

B.C. on the Move: Engagement Meeting Notes

OCTOBER 23, 2014

9:30AM

FORT ST. JOHN

ATTENDEES/AFFILIATION	Councillor Larry Vezina, Chetwynd Councillor Don McPherson, District of Tumbler Ridge Doug Beale, Operations Manager, District of Tumbler Ridge Mayor Bill Plowright, Village of Pouce Coupe Councillor Colleen Evans, Village of Pouce Coupe Councillor Andre Lavoie, Village of Pouce Coupe
MOTI REPRESENTATIVES	Scott Maxwell, Acting Regional Director, Northern Region, Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MoTI) Kyle Drummond, Regional Manager of Project Delivery, Northern Region, MoTI
NOTE TAKER	Selina Bull, Kirk & Co. Consulting Ltd.
KEY THEMES (3-6)	
1) Highways: Participants agreed that there was a need to pave or hard-surface the 40km unpaved section of Highway 52 East.	
2) Highways and side roads: Participants agreed that the rehabilitation of existing infrastructure is generally preferred over four-laning or other capital projects for the region.	
3) Highways: Participants noted that there was a need for safe passing lanes in certain sections (especially on Highway 29 near Moberly Hill).	
4) Side roads: Participants agreed that Murray River Forest Service Road to Kinuseo Falls is in poor condition, and needs either hard-surfacing or more frequent grading.	
5) Engagement with Ministry: Participants expressed a strong interest in the establishment of a regional advisory committee for transportation issues.	
CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants felt that the Peace region is growing fast, and will grow even more quickly if LNG development goes ahead. Even without this development the population could double in a short time. Participants felt that a key challenge for this region is maintaining the existing inventory of roads, especially unpaved roads/sections of highways. With the increased heavy trucking traffic in the area these gravel roads need to be graded more frequently. A representative from Pouce Coupe noted that her village would like to see some development of transit services as there are more seniors and people without cars living there. However, she noted that such provision of transit had been attempted previously and had a problem of low ridership. Participants felt that a challenge for growth in their region was the perception that residents of Southern BC do not appreciate or know enough about resource development and the transportation needs in the northeast. 	
Moving Forward – Strategies	
1) Moving People and Goods Safely and Reliably	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants from both Tumbler Ridge and Pouce Coupe noted that there is a 40 km section of Highway 52 East that is not paved and it needs attention, whether paving or hard-surfacing. This would allow much greater use both commercially and in terms of tourism, and would bring more people into all these areas. Participants noted that given Highway 52's current state, drivers often prefer to drive the Hourglass Road East of Tumbler Ridge, a longer detour on an all-gravel road. Participants agreed that the rail crossing in Pine Pass is on an S-curve and causes a lot of accidents and fatalities; further, there is limited space to maneuver if there is an accident, which causes other safety problems. Some participants noted that the deck of Taylor Bridge is in bad condition and is slippery and unsafe. 	
2) Growing the Economy	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A representative from Tumbler Ridge noted that there is a need to address the poor state of Murray River FSR to Kinuseo Falls. He noted that Kinuseo Falls is important to BC's tourism sector, so the road deserves to be adequately maintained, and that satisfactory maintenance of the road would boost tourism in the area. There is a need to ensure commercial vehicles do not destroy roads or make driving conditions unsafe for other vehicles 	
3) Connecting and Strengthening Communities	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A representative from the Village of Pouce Coupe expressed a concern with the timeline for four-laning the highway to Alberta because there would be four-lane highways funnelling into two-lanes as one drives into Pouce Coupe. The representative from Chetwynd noted that from a safety perspective, the four-lane highway should go right up to Dawson Creek. A representative from Pouce Coupe noted that there is a need for transit services, in order to keep seniors and those without access to cars connected with the rest of the area. 	
4) Maximizing Collaboration and Investment with Partners and Stakeholders	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There was general consensus that the creation of a regional advisory committee for transportation would benefit the entire region, since most of these issues don't just affect the community but the whole region. 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A representative from Tumbler Ridge expressed interest in working with the Province and the federal government to pave or hard-surface Murray River FSR to Kinuseo Falls.
TOP THREE PRIORITIES FOR TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS
<u>Tumbler Ridge:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A participant from Tumbler Ridge noted that he would prioritize opening up a road to McBride.
<u>Chetwynd:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The representative from Chetwynd noted that a priority is a rail overpass in the town, as longer trains block all the intersections in the town at the same time meaning that an emergency services vehicle cannot get through.
<u>Pouce Coupe</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Mayor of Pouce Coupe noted that four-laning the highway between Fort St John and Alberta (Highways 2, 97) is a concern because if it were to come through town it would destroy the village. Pouce Coupe has requested that it and the surrounding areas be involved in the routing decisions for the highway. The Mayor of Pouce Coupe noted that the existing highway that goes right through the village (Highway 2) needs upgrades because of the damage done by traffic with heavy loads. A representative from Pouce Coupe noted that a priority is transit services.
<u>Regional:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants agreed that paving or hard surfacing for unpaved sections of Highway 52 was a priority for the region. Participants noted that if Highway 52 East were paved, it would be more heavily utilized. Participants agreed that the grading of gravel side-roads or sections of highway with appropriate frequency was a priority for their region. Participants agreed that a priority for the region is the Pine Pass on Highway 97 (near Powder King). They noted the need to increase safety at the rail crossing at the S-curve in Pine Pass. Most participants noted a need for new passing lanes in sections of Highway 29 and others Participants noted that Murray River FSR to Kinuseo Falls needs upgrading, either through hard-surfacing or more frequent grading.
ADDITIONAL COMMENTS/DISCUSSION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A participant pointed out that legislation has helped a great deal with safety (e.g. commercial vehicle safety). Participants noted issues with clearing of snow on the highways: highways are cleared but snow banks are pushed onto the municipal roads creating safety hazards for municipal snow plows, which are not supposed to go onto the highway, but they have to clear it to provide access to the highway. A participant from Chetwynd noted that some railway crossings are unsafe, especially with longer trains blocking intersections. The Mayor of Pouce Coupe noted that the unpaved section of Highway 97 north of Fort Nelson is rutted and in bad condition. A participant from Tumbler Ridge expressed a concern at what would happen in the region with LNG moving forward, as Tumbler Ridge is not within the main zone for LNG development. The mayor of Pouce Coupe asked whether the Ministry would consider seal coating some of the unpaved roads. A participant from Tumbler Ridge noted that the walking/cycling trail along the highway by Tumbler Ridge has seen a proposal for lighting. Scott Maxwell noted that this application for lighting has been approved. Participants from Pouce Coupe noted that there are some issues with the placement and malfunctioning of speed reader boards in their village (signs are not always illuminated). The Mayor of Pouce Coupe noted that his Council is considering pedestrian crosswalk signs to slow down traffic coming through the village, because sometimes the sign is not illuminated at night to warn traffic. A participant from Chetwynd noted that there is a need for passing lanes on Highway 29 near Moberly Hill, as there is a 3 km stretch without any passing lane. The representative from Chetwynd noted that the pedestrian light near the KFC does not allow enough time for a truck to pass through the intersection. A representative from Tumbler Ridge expressed an interest in speed reader signs for his area. The Mayor of Pouce Coupe asked about the railroad tracks that are unused through the village of Pouce Coupe. Pouce Coupe would like to acquire this property for a residential expansion of the village. The Mayor of Pouce Coupe noted that highway safety has improved in part because trucking and transportation companies have bettered their practices and equipment. A representative from Tumbler Ridge noted that if there is a slide or a problem with the road in the area, it does not get properly fixed. Participants expressed a concern with the turn at Taylor Hill, and noted that many vehicles spin off the road there. Participants expressed some frustration with CVSE in terms of inappropriate or unsafe locations for pulling trucks over. One participant also noted that he was frustrated with the highways. Participants from Pouce Coupe noted that the maintenance contractor did not adequately plough the highway through the village and that they often left snow banks blocking every exit.

- All participants agreed that there would be a benefit for local governments in the region to meet again to discuss transportation issues. Scott Maxwell suggested that the Northeastern BC Coalition could be a great venue for that.