

B.C. on the Move: Engagement Meeting Notes

OCTOBER 29, 2014

8:30AM

INVERMERE

ATTENDEES/AFFILIATION	Mark Read, Village of Radium Hot Springs and Jumbo Glacier Resort Municipality Mayor Gerry Taft, District of Invermere CAO Chris Prosser, District of Invermere
MOTI REPRESENTATIVES	Norm Parkes, Executive Director of Highways, Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MoTI) Jack Bennetto, District Manager, Transportation, Rocky Mountain District (MoTI)
NOTE TAKER	Carmen Bennett, Kirk & Co. Ltd.
KEY THEMES (3-6)	
1)	Highways: Participants expressed that Highways 93 and 95 are important to the communities of Invermere and Radium Springs, and infrastructure improvements are necessary in order to safely accommodate high volumes of tourist and truck traffic. This is particularly an issue when closures affect reliability of the Trans-Canada Highway, redirecting traffic through the communities on Highways 93 and 95.
2)	Cycling and pedestrian/Transit: Participants noted that connecting communities with cycling infrastructure and expanded transportation options (including transit between communities and to mountain resorts) is important for commuting and tourism.
3)	Highways: Participants discussed the impact that highway closures due to avalanches have on communities, travelers and residents.
4)	Highways: Participants noted that wildlife collisions are increasing on the highway, which is a safety and environmental concern.
CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highway closures due to avalanches impact communities, travelers and residents. Participants noted that they would like to see efficiency improvements to clearing avalanches and minimizing the length of closures. Increased traffic volumes on Highways 93 and 95 continue to put pressure on Radium Hot Springs and Invermere, especially when the Trans-Canada Highway is closed due to avalanches or accidents. Transit connection between communities is inefficient and infrequent. Incidents involving wildlife on highways are becoming more frequent.
MOVING FORWARD – STRATEGIES	
1)	Moving People and Goods Safely and Reliably <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Streamlining avalanche closures is important for increased reliability of highways. Improvements and investment in rail transportation through this region would maximize movement of goods (including quantity and type of cargo being moved). Rail is an efficient form of transportation that could be maximized. Participants noted that Highways 93 and 95 are an extremely important transportation corridor, as this is the alternate route from Golden when the Trans-Canada Highway is closed through Field or Kicking Horse Canyon. Closures related to avalanches and crashes mean traffic is routed directly through Radium Hot Springs. Radium Hot Springs noted there are technical deficiencies with respect to the primary Highway 95/93 intersection in Radium, which cannot handle volumes of truck traffic and does not allow large trucks to maneuver properly. Large volumes of traffic in summer tourist season are also an issue. The Athalmer intersection of Highway 93 and 95 is in need of upgrades, as traffic volumes have increased. The Mayor of Invermere noted that this is the gateway to the community and questioned whether there is an opportunity to partner with the Ministry on aesthetic upgrades. The Mayor noted that speed is a concern at the intersection, as drivers do not abide by the posted speed limits. The Mayor questioned whether a left-turn signal could be incorporated at the intersection to address turning volumes. Participants noted that accidents on Highway 95 at the corner of Edgewater are common with truck drivers who are unfamiliar with that corner. Participants noted that there is a lack of cell service on Highway 93 through Kootenay Park (Federal), which can cause problems, especially if there are closures or accidents. The Mayor of Invermere expressed that there are issues with limited rail crossings (particularly to Lake Windermere). He also noted that passenger rail used to stop overnight in Invermere, which would be a great addition from an economic perspective.
2)	Growing the Economy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maximizing the capacity for tourism is important for economic development in these communities, as is providing access to the mountain resorts (Panorama and Jumbo Glacier).
3)	Connecting and Strengthening Communities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants agreed that Highway 93/95 is important and needs to be resurfaced on an as-needed basis. Participants noted that the majority of traffic into the region is from Alberta. The connection to Cranbrook is important for

health services, but there is a strong connection to Calgary as well.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants noted there is a Paratransit system in partnership with BC Transit, but this is a one-bus system in the Columbia Valley (Edgewater to Canal Flats), which poses scheduling and efficiency challenges. A second bus would make a significant difference to the system. Two buses would allow for one to service loops within the communities, while the other stays on the highway. A second bus would also provide better service to seniors. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants noted that the bus comes from Golden each day, though it is not available for passengers going to and from Golden and there is no back-up bus. Participants would like the bus to be located in the communities that it is servicing. Participants noted that the taxi service in town consists of one minivan, and suggested that a second bus could be smaller in size to service ridership within these communities. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants noted that Health Connections is also operated out of Golden and is a well-used service. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invermere would like to see an increase in cycling infrastructure for commuting and tourism. The Mayor noted that a network of level, railway-grade trails adjacent to major roads is an ideal way to connect communities. He noted this would likely consist of improvements to the shoulder on the existing right of way, as well as paths that can veer off the road where possible. Existing connections between Radium and Invermere could provide opportunities for cycling loops. The Mayor questioned whether cycling infrastructure grants could be considered, as pathways are important. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Mayor suggested that strengthening alternate modes of transportation between Invermere and Panorama would strengthen economic development of the resort. A shuttle is currently subsidized by the communities, which transports approximately 15,000 riders per year during the winter months. 	
4) Maximizing Collaboration and Investment with Partners and Stakeholders	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants noted that an opportunity to partner with the Province on paving projects would be desirable, as a joint tender could help with competitive pricing in the paving community. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invermere noted that it would like the Ministry to take over responsibility for a section of provincial highway (Athlmer Road) that the community inherited from government in the 1990s. Athlmer leads to Panorama, and eventually to Jumbo Glacier Resort. Invermere would like to see upgrades to this roadway, noting safety concerns. 	
TOP THREE PRIORITIES FOR TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS	
Radium Hot Springs and Jumbo Glacier Resort:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CAO Mark Read noted that Highways 95 and 93 are an important transportation corridor and improvements are required, particularly at the intersection of 93 and 95 in Radium Hot Springs. A plan for upgrades to the intersection is being discussed to accommodate heavy volumes of traffic and large trucks, but Radium would like this moved up on the priority list. The CAO expressed concern that if there are closures to the Trans-Canada Highway during infrastructure improvements, 100% of traffic will be routed through Radium. In Radium, the commercial sector is divided by the highway and traffic frequently exceeds speed limits through town, so the community would like to see improvements to safe pedestrian crossings. The community would like to reevaluate this priority with Ministry to create a 5-year plan for safe crossings. The CAO expressed that wildlife is a concern, particularly big horn sheep, and noted that the use of salt for de-icing attracts sheep to the road, causing accidents and herd fatalities. He suggested the use of different de-icing material so as not to attract wildlife. The CAO noted there is problem for trucks that are not equipped to deal with extreme grades coming down the hill into Radium, putting further pressure on the intersection. 	
Invermere:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invermere would like to see an increase in cycling infrastructure for commuting and tourism. The Mayor suggested that strengthening alternate modes of transportation between Invermere and Panorama would strengthen economic development of the resort. The intersection of Highway 93 and 95 at Athlmer is in need of upgrades to accommodate traffic volumes. The Mayor would like to discuss an opportunity to partner with the ministry on aesthetic upgrades. The Mayor noted that speed is a concern at the intersection, as drivers do not abide by the posted speed limits. The Mayor questioned whether a left-turn signal could be incorporated at the intersection to address turning volumes. Invermere would like the Ministry to take over responsibility for a section of provincial highway (Athlmer Road) that the community inherited from government in the 1990s. This road is in need of improvements to facilitate access to mountain resorts. 	
Regional:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants agreed that Highway 93 and 95 cannot be overlooked as a critical transportation corridor, and it is important to make sure it gets resurfaced on an as-needed basis. Participants noted that an opportunity to partner with the Province on paving projects would be desirable, as a joint tender could help with competitive pricing in the paving in the community. Participants noted that community transit is a one-bus system in the Columbia Valley (Edgewater to Canal Flats), which poses scheduling and efficiency challenges. A second, smaller bus would make a significant difference to the system. 	
ADDITIONAL COMMENTS/DISCUSSION	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Mayor of Invermere noted that the airport there is a "private" airport, so does not receive government funding. Also, Fairmont Hot Springs Airport is run by the resort and does not receive government funding. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants expressed concern that they are not eligible for infrastructure grants under the Build Canada Fund, due to considerations and restrictions related to the size of communities. 	

