

Roads are Critical to Alberta's Quality of Life

The personal convenience, economic prosperity and social benefits enabled by roads is an essential foundation for a well-functioning and modern society. The Alberta transportation sector contributes \$11.2 billion annually to our economy and employs 130,000 people. Unfortunately, the management of roads as a public good funded through general revenues has left Alberta roads vulnerable to competing interests which has resulted in the deterioration of our roads and highways.

The Alberta Road Builders and Heavy Construction Association is committed to providing principled and compelling solutions to ensure Alberta's road infrastructure supports a vibrant economic climate and enhances the quality of life of Albertans.

Recommendations

The ARHCA convened a very accomplished and diverse group of advisors from the public and private sectors to form an expert advisory panel. The [Transportation Infrastructure Advisory Panel](#) worked with the ARHCA to assess road infrastructure challenges and identify policy recommendations to support long overdue improvements. The ARHCA is advocating the following recommendations for the Alberta government.

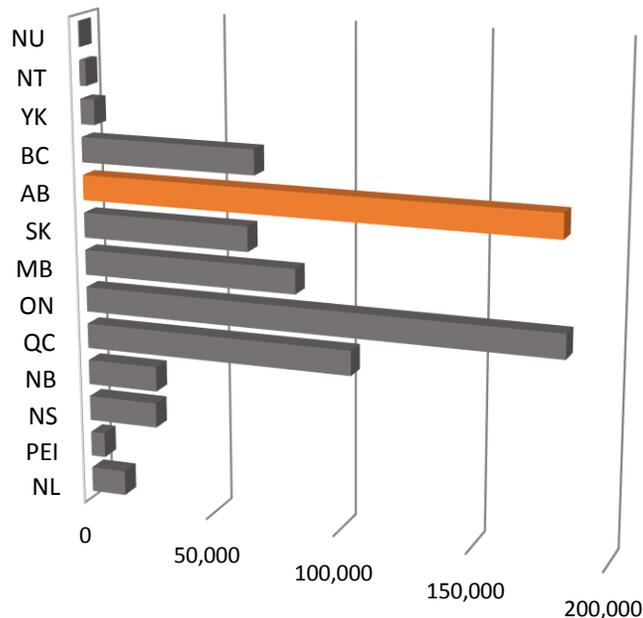
- 1.1 Commit to and share publicly a long-term vision and strategy for the sustainability and future of Alberta's road network.
- 1.2 Create a new and predictable funding model to manage and maintain Alberta's road infrastructure by matching funding to achieve commitments made by government in published 5-year rolling plans.
- 1.3 Commit to an integrated and multi-modal approach to transportation infrastructure policy and planning.
- 1.4 Create a policy and regulatory environment that incentivizes technological advances in the transportation sector.
- 1.5 Clearly define and empower entities to be accountable for their respective roles. Government should be responsible for setting strategic direction and policy, an independent agency should oversee planning and procurement, while the private sector is responsible for construction and delivery.

New roads, new tools, and new approach are needed

It is no coincidence that Alberta has, per capita, the highest share of the national road network as well as the highest share of GDP. Roads have been critical to unlocking so much of our economic potential, and every economic sector has benefitted from investments in transportation infrastructure.

Despite this fundamental importance to our lives and livelihoods, the investment of funds and focus from the provincial government has not been adequately sustained in the last decade. We must get away from the year-to-year politicized approach for determining which roads are built. The status quo approach for planning, building, maintaining, and funding our road network is no longer acceptable, it is inefficient and does not provide the best value for the taxpayer.

Public Roads by Province in Kilometers



Source: Canada's Core Public Infrastructure Survey: Roads, bridges and tunnels, 2016, Statistics Canada

Alberta needs a long-term comprehensive plan for our road network, with predictable multi-year funding that will enable government and industry to build and maintain it efficiently. This plan needs to begin with a vision for the economic and social goals we want to achieve, bring in all stakeholders and best practices from other jurisdictions in developing effective strategies, and then make a binding commitment to follow through.

Government leadership and planning are crucial, the transportation department has always done long-term planning, but the results can no longer be so conditional on political pressures and budgetary fluctuations. We need elected officials to set a strategic direction, determine the funding model, put an effective longer-term tendering process in place, and then let the department and private sector manage the execution strategy to deliver the best value to Albertans.

\$70 BILLION

is the replacement value of
Alberta's provincial highway
network.

**A VALUABLE ASSET
WORTH MAINTAINING**

The funding model needs to be truly predictable so that municipalities and the private sector can maximize the savings that arise from multi-year project scheduling. Departments within the provincial government must collaborate with each other, municipalities, and private sector partners to ensure our investments enhance the long-term resiliency of our network in the face of challenging economic uncertainty, natural disasters, or climate change.

The plan must be multi-modal; Alberta's air and rail infrastructure must be included. It must also renew Alberta's leadership in adopting emerging technologies. To some extent, Alberta is already a

leader in welcoming innovation like Artificial Intelligence (AI)-assisted driving. Our regulatory environment should position Alberta as the most desirable jurisdiction for developing transportation technologies.

Finally, we must be open to innovation and adopt the most effective means to build and maintain our road network. Alberta is a leader in cold weather materials engineering; innovation and experimentation must be encouraged without fear of reprisals. Alberta should be open to partnerships that encourage innovation and leverage the expertise of the private sector to construct projects safely and within scope and budget.