

Minutes
Veterans Memorial Highway Association
South Zone Meeting
held Friday, September 30th, 2016
Brooks Fire Hall
504 Cassils Road East
Brooks, Alberta

The meeting was called to order at 11:05 a.m. By Chairman Arnold Hanson.

In

Attendance: The list of people attending the meeting is attached and forms part of these minutes.

Introductions: All attendees introduced themselves and stated which jurisdiction they were representing.

Alberta

Transportation: Mr. Jerry Lau from Alberta Transportation was in attendance to update members on what has been taking place in the south region. The repairs to Highway 36 on the Chin Coulee are progressing very well. For the most part there is very little work planned for Highway 36 in the south region over the next three years. The highway is in fair condition. Ben Elfring asked about rest areas. Mr. Lau stated that P3 type rest areas were identified in the Province's long term strategy, however they were only placed on the single digit highways being 1, 2, 3 and 4. Ben Elfring stated that he would like to see the Department acknowledge the need for rest areas on two digit highways as well. The M.D. of Taber and the Town of Vauxhall have had discussions about a rest area along Highway 36 which would benefit the heavy wide loads coming up the highway. Mr. Lau asked Mr. Elfring to contact him for more discussions on this matter. Wayne Hammergren asked if there were any long range plans to put a passing lane through the Chin Coulee. Mr. Lau stated that there is no plan in the immediate future, but it may be considered when the bridge replacement is being done which is about ten years in the future.

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Jay Slempp stated that for heavy wide loads wanting to access Highway 36 from coming from Highway 41 and Medicine Hat you need to use Highway 1 which is not designated a high load corridor. Walter Valentini stated that the power lines along Highway 1 do not meet the 9 metre standards. Jay Slempp was also concerned that municipalities would be asked to fund high load corridors which when dealing with highways come under Provincial jurisdiction. The high load corridor study did not apply principles of fairness especially how the questions were asked. Bill Prentice felt that Highway 1 would need very little infrastructure changes except for the power lines to make it acceptable as a high load corridor. Norm Gerestein asked whether there is an overall highway budget which would show how much is spent on Highway 36. Mr. Lau did not have the numbers available, but will look into it for the association.

Michael Simpson questioned whether major intersections such as the one at Highway 36 and Highway 1 as a safety precaution suggested that warning lights be used to highlight to travellers that an important intersection is coming up. Mr. Lau stated that these type of safety devices have been tried and they learned that after time the effectiveness is lost. Ben Elfring asked how road counts are done. Mr. Lau stated they are in two ways. They are done by just counting vehicles while the other way of counting is done by number of axles. Counting is done mechanically while axle counts have to be done manually. Axle counts are done about every five years. All road counts are available on the Transportation Department website. Ben Elfring also asked about permit data being made available. Mr. Lau said we could contact Orland Rodriguez about the permits.

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Those in attendance were asked about the maintenance and repairs to Highway 36 and were there any issues or concerns which Mr. Lau should be aware of. All members in attendance were very happy with the service being provided by Volker Severn and they also are very good to work with.

Jane Stroud and Jay Slep stated that the work done by Carillion in areas north was not the best.

Chairman Hanson thanked Mr. Lau for attending the meeting. Mr. Lau then left the meeting.

South Zone

Issues:

Wayne Hammergren said that an overpass is still needed at the intersection of Highway 1 and Highway 36. Sometimes there are as many as 4 to 5 trucks on the intersection. There has been no further work on the intersection since the widening a number of years ago. The Emerson Bridge area still needs a turn off for the campsite.

Margaret Plumtree that a rest area is still a big necessity in the south area. Some long wide and heavy loads do not have pilot cars with them and backing up traffic creates worse case scenarios. She also asked that the Association meet with Mayors and Reeves and ask their support of our goals, objectives and project study as we continue to ask the Province to improve the highways.

Walter Valentini has talked to Shaun Hammond about the Transportation Study and the concerns which rural areas have with the study. It would advised to enlist the support of MLA's and work with the ADM's to put forward our agenda.

Ben Elfring said that road counts and not permits have to be used to support our efforts to show the amount of traffic using Highway 36 and 881 and the need for improvements and safety.

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Jay Slemple feels we need a better strategy to deal with the Department on our issues. When he has talked to Mr. Hammond we need to make our concerns front and centre in order to have Highways 36 and 881 acknowledged as major transportation routes.

Arnold Hanson feels that we need to show how the 36 and 881 Highways are important to the economy of the Province and have voice to put forward to MLA's, Mayors and Reeves.

Jay Slemple would like to see the message short and to the point.

Norm Gerestein asked if the Province is collection all those permit fees for running Highway 36 and 881 shouldn't the money be going to make necessary improvements to those highways.

Walter Valentini stated he felt that safety concerns are the most effective points to make the case to the Province in order to have improvements made.

Jane Stroud asked if there is a percentage of permit revenues going to municipalities. From any information gathered no revenues go to the municipalities.

Margaret Plumtree told the meeting that in her personal experiences while travelling there is no opportunity to pass or go by high wide loads unless they pull off and unfortunately there is no place for them to pull off except in cases of turning lanes and even then it is dangerous. It can make a short trip into a very long slow trip.

Norm Gerestein said that MLA's have to be invited to any meetings of the Association so they can learn and understand our concerns and issues.

Bill Prentice feels that an appropriate app for Travis would be a valuable tool to let motorists know about a high wide load move travelling 36 and 881 so they can plan their trip accordingly. Walter Valentini said it could also advise people of construction projects.

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EATC: Jay Slempp wanted to talk to the members about the Eastern Alberta Trade Corridor. The Corridor is made up of the three Regional Economic areas being Palliser Economic Partnership, Battle River Alliance for Economic Development and the NE HUB. The organization includes some 80 municipal jurisdictions. EATC is working on common interests for eastern Alberta to have the highway infrastructure needed to make it possible for area products to become value added commodities for economic growth for the area. Transportation is a very important component for this type of growth to our communities as well as the Province as a whole. He would like to see each zone of the Association pick one project from the study as a priority project for improvement. The 50 year transportation study shows a network of highways working like the spokes in a wheel. We need to focus our efforts to actually make our agricultural products value added in our own areas. The increase in pulse crops in our areas can be value added here instead of taking them elsewhere. EATC is looking to do a project together. We could pool our finances which then could receive matching provincial funding to do a better detailed study of how this could work. By working together to solve the issues will benefit all of us and stop the Province from ignoring our area.

Ben Elfring asked if the South Grow Region had been contacted about participating . Walter Valentini has some members of the South Grow region, but has not talked to the organization. Palliser has committed \$20,000.00 for the EATC project. The value is that teamwork can show ADM's that there is potential for investment, development and economic spin – off possible for eastern Alberta.

Jay Slempp said by combing our efforts, our message won't get lost. This effort and idea is not to expand, but to produce better quality Information to present to Government for their consideration.

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Arnold Hanson said the total project cost is estimated at \$60,000.00. Every community would get the message. The Association will discuss the request at the Board Meeting.

Adjournment: There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 1:12 p.m.

Chairman

Secretary - Treasurer