga'a Village of Gitlaxt'aamiks stressed that highway safety was their number one concern, and cannot be put second to economic development. The participant indicated that capacity (width) was a key concern for highway safety in the area, especially with the bridges, corners, and hills. • The Nisga'a Village of Gitlaxt'aamiks expressed concern with timely maintenance. There was one issue in which trees were causing a driver visibility problem. The village had to take that on for itself, although the trees were on MoTI right-of-way. • A participant from the Nisga'a Village of Gitlaxt'aamiks noted a safety concern with potholes on the highway, especially for visitors. He wondered why that kind of issue could not be dealt with more quickly because it causes danger especially to tourists who do not know the road well. He also indicated a concern with the enforcement of commercial vehicle safety in the area. For example, there is no weigh scale and no patrol monitoring what appear to be overloaded trucks. • The Nisga'a Village of Gitwinksihlkw noted that the current steady flow of traffic requires the Ministry to improve safety in the area. • The Nisga'a Village of Gitlaxt'aamiks expressed a safety concern with the timeliness of maintenance of the roads in the area, particularly Highway 113. The Nisga'a Village of Gitlaxt'aamiks also noted a concern with the road to Gingolx, that there is little space to manoeuvre and no guard rails between the road and the river. This participant indicated a safety issue with the fact that maintenance crews do not use pilot vehicles ahead or behind plows, graders etc. in order to warn traffic what is on the road ahead. • The Nisga'a Village of Gitlaxt'aamiks expressed a safety concern with the growing truck loads coming through the area that have to cross small, single-lane bridges.
2)	<p>Growing the Economy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A participant from the Nisga'a Village of Gitlaxt'aamiks noted that it was vital for the Ministry to reconsider the classification of Highway 113 as the Nisga'a people work with the province to grow the economy, and that such a re-classification would constitute a major investment from the Ministry in the area. The participant wondered how the Cranberry Connector and the Nisga'a highway fit into the province's plan to grow the economy in northern BC. • A participant from Nisga'a Lisims Government noted that economic development is vital for this territory; however, he expressed concern that it should be taken into consideration above safety improvements. • The Nisga'a Village of Gitwinksihlkw expressed appreciation at being able to meet with the ministry in advance of the major resource development projects that the Nisga'a are involved in. • The Nisga'a Village of Gitlaxt'aamiks noted that the single-lane bridges and tight corners on Highway 113 pose a distinct challenge for economic development in the area, especially considering the large pipes that will have to be transported on large trucks for pipeline construction. • A participant from the Nisga'a Village of Gitlaxt'aamiks noted that the Nisga'a nation contributes strongly to growing BC's economy with the extraction of pressed minerals, and expects to contribute more in terms of timber and LNG projects. He urged the province to consider the related growth in traffic on Highway 113. The participant noted that the Nisga'a territory and nation welcomes development, and that the Nisga'a expect that some modest funds would be spent in the area to ensure safety in the Nass Valley so that everyone can benefit from the resources extracted there.
3)	<p>Connecting and Strengthening Communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Nisga'a Village of Laxgalts'ap noted that cycling in the north is very dangerous. The roads are not clear enough and there are safety issues arising from sharing the (sometimes narrow) road. • Participants indicated concerns with road maintenance in the area, especially as it contributes to difficulties accessing services – especially for school children getting to school. A participant from the Nisga'a Village of Gitlaxt'aamiks noted that, today, for example, participants from Gingolx were not able to travel to the meeting because of a tree blocking the road. This participant indicated that this year, the Nisga'a have a plan for improving education, but that will be useless if the children cannot get to school. • The Nisga'a Village of Gitwinksihlkw also noted that the Cranberry Connector was key for the connectivity of the entire region. When Highway 16 is closed, it puts Nisga'a communities in direct line of heavy traffic, so the Cranberry Connector has to be considered for upgrades. A participant from the Nisga'a Village of Gitlaxt'aamiks felt that the Cranberry Connector was key for his community's connectivity because when Highway 16 is closed, the Connector is the only way out for the Nisga'a.
4)	<p>Maximizing Collaboration and Investment with Partners and Stakeholders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A participant from the Nisga'a Village of Gitlaxt'aamiks noted that the Cranberry Connector has been "in limbo" for a long time and asked when the jurisdictional problem providing better maintenance of forest service roads (like the Cranberry Connector) would be solved. The participant noted that it cannot continue as it has done for years now, and that she looks forward to hearing about the Ministry's plan to resolve it.
	<p>TOP THREE PRIORITIES FOR TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants agreed that a top priority for infrastructure improvements was to increase capacity from single- to double-lane bridges in the area. • Participants agreed that better maintenance or upgrades to the Cranberry Connector was a prime concern for their communities. • Participants agreed that an upgrade of Highway 113's winter maintenance classification standard (currently Class C) was a

top priority to improve highway safety for their people.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS/DISCUSSION	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants noted a concern that their highway (Highway 113) was not on the map in the BC on the Move Discussion Guide Materials. They indicated that it seemed like the Ministry was forgetting their communities. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A participant from the Nisga'a Village of Gitlaxt'aamiks noted some concerns with the timeliness of maintenance and dealing with bureaucracy of MoTI. He urged the ministry to consider their safety issues seriously. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Another representative from the Nisga'a Village of Gitlaxt'aamiks echoed these concerns and indicated that it appears that the government only cares about safety in the area when there is a tragic accident. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A participant from the Nisga'a Village of Gitlaxt'aamiks indicated that his community has brought these safety issues to different ministers and representatives of government before. The participant noted that while there have been plenty of commitments to improve things, action is better. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A representative from the Nisga'a Village of Gitlaxt'aamiks expressed a concern with the provision of winter maintenance, and expressed an interest in taking on the maintenance contract. Scott Maxwell noted that in 2019-2020 the maintenance contracts will be re-tendered. MoTI representatives urged participants to work directly with contractors or with the District Staff to ensure that maintenance concerns are dealt with, and noted that they would carry forward concerns with maintenance that arose in the meeting. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Several participants felt that the lack of investment made into the road network in Nisga'a territory was unfair and makes it seem as though the government does not care about their communities. They noted that their contributions to BC's economic growth and to BC's tax revenues have certainly paid for upgrades to the area's road system, yet investments continue to flow disproportionately to the south of the province. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A participant from the Nisga'a Village of Gitwinksihlkw noted that there is no reason not to replace single-lane bridges and to bring the infrastructure to a modern standard in the region. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A participant from the Nisga'a Village of Gitwinksihlkw urged the Ministry to consider construction for resource development in light of some of the issues that presented during the construction of the northern transmission line. He noted that there were many accidents during this period. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A participant from the Nisga'a Village of Laxgalts'ap inquired whether the Ministry is involved in installing signage for tsunami evacuation routes. Randy Penner noted that it is not the purview of MoTI but that the Ministry supports this signage. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A participant from the Nisga'a Village of Gitlaxt'aamiks indicated that his community had been under the impression that the Ministry would replace one bridge per year until all were done; however, up till now, only one has been done. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A participant from the Nisga'a Lisims Government noted a concern with provincial traffic counts that occurred in the area. The participant indicated that it was not logical to count during mid-August when residents were not at home and when children were not in school. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A participant from the Nisga'a Lisims expressed concern with the conduct of the maintenance contractor. He noted that he had witnessed the contractor dropping treated wood from an old bridge deck into the creek below. He urged the Ministry to require environmental monitoring for such work in the Nass Valley. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Several participants expressed frustration that meetings of this kind have not produced results. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A representative from the Nisga'a Village of Gitlaxt'aamiks noted that the Nisga'a nation was a part of BC and of Canada. He indicated that as such, these communities and their concerns should be taken seriously. The Nisga'a contribute greatly to BC's economy but this contribution is going to bring increased traffic. The participant noted that the safety of his people is incredibly important and commitments to improve safety must be acted upon now. 	