

Roads are Critical to Alberta's Quality of Life

The personal convenience, economic prosperity and social benefits enabled by roads are essential foundations 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.

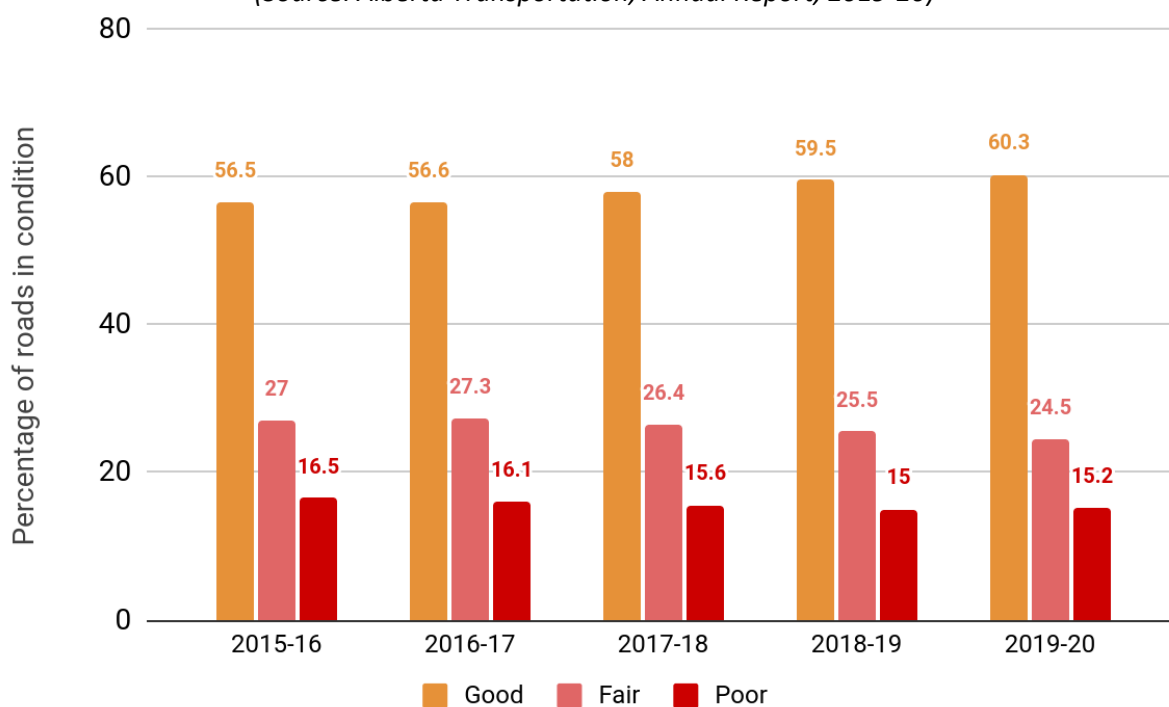
The Alberta Road Builders and Heavy Construction Association is committed to providing principled, data-informed solutions to ensure Alberta's road infrastructure supports sustainable economic recovery and development and enhances the quality of life of Albertans.

New roads, new tools, and new approach are needed

Alberta is responsible for maintaining the second-largest road network in Canada. Despite this, the government has not adequately sustained investment over the last decade. More than 15% of Alberta's highways have remained in poor condition since 2015. This means approximately 4,500 kms of Alberta roads don't comply with minimum safety standards, and need major repairs or replacement.

Condition of Alberta Highway Bridges

(Source: Alberta Transportation, Annual Report, 2019-20)



Alberta's status-quo for planning, building, maintaining, and funding our road network is no longer acceptable, and it is too close to four-year political cycles. Alberta needs a long-term solution for its road network that commits to transparent planning, stable and predictable funding for construction and maintenance, and transparent procurement.

This plan needs to reflect the economic and social goals we want to achieve, especially as our economy rebuilds out of the 2020/21 pandemic.

Alberta can plan and procure road construction and maintenance services better, in ways that are independent of political cycles. Albertans expect their political leaders to recognize the need and economic value of roads, and to put an effective, longer-term published plan and tendering process in place, executed in partnership between the civil service and the private sector.

The funding model needs to be predictable so that municipalities and the private sector can maximize the savings that come from being able to confidently and efficiently plan their business, and finance equipment purchases over the long-term. Provincial departments must collaborate with each other, municipalities, and private sector partners to ensure our investments enhance the long-term resiliency of our network, whether in terms of economic uncertainty, natural disaster, or climate change.

The plan must also be adaptable to emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence, machine learning, smart road technologies, and infrastructure changes brought about by the energy transition. We need to ensure our regulatory environment makes Alberta the most a more desirable jurisdiction for developing and implementing transportation technologies.

Finally, we must be open to innovation and adopt the most effective means to build and maintain our road network. Alberta needs to foster a culture that encourages innovation and leverages the expertise of the private sector to deliver on public roads.

Recommendations

The ARHCA is advocating the following recommendations to the Alberta government. These were identified by our [Transportation Infrastructure Advisory Panel](#).

1. Commit to and share publicly a long-term vision and strategy for the sustainability and future of Alberta's road network.
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.
3. Commit to an integrated and multi-modal approach to transportation infrastructure policy and planning.
4. Create a policy and regulatory environment that incentivizes technological advances in the transportation sector.
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.