

B.C. on the Move: Engagement Meeting Notes

NOVEMBER 13, 2014

3:30PM

NEW HAZELTON

ATTENDEES/AFFILIATION	Shirley Michell, Hagwilget Village Council Sheila Joseph, Hagwilget Village Council Bob Barnes, Kispiox Band Council Dianne Shanoss, Gitanmaax Band Council Theresa Jack, Gitanmaax Band Council Keith Morgan, Gitwangak Band Council
MOTI REPRESENTATIVES	Scott Maxwell, Acting Regional Director, Northern Region, Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MoTI) Carl Lutz, District Manager, Transportation, Bulkley-Stikine District, MoTI
NOTE TAKER	Selina Bull, Kirk & Co. Consulting Ltd.
KEY THEMES (3-6)	
1)	Transit: Participants agreed that transit and connecting communities in the area was concern for their people. Participants noted that transit access to either Terrace or Smithers was critical for residents' work, medical, educational, or personal purposes.
2)	Highways and side roads: Participants expressed interest in the local delivery of the road maintenance contract.
3)	Highways and side roads: Participants agreed that maintenance, especially dealing with erosion spots and damage from trucking was a concern for their communities.
4)	Highways and side roads: Participants expressed an interest in restoring alternate access to their communities by re-opening the Hazelton-Kitwanga back road.
CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants noted that the BC Ferries Service cuts were a challenge to the success of the tourism sector in their area. Participants agreed that increased trucking traffic have challenged safety in their communities, especially for communities that are located alongside the highways. Participants felt that poor maintenance of erosion spots and of alternate access routes posed a challenge to their communities' connectivity. Participants indicated that a lack of transit options posed a challenge to residents' access to employment opportunities and other services.
MOVING FORWARD – STRATEGIES	
1)	Moving People and Goods Safely and Reliably
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants noted a concern that heavy trucking traffic in the region was causing damage (like rutting) to the roads, especially between Hazelton and Terrace. Gitanmaax Band Council expressed safety concerns about some erosion spots on roads in the area. Specifically, participants noted bad erosion on Highway 62 en route to the Kispiox Valley Road, and on the corner at Bridge Street. Gitanmaax Band Council indicated that Ministry should put in place a better long-term erosion control system with adequate funding. Gitwangak Band Council noted that Highway 37 in Kitwanga was in need of an overpass due to long trains that block the flow of traffic, and can even cut off emergency response services for a significant time period. A participant from Hagwilget Village Council indicated some safety concerns with the one-lane Hagwilget Bridge. Participants noted that bad visibility due to fog can lead to accidents, and requested the installation of traffic lights or better street lights on the bridge at either side to improve safety. Gitwangak Band Council indicated that the Ministry should be attempting to mitigate the adverse effects of increased heavy trucking traffic by widening "pinch-points" on Highway 16 and other roads in the region and working with communities to reduce speeds, improve signage, and/or to inform and educate truck drivers. The participant noted a specific dangerous intersection on Highway 16, east of Gitsegukla. A participant from Gitwangak Band Council noted a safety concern for communities on the edge of highways. Participants noted that truckers and other drivers unfamiliar with the area may not realize that they are driving through a community. Gitwangak Band Council indicated an issue with speed, unsafe driving, and pedestrian safety especially at Highway 37 and Bridge Street, and on Cedervale Road. This participant requested pedestrian crosswalks with lights at these locations. Gitwangak Band Council noted a concern with the difference in quality of winter maintenance between the different service delivery zones and maintenance contractors. This participant indicated that the Terrace side of Highway 16 was worse than the Smithers side. Kispiox and Gitanmaax Band Councils indicated a safety issue with unsafe driving (including tailgating) by truckers on Highway 16 between their communities and Smithers.
2)	Growing the Economy
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hagwilget Village Council noted that BC Ferries service cuts have caused tourism in the area to suffer. One participant indicated that the communities in the region depend heavily on tourism from the Port Hardy circle route on BC Ferries.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gitwangak Band Council noted that the Ministry has to build and upgrade infrastructure in to accommodate increased mining activity in the northwest, but that the Ministry should also be considering how to mitigate the impacts of such industrial activity on communities and their existing infrastructure.
3) Connecting and Strengthening Communities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants agreed that alternate access routes were key to their communities' connectivity. They noted that if Highway 16 should close, their communities would be stranded, and if erosion closes Highway 62, residents would be unable to access to critical medical services.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gitwangak Band Council indicated that longer and more frequent trains are causing disruption to Kitwanga's communities. This participant indicated that Gitwangak would like to work with CN and the Ministry to reduce noise disturbance from the train signals and to decrease levels of dust from the coal trains.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants agreed that they would like to see better transit options in the area. Some noted that the bus departure times do not work well for everyone (especially students). Others noted that bus service should include more communities in the area, and should provide service into Terrace so that residents can access job opportunities, as well as educational and medical services.
4) Maximizing Collaboration and Investment with Partners and Stakeholders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants expressed an interest in working with BC Transit and the Ministry to produce better transit solutions for their communities.
TOP THREE PRIORITIES FOR TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS
<u>Kispiox Band Council:</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kispiox Band Council prioritized rehabilitation of roads such as fixing rutting on Highway 16.
<u>Hagwilget Village Council:</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hagwilget Village Council prioritized visibility improvements on the Hagwilget Bridge such as better street lighting or traffic lights to increase safety there.
<u>Regional:</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gitwangak and Kispiox Band Councils indicated a priority to re-open the Hazelton-Kitwanga back road so that communities in that area could have an alternate access route.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gitwangak and Gitanmaax Band Councils prioritized finding a longer-term solution for the highway erosion problems in the area.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All participants noted a need for better transit services in the area, including more direct links to different communities and better-timed scheduled service.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All participants indicated a priority to improve highway safety, especially with an eye to the increased trucking traffic coming through their communities.
ADDITIONAL COMMENTS/DISCUSSION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A participant from Gitanmaax Band Council inquired whether the Ministry subjects its contractors to performance reviews.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A participant from Gitwangak Band Council inquired whether communities such as his own could be directly involved in local maintenance provision. The participant noted that the Band already has a subcontract with the maintenance contractor, but that it would be helpful to have a longer-term commitment from the Ministry in order to help gain financing for the equipment. The participant indicated that it would be beneficial to get a list of services and qualifications required by the Ministry so that the band could encourage students to move in the right direction for that job opportunity.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A participant from Gitwangak Band Council requested that the Ministry provide the Band with any studies or reports about the Bridge Street erosion and about the Hazelton-Kitwanga back road
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A participant from Gitwangak Band Council noted that occasionally the maintenance contractor's plows are out while there is no snow on the roads. Scott noted that the contractor is required to do patrols.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A participant from Kispiox Band Council noted that large trucks often spray smaller vehicles with ice and snow on the highway. This participant inquired whether the Ministry representatives knew of an easy solution for this problem, like installing guards.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A participant from Kispiox Band Council expressed frustration that there had been numerous studies done on the Hazelton-Kitwanga back road, but that nothing had come of it.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A participant from Gitanmaax Band Council expressed frustration at previous poor winter maintenance on the western portion of Highway 16 due to cutbacks on the part of the contractor.