

Good governance benefits all Albertans

Getting infrastructure decisions right is crucial to ensuring that investments enhance our welfare and contribute to productivity growth and competitiveness. Key to any successful infrastructure program is an appropriate structure for decision making, strategic planning, and implementation that is done in a transparent and accountable way. Strengthening systems, procedures, and processes and collaboration will provide for improved road infrastructure delivery.

The Alberta Road Builders and Heavy Construction Association is committed to providing principled, data-informed solutions to ensure Alberta's road infrastructure supports sustainable economic recovery and development and enhances the quality of life of Albertans.

Making the right decisions for better roads

Good governance, or its absence, has concerned transport sector policy-makers and stakeholders for decades. Considerable investment and effort has been made to build supportive technical, financial and management capability.

An efficient and effective road transportation system is fundamental to Alberta's growth and prosperity, from transporting goods to markets, to maintaining our social well-being and quality of life. The consequences of a poorly managed road network include increased congestion, unsafe conditions created by failing infrastructure, and a diminished ability to remain economically competitive in the global economy.

The undeniable truth is that the current approach to managing our public roads infrastructure is failing Albertans. Today, 33% of Alberta highways are in fair or poor condition. Without modern improvements to how projects are prioritized, procured and funded, the needs of Alberta's transportation system will soon outstrip our ability to provide safe roads, and offer a resilient supply chain.

Leading jurisdictions have adopted new, independent governance models that offer better, more effective collaboration between the public and private sector. These models offer improved transparency and predictability around procurement and planning, in a way that decouples the process from political budget cycles.

Alberta has been idle on transportation policy issues for too long and we have clearly fallen behind. We need to transform the governance of our public road infrastructure so we can address current and future transportation needs in an impartial, strategic and sustainable manner.

The department of transportation has traditionally been responsible long-term planning, but the execution of these plans can no longer be so conditional on political exigencies and budgetary fluctuations. Separating and defining responsibilities to align with capabilities and competence will help clarify roles and facilitate improved governance. The politicians need to set the long-term strategic vision for Alberta's road infrastructure and determine the funding model to support its implementation. The bureaucrats need to be responsible for the policy, planning and management of road infrastructure and the private sector responsible for project management and delivery.

To further support this approach, an independent government agency should be created to oversee transportation infrastructure management, procurement and project contract delivery. Similar to other sectors, this arms length entity would essentially manage public assets on behalf of Albertans by working with government and private industry.

Recommendations:

The ARHCA has worked with the [Transportation Infrastructure Advisory Panel](#) to assess road infrastructure challenges and identify policy recommendations to support long overdue improvements. The ARHCA is advocating the governance recommendations for the Alberta government to build better roads.

1. Create an independent Alberta Highway Trust body to oversee transportation infrastructure management, procurement and project contract delivery.
2. Establish performance and/or service standards for Alberta's road transportation network.
3. Develop a transparent and strategic approach for the prioritization and selection of road infrastructure projects.
4. Create a more integrated and co-ordinated approach to transportation policy and planning within and across all levels of government.
5. Ensure appropriate transfer of risk between public and private entities.