

Driving road safety through policy and practice

Every day millions of vehicles travel on Alberta roads and highways transporting people and goods. Ensuring the safety of Albertans using our road infrastructure is paramount to our quality of life, economic prosperity and personal well-being. Across Canada, provincial investments in roads as a percentage of budgets has decreased since 1980. It is no coincidence that these budgets have been reduced as spending on health care has soared from 18% of Alberta's budget in 1980 to almost 40% in 2019.

The Alberta Road Builders and Heavy Construction Association (ARHCA) 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.

- 2.1 Adopt an integrated approach to road safety through better road design and maintenance, improved driver behaviour and enforcement of traffic regulations.
- 2.2 Renew the Alberta Traffic Safety Plan in collaboration with industry partners and stakeholders.
- 2.3 Increase and sustain public education and communication on traffic safety to address driver behaviours, particularly in roadside emergency scenes, construction zones and where winter crews are working.
- 2.4 Explore the implementation of Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) technologies to improve safety and relieve congestion.
- 2.5 Enable the adoption of new technologies and materials to improve the safety, design, construction, condition monitoring, maintenance and lifecycle of Alberta's road infrastructure investments.

Road safety requires an investment

A recent report from Statistics Canada confirms that 43% percent of Alberta's highways are in fair or very poor condition. This means right now in our province there are more than 13,500 kilometers of roads requiring some rehabilitation or reconstruction.

How would you feel if a railcar transporting dangerous goods was travelling on a track of which 43% was in fair to poor condition? Or the pilot announced that 43% of the plane's wings and the fuselage was in fair to poor condition? You would be forgiven for feeling

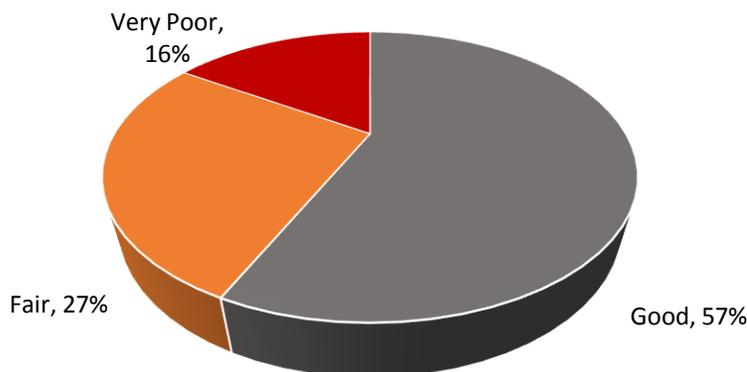
outrage and concern about your safety being placed at risk. So, if it's not acceptable for railroad tracks and planes why would you accept a similar risk with Alberta's roads?

The safety and reliability of our road infrastructure is a serious concern that requires a coordinated effort to alter the trajectory towards renewal, resilience, sustainability and innovation of our transportation system. The Government needs to refocus its efforts to road safety through better road design and maintenance, improved driver behaviour and enforcement of traffic regulations.

Predictable funding is required for road maintenance and upgrades to enhance and improve the safety and reliability of our road network. This might, for example, include routine maintenance, changes in road engineering and design, or the implementation of new technologies to improve traffic safety and relieve congestion. The difficulties of maintaining and enhancing a safe transportation system in future years will be compounded by a growing population, rapidly changing demographics, technology, and automation.

Investment in road infrastructure maintenance and improvement is just one part of the solution, we can't have safe roads without safe and competent drivers. Government also owns the responsibility of traffic safety from making and enforcing the traffic laws to licensing and educating drivers. When Alberta introduced its first Traffic Safety Plan in 2007 the number of collisions, deaths and injuries on Alberta's roads declined significantly.

Physical Condition of Alberta Highways



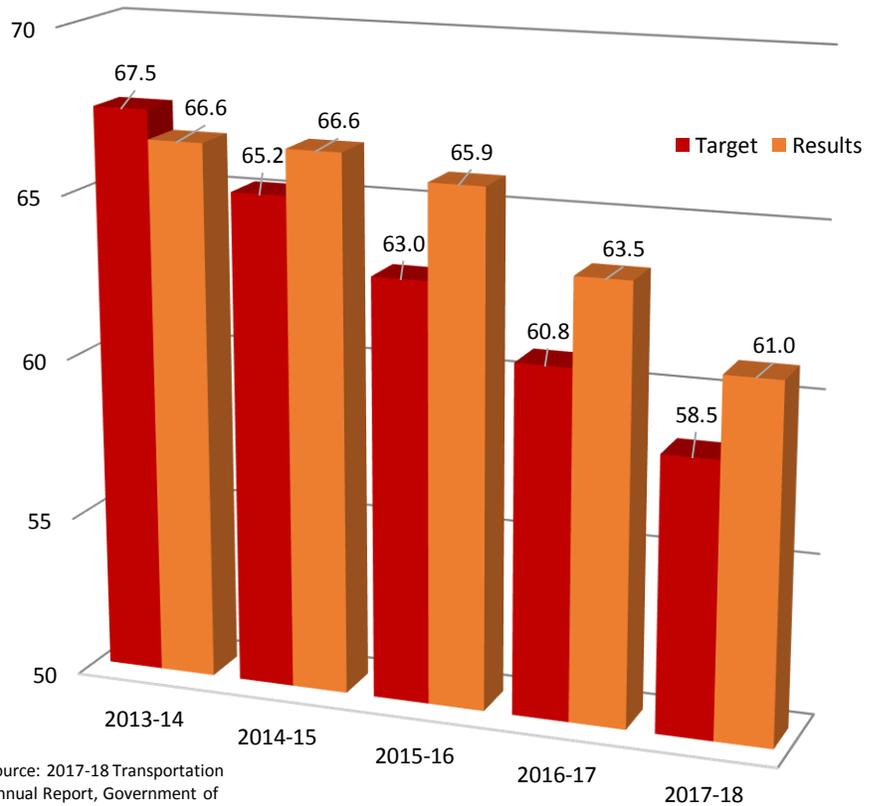
Source: Canada's Core Public Infrastructure Survey: Roads, bridges and tunnels, 2016, Statistics Canada

However, for the past four years, the provincial government has not achieved its targeted outcome measure for transportation safety and security. A renewed strategy is needed to address speeding, distracted driving, and alcohol and drug-impaired driving to protect Albertans.

The government cannot afford to be complacent in making improvements to the safety of our roads, the lives and livelihoods of Albertans depend on it. This includes recognizing the safety of our construction labour force and the impact of driver behaviour on their safety. Government must take the responsibility for drivers seriously and not put construction workers at risk on provincial projects by contributing to public sentiments that construction and highway maintenance are a nuisance and impediment to driver's convenience.

Sustainable investment is required to maintain and enhance the safety of Alberta's road network and increased public education on traffic safety.

Combined Fatal and Major Injury Collision Rate per 100,000 Population



Source: 2017-18 Transportation Annual Report, Government of Alberta