

# B.C. on the Move: Engagement Meeting Notes

OCTOBER 29, 2014

1:30PM

MASSET

<b>ATTENDEES/AFFILIATION</b>	CAO Trevor Jarvis, Village of Masset Councillor Jason Thompson, Village of Masset Councillor Bret Johnston, Village of Masset Deputy Mayor Barry Pages, Village of Masset CAO Kim Mushynsky, Village of Port Clements
<b>MOTI REPRESENTATIVES</b>	Scott Maxwell, Acting Regional Manager Northern Region, Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MoTI) Randy Penner, District Manager, Transportation, Skeena District, MoTI
<b>NOTE TAKER</b>	Selina Bull, Kirk & Co. Consulting Ltd.
<b>KEY THEMES (3-6)</b>	
<p>1) <b>Ferries:</b> Participants felt strongly that communities in Haida Gwaii have suffered from the fare increases and service cutbacks on BC Ferries. The limited transportation options and high prices are having adverse effects on residents' access to medical, educational, and social services. Participants see the Ferries as a marine highway, and a vital life-line for economic prospects both on and off the islands.</p> <p>2) <b>Ferries:</b> Participants noted that the Ferry reservation system is inefficient, and agreed that the poor system has cost their communities lost tourism revenue. The Mayor of the Village of Masset noted that a capital investment in the reservation system will help BC Ferries' bottom line by ensuring that ferries run at capacity.</p> <p>3) <b>Travel Assistance Program (TAP):</b> Participants expressed that the Travel Assistance Program (TAP) for claiming discounts on airfare is frustrating and inefficient. Participants also found the TAP system for ferries frustrating because the minimum time investment for travelling by ferry to the mainland to access services is over three days. With cuts to ferry sailings, the TAP coverage for ferries is becoming less useful to residents who need access to medical services, so the TAP for airline services needs to be more efficient and affordable.</p> <p>4) <b>Engagement process:</b> Participants expressed concern that this process of consultation will not truly address their issue and that they felt that the plan has already been written. The Mayor of Masset noted that the government did not listen to their communities' concerns during the last round of consultation for BC Ferries.</p> <p>5) <b>Shipping safety:</b> Participants noted that with the government's focus on resource development including LNG and the Enbridge Pipeline, there should be an attendant focus on ensuring vessel safety is at an adequate standard to protect the coast.</p>	
<b>CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Mayor of the Village of Masset noted a safety challenge at the Masset Airport with deer getting into the area and are not noticed until they cause an accident.</li> <li>The Mayor of the Village of Masset noted that the province is going to have the opportunity to re-stimulate the coastal economy when it renegotiates the Coastal Ferries contract with BC Ferries. He also noted that an investment in BC Ferries is an investment in the economy, in the marine highway, and in coastal communities.</li> <li>Participants agreed that there was an opportunity to increase the efficiency of BC Ferries operations by addressing the poor reservations system.</li> <li>There was a general consensus that the greatest challenge for coastal communities going forward is the fare increases and service cuts to BC Ferries, which has created a "bottle neck" on the islands' economic prosperity, and gravely reduced residents' access to vital medical, dental, social, and educational services on the Mainland.</li> <li>The Mayor of the Village of Masset felt that promises that were made in the BC Coastal Ferries Act have not been fulfilled. In a coastal province, affordable ferry service is as necessary as public transit and roads are to the rest of the province.</li> </ul>	
<b>MOVING FORWARD – STRATEGIES</b>	
<p>1) Moving People and Goods Safely and Reliably</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Village of Masset noted that the Sangan and Chown bridge decks are often slick and therefore unsafe.</li> <li>The Mayor of the Village of Masset reported safety issues with deer on Masset airport property and suggested that council would like some support in its efforts to clear the area.</li> <li>The Village of Masset noted that, in order to balance its focus on the development of natural resource sectors like oil and gas, the province should be investing in shipping safety standards.</li> <li>Participants noted that with growing interest in cycling and walking as transportation options, investment in shoulder safety will be an issue.</li> <li>One of the key concerns for all participants about the reliability of transportation came from the Ferries reservation system. Participants all felt that tourists and locals could rely more on the Ferries if the system were more effective.</li> <li>Participants also felt that ferry service is not adequate or reliable for residents who need to access healthcare, and that it is frustrating to have to plan a trip for 5 or more days just to attend an appointment or something of that sort.</li> </ul>	
<p>2) Growing the Economy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participants felt that tourism, especially sports fishing, is an important part of the local economy, but that the BC Ferries cuts have adversely affected this sector's performance. The Mayor of the Village of Masset noted that in 2015 the province will have an opportunity to re-invigorate the islands' economy by reinvesting in BC Ferries.</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Village of Masset noted that while the Haida Gwaii has abundant and attractive job and education opportunities, the lack of transportation choices and the expense is deterring people from moving there.</li> <li>The Village of Masset noted that with the province's support for LNG and other resource initiatives, it is irresponsible not to invest more in vessel safety, and cited the recent incident when the Russian vessel Simushir was adrift off Haida Gwaii. The Village of Port Clements likewise noted that the province should invest in infrastructure to deal with shipping emergencies.</li> <li>Participants noted that Haida Gwaii is a key economic driver for the province, with its natural resources, and as such deserves support in its transportation concerns. They also noted that islanders are not well connected to the resource activity in northeastern BC and Alberta, and may therefore miss out on the economic benefits from this industry.</li> <li>The Village of Port Clements questioned the idea of developing a ten year plan when the province is on the verge of a natural resource explosion: it will be difficult to forecast what will happen in four years, let alone ten.</li> </ul>
3) Connecting and Strengthening Communities	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Village of Port Clements noted that the goal of "connecting communities" in BC with one another and with the rest of Canada cannot be achieved without investment in BC Ferries.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Village of Port Clements noted that the Discussion Guide mentions that sea plane services provide essential connectivity between coastal communities. However, it also pointed out that the sea plane services from the Haida Gwaii to Prince Rupert are more expensive than those that run to Vancouver, and is thus not a service that residents generally use.</li> </ul>
4) Maximizing Collaboration and Investment with Partners and Stakeholders	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Village of Masset felt that gaining grants from the federal government or the province for programs like Build Canada or Bike BC was too much of a "one-size-fits-all" approach, as the applications can be very demanding for small communities like the Village of Masset.</li> </ul>
<b>TOP THREE PRIORITIES FOR TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS</b>	
<u>Village of Masset:</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participants from Masset noted that they would like to see unsafe and conditions of three bridges resolved: the Sangan, which is a single lane, the Cundiss, which has a slippery wooden surface, and the Chown, which is curved and gets slippery. However, one participant noted that these are not top priority like investment in Ferries.</li> </ul>
<u>All/Regional:</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participants felt that by far, their communities' top priority for transportation improvements involve a re-investment in the BC Ferries, their marine highway. This would include fare reductions to equal the rate of increase of cost of living, more frequent sailings, and investment in a more effective reservations system.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participants noted a priority to invest further in air travel. This would include improvements made to the area surrounding Masset Airport to keep deer out, the provision of better and cheaper service, and also a more effective Travel Assistance Program (TAP) for airlines.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participants felt that it would be critical to invest in shipping safety standards, especially since the province is pursuing resource development initiatives.</li> </ul>
<b>ADDITIONAL COMMENTS/DISCUSSION</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Village of Masset noted that the survey for <i>BC on the Move</i> needs to be easier to send in. He noted that without providing a self-addressed and stamped envelope, it seems as though the government does not really want public feedback.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Mayor of Masset thanked the Ministry for the work that had been done adding shoulders to the roads between Masset and the airport. He acknowledged that this investment has improved cycling and pedestrian safety along the roadway.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participants from Masset noted that maintenance and public works projects on the island were causing capacity issues on the ferries throughout the summer, and further dissuading tourists from coming to the Haida Gwaii, and causing frustration for locals.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participants noted that the BC Ferries reservation system is made even more inefficient and frustrating by the fact that passengers can reserve for a trailer and can then cancel just an hour before the sailing. This issue is causing further losses in the tourism sector when tourists are not guaranteed passage.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Mayor of Masset acknowledged the work that has been done by the ministry to develop an earthquake evacuation zone. He noted that it was difficult to evacuate the town with only one lane by the evacuation zone, and people walking along the edge of the road. Randy Penner responded that he looks forward to working with the island communities to keep developing their evacuation plans and to improve Causeway Bridge.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Village of Masset noted that it would be good to build an evacuation zone closer to the village because, in the case of a tsunami, there may be less than 15 minutes to evacuate. He also noted that the propane bulk plant and gravel cliffs could cause safety concerns during an earthquake.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Village of Masset asked whether any speed limits on island roads had been considered in the Ministry's speed review. Randy Penner noted that it had not been reviewed recently because of the high number of wildlife accidents.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Village of Masset inquired about upgrades on Highway 16 between Prince Rupert and Terrace. Randy Penner responded that there are some projects on the horizon for that stretch of the highway, including trial avalanche fencing at Mile 35 and the potential construction of an overpass for a dangerous rail crossing at Mile 29.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Village of Masset noted that a hill called "The Conglomerate Hill" near St. Mary's Springs and Davis road was unsafe with rocks falling down onto the highway.</li> </ul>