

B.C. on the Move: Engagement Meeting Notes

NOVEMBER 5, 2014

9:30AM

SMITHERS

ATTENDEES/AFFILIATION	Councillor John McDivitt, Village of Telkwa Councillor Rimas Zitkauskas, Village of Telkwa Councillor Charlie Northrup, Town of Smithers Councillor Frank Wray, Town of Smithers Councillor Mark Bandstra, Town of Smithers Mayor Bill Holmberg, District of Houston
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 and Co. Consulting Ltd
KEY THEMES (3-6)	
1)	Highways and side roads: Participants agreed that transportation planning and investments should focus on the rehabilitation of existing roads in the area, instead of focusing mainly on capital projects.
2)	Airports: Participants noted a major concern with the terminal capacity of the Smithers airport in terms of current passenger levels. A terminal expansion would open up opportunities for more competition, which would advantageously impact prices.
3)	Highways and side roads: Participants noted a need for more rest areas and pull-outs.
4)	Highways and side roads: There was a general concern with increased heavy hauling in the region and especially on Highway 16.
5)	Rail: Participants indicated a concern with the safety risks with the transportation of hazardous materials by rail.
6)	Highways: Participants noted that with the Highway 16 corridor getting busier, there are concerns with higher traffic volumes and speed and safety.
CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Village of Telkwa noted that the designation of Highway 16 as part of the Asia-Pacific Gateway may have had some unconsidered negative effects. The participant indicated a need to think through the traffic and safety challenges, along with the financial implications of these, when making decisions like this. A representative from Smithers noted that a major challenge for this region is the capacity of the airport terminal. The Smithers airport is the hub of growth, with the fly-in fly-out strategy for economic development, but the airport capacity is not adequate for the expected construction process for LNG facilities, for example. The Town of Smithers also noted that the lack of airport capacity created more pressure on the highway network.
MOVING FORWARD – STRATEGIES	
1)	Moving People and Goods Safely and Reliably
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A participant from Smithers noted that there is a safety concern with the rutted state of Highway 16 through Smithers. The Village of Telkwa indicated that traffic volumes are increasing, but also that the weight of the loads are increasing. A participant from Smithers noted a concern that the truck inspection pull-out between Smithers and Telkwa is not open anymore. The Town of Smithers indicated that this could cause safety concerns if the trucks are not being inspected, and that some truck drivers are not following traffic laws. The Ministry Representative noted that if traffic violations are taking place, the CVSE officers have the power to write tickets, and asked people to contact his office if there were specific concerns. The Town of Smithers indicated that for safety on Highway 16 through Smithers, it would be good to have left-turn lanes at the Golf Course and at the Lake Kathlyn subdivision. The Mayor of Houston noted that Burns Lake should be a high priority to get a bypass. The Town of Smithers noted a concern with emergency response times for areas that are not the major centres in the region. A participant from Smithers indicated a concern with the length of trains, and noted that the longer trains can cut people off from emergency response. A participant from Smithers noted an issue with the safety of the pedestrian trail crossing of Highway 16. The participant indicated that drivers do not see pedestrians coming out onto the road and this can cause accidents. The Village of Telkwa noted that while the physical infrastructure and rehabilitation of this is important to highway safety, there are other things that add to safety, like lighting. Specifically, there was a concern that the highway between Smithers and Telkwa is not lit.
2)	Growing the Economy
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Town of Smithers noted that transportation planning for the north really needs to take port expansion, LNG, and other resource development into account. There needs to be a holistic look at the entire Highway 16 corridor.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Village of Telkwa noted that the northwest region depends on the transport system for economic growth and its ability to attract more residents, who support local businesses. An investment in the region's transport system is an investment in economic prosperity and sustainability.
3) Connecting and Strengthening Communities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Town of Smithers indicated that it would be beneficial to have a walking path between Smithers and Telkwa.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Town of Smithers noted that BC Ferries was important to the region and its communities, as it provides an important network with the highways.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Town of Smithers indicated that the Ministry should set aside more funds for the districts to be able to work locally with communities.
4) Maximizing Collaboration and Investment with Partners and Stakeholders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A participant from Telkwa expressed some frustration that taxpayers are paying for the upgrades and maintenance to roads that are primarily used and damaged by industry. The participant indicated that the permit process might be an avenue through which industry could be leveraged to help pay for road use.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Town of Smithers indicated an interest in partnering with the Ministry for specific projects like the development of pedestrian facilities.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A participant from Smithers noted that there was an opportunity for the Ministry to work with the federal government and CN to ensure train safety.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A participant from Smithers indicated that there should be communication between the Northern Development Initiative Trust, MoTI, and the communities in order to combine funding to perhaps be able to do larger projects.
TOP THREE PRIORITIES FOR TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS
<u>Town of Smithers:</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Town of Smithers indicated that passing lanes and pull-outs should be prioritized for Highway 16 in the region. One participant noted that passing lanes near Burns Lake would be good to add.
<u>Regional:</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants agreed that the maintenance and rehabilitation of existing infrastructure (over capital projects) was a top priority for their region.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants agreed that the airport needs a terminal expansion.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants agreed that trucking and industry were vital to the region and that the Ministry should anticipate increasing needs of industry and work to facilitate heavy-haul trucking.
ADDITIONAL COMMENTS/DISCUSSION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A representative from Telkwa noted that the Omineca Beetle Action Coalition (OBAC) had put together a regional transportation and infrastructure strategy and indicated that this strategy should be considered as input in the transportation plan.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A participant from Smithers indicated that there was a concern with trying to gain extra revenue through the truck permitting process because it would add to the cost of living in the Northwest.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A participant from Smithers inquired as to whether there was still a plan to twin the highway to Prince George.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Mayor of Houston inquired as to the budgetary split MoTI including how much it costs yearly to run the Ministry.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A participant from Smithers inquired as to the Ministry's capital budget.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A representative from Smithers expressed his appreciation for this meeting and noted that planning and communication are key in the development of a good strategy for action.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A participant from Smithers indicated that the highway beautification in Smithers is appreciated by residents, but that it is costing the town \$70 000 per year, while the Ministry only contributes \$10 000. This participant noted that these little things can frustrate communities and that this kind of beautification project should be included in the plan.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Mayor of Houston noted that MoTI probably has already picked out its key focusses for the plan and that if the goals of communities do not align with those, it might be difficult for the communities to gain much from this plan.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A participant from Telkwa noted that the local relationship with MoTI was important and that the Ministry needs to consider the growth of Telkwa, which is now occurring mainly at the Tower Subdivision, in its plans.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Mayor of Houston noted that the region generates a lot of revenue for the province and that the spending is unevenly spread. He indicated that the Northwest communities are very cognizant of that imbalance as the resource sectors pick up again, and that the region wants its fair share of government expenditure.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A participant from Smithers noted that the airport had been granted federal ACAP (Airports Capital Assistance Program) funds to buy new equipment but that they did not have the funds to properly store the new equipment.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A representative from Telkwa noted that MoTI's district budgets did not provide enough latitude, and indicated that it would be good for district budgets to have some unassigned funds to be used more flexibly for local issues that quickly pop up.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A participant from Smithers inquired whether the process was bringing forward any ideas that were new to the Ministry.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A participant from Telkwa noted a concern with the hazardous materials response of CN and the regulation of the transportation of hazardous materials by the Ministry of the Environment. This participant indicated that MoTI has a role to play and that there should be cross-ministry cooperation to deal with this issue and others like it.

- A participant from Telkwa indicated a concern with the Bulkley Bridge.