



Building the Road Ahead

**Reinforcing the link between a modern highway
infrastructure and a strong B.C. economy**

**The B.C. Road Builders and Heavy Construction Association
is the recognized advocate for a balanced, safe transportation
system and infrastructure development that sustains and
promotes provincial economic growth.**

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The case for a modern highway system in British Columbia

The B.C. Road Builders and Heavy Construction Association represents member companies that are involved daily in all aspects of road building, rehabilitation and maintenance. Our members specialize in grading, bridge building, blasting, asphalt manufacturing, paving, utility construction and bridge repair and maintenance.

As such, we have a mandate to communicate with the public and with governments about critical transportation issues and the negative impact of highway inefficiencies on the B.C. economy.

Capital investment in public infrastructure should be applied in a consistent and sustainable manner. This capital investment must be sufficient to replace our current public infrastructure and to meet the new demands placed upon it by a growing economy.

The fundamentals

A modern, well maintained and efficient national highways system is critical to the safety and economic well being of all British Columbians.

- Transportation facilities and highways infrastructure are essential components of a strong economy;
- High rates of highway-related accidents, fatalities and injuries are caused by present-day increased volumes of traffic on roads that were built decades ago, when traffic levels were lower;
- Traffic congestion and delays increase the cost of transporting goods and reduce our competitiveness in the marketplaces of the world;
- Regional prosperity relies heavily on the ability to be linked to the rest of the province for the efficient movement of goods and services.

“Once we understand the direct link between inefficiencies of delayed investment in our highways infrastructure and increased costs to taxpayers then the argument for action and investment becomes compelling.”

(B.C. Transportation Summit)



“One in three jobs is dependent on trade... and trade corridors in B.C.’s lower mainland are prone to excessive levels of traffic congestion. This gridlock has a negative impact on our economy and the environment.”

(B.C. Chamber of Commerce)

B.C.'s transportation needs

Infrastructure needs

The economic prosperity of British Columbia is dependent on an effective and efficient transportation system. Increased capacity for our roads, prompt rehabilitation and timely new construction will save the province billions annually.

B.C. is losing business opportunities because our highway systems are flawed:

- According to the provincial government, there has been a 14% increase in traffic in the Lower Mainland in the last five years, with no increase in infrastructure capacity. The Central Okanagan Valley has had a 7% increase in traffic in the last five years with no increase in capacity. There's a cost to the trucking industry and it is a factor in attracting new businesses to British Columbia as well;
- The poor condition of the Trans Canada Highway is driving container truck traffic south into the United States. Dedication of the \$750 million collected annually by the federal government in fuel taxes from British Columbians could be put toward the improvement of this major roadway;
- In Vancouver - Efficient access to and from our ports and border crossings is non-existent and the corridor between the downtown and the airport represents a business liability. Greater access to our ports and airports would increase B.C.'s competitiveness in the global marketplace and help the province's economy to start moving again;
- Growth in the Okanagan is driving the need to make improvements to Highway 97;



“A deteriorating road system, increasing population, more vehicles on the road and decreasing ridership on public transit are magnifying the already severe congestion in the region.”

(Greater Vancouver Gateway Council)



- Throughout rural British Columbia our service and side road access is in a state of decay and seriously affecting the economy of our resource-based communities. In the North Peace, 78% of the 3,185 km of roads are gravel or dirt – these roads are unable to support the type or volume of traffic they are seeing and major accidents are imminent;
- Tourism opportunities will never be maximized as long as our most Super Natural assets are hard to reach.

Safety needs

The condition of many B.C. roads is inadequate, increasing the risk of injury and death to British Columbians. Consider the following costs when roads are not kept in safe condition:

- According to ICBC, in the year 2000 in B.C. there were 42,603 traffic collisions reported. The number of people reported injured was 29,886 and on average a fatality occurred every 20 hours in 2000 as a result of traffic collisions;
- Between 1996 – 2001 there were 3,300 accidents on the Sea-to-Sky Highway with 34 fatalities;
- Over the past five years there have been over 700 accidents leading to 21 fatalities on the Trans-Canada Highway at Kicking Horse Canyon;
- Emergency response vehicles are delayed due to congestion and insufficient roads, which increases the number of deaths and severity of injury for individuals in traffic accidents;
- Driving on congested roads can lead to increased stress and tension, and in today's vernacular "road rage."

“Residents and visitors alike need safe, comfortable and affordable transportation systems to access the natural splendor of our province. It is one of the keys to developing a world class industry.”

(Tourism Association of BC)



“The cost of driving accidents that are caused by BC's inadequate road and highway system are felt by every citizen in the province. Accident injuries tie up space, capital and time in already overcrowded hospitals, in addition to compromising the safety and lives of British Columbians.”

(B.C. Road Builders and Heavy Construction Association)

Policies for solutions—We need ACTION NOW

Good roads cost taxpayers less than bad ones

When our highway infrastructure is in good repair a number of benefits accrue: vehicle-operating costs, travel time and the frequency and severity of accidents are all reduced.

We must keep our highways in good repair. Consider these costs related to highway rehabilitation:

- Repaving of a 12 year old road costs \$65,000/km;
- At 20 years, repaving and rehabilitation cost is \$400,000/km;
- At 24 years, the complete rehabilitation is \$1 million/km;
- Average highway pavement age in B.C. is 15 years.

Our roads are deteriorating quickly...we need a plan now

As the graph indicates, our main highways are almost 30% deficient and our secondary roads are more than 70% deficient.

A plan for improving B.C.'s road infrastructure needs to accomplish the following:

- Sound economic benefits as a motivating principle;
- Greater public safety;
- Reduced congestion and environmental impacts caused by increased pollution from sitting traffic;
- Cost effective rehabilitation programs using life cycle cost/benefit analysis;
- Establish condition targets - 80% or better for primary and secondary roads and 65% or better for side roads.



An alarming number of skilled workers are leaving our industry

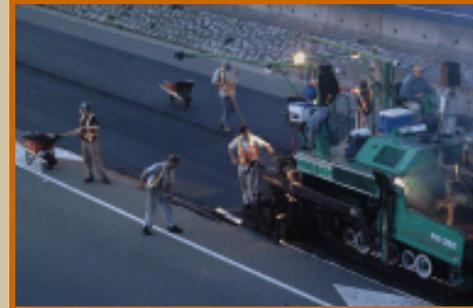
To sustain the industry and its workers, government must recognize the need to continue calling contracts in the interim while new, major projects are developed. Otherwise, this specialized workforce will continue seeking work in other provinces or being retrained in different fields.

- If our highly skilled workforce is lost, the costs associated with rebuilding it would continue for years;
- The construction industry has been proven to have the highest job spin-off multiplier. Every job in construction creates five or more jobs. Generating this type of work sooner rather than later, with leveraging five secondary jobs for each construction job, will mean the economy can be primed and be recovering this year rather than in one or two years from now;
- If a roads program were to begin immediately, displaced forestry workers could be used to start construction.

Financing

The provincial government estimates its 10-year capital needs for transportation will be \$10.3 billion. In order for these improvements to occur, the Road Builders Association believes **dedicated funding** should come from:

- Tolls;
- Sale of assets;
- Fuel taxes;
- Other road and transit user fees, licenses and registration fees;
- (Good, short term) Debt.



“Every spring as the frost comes out of the frozen North Peace ground, seasonal load restrictions are placed on 3,185 km of roads to protect them from damage. This annual event has a devastating effect on the regional economy, grinding all field activity to a halt for three months. When the oil and gas industry pulls out in the spring, they head to Alberta, slowing the regional economy and driving up seasonal unemployment.”

(North Peace Rural Roads Task Force)



Innovative Financing

The Association supports public-private partnerships and private sector investment, which are being developed as solutions for major projects. We recognize the need for innovative financing to fund the necessary improvements to B.C. roads.

These partnership solutions should:

- Support the province's long term infrastructure plan and not be seen as short term financing for government initiated projects;
- Always be subject to transparent tendering processes and structured in such a way that work opportunities are suited to the local highway construction industry.

Federal Funds

The Association is pleased with the recent federal government announcement of a \$2 billion infrastructure and highways program and the \$600 million border crossing improvement fund. Traditionally B.C. should qualify for in excess of \$300 million of this funding.

The Association urges the B.C. government to ensure that full matching funds are available in order that all federal funds eligible for highway improvements are accessed.

“Like power and other utilities, transportation is a part of the basic infrastructure of our society. Other sectors depend on transportation every day. Transport costs can make or break many businesses.”

(Greater Vancouver Gateway Council)



“The provision of an efficient and safe system of roads is an essential responsibility of all levels of government. Planning, construction, maintenance and administration should be based upon sound uniform economic, social and engineering criteria.”

(B.C. Automobile Association)

Part of a bigger team

B.C. Transportation Summit

The B.C. Road Builders and Heavy Construction Association is one of the founding members of the B.C. Transportation Summit. This group of stakeholders from across the province is working to gain support from the public and all levels of government to improve transportation infrastructure throughout the province. Government must be persuaded to acknowledge that before we can fund health and education to the levels the public is demanding, we must first rebuild our economy. To successfully start our economy, we need an efficient and competitive transportation system.

The B.C. Road Builders Association supports the following positions of the B.C. Transportation Summit:

- Dedicate all federal and provincial fuel taxes, fees and tolls;
- Reduce the federal fuel tax by \$0.05/litre to allow provincial governments to collect and dedicate the taxes to transportation infrastructure development and maintenance;
- Support P3s and the use of private investment using a combination of dedicated asset sales, fuel taxes and tolls;
- Make better use of existing infrastructure (i.e. dedicate HOV lanes to truck traffic in off-peak hours); make greater use of water, rail and northern routes;
- Reassess investment strategies of provincial government and transportation authorities to find a realistic balance between public transit and roads;
- All levels of government, as well as Crown Corporations, must work together, coordinating projects and transportation modes so that they interconnect efficiently; additionally, provincial governments and associations should work together to ensure federal government accountability;
- Decide and choose priorities based on a business case; each project should be a viable business proposition that serves the public interest.

