

## Mackenzie Region – Transportation requirements

The Mackenzie Region spans a land mass, about the size of the Province of New Brunswick. Within the boundaries of the Mackenzie Region is a mix of Oil & Gas, Agriculture and Forestry industrial base, along with two incorporated Towns, one incorporated County, large rural land base, three recognized hamlets and multiple recognized settlement clusters as well as many First Nation reserves.

Our borders meet with the NWT to the North, BC to the West, Wood Buffalo National Park to the West, Paddle Prairie Métis Settlement, Municipal District of Northern Lights, Municipal District of Opportunity and Northern Sunrise County to the South.

Our Region boasts one of the youngest communities in Alberta (High Level) and one of the Oldest (Fort Vermilion), we are proud to have a 100+ year old operating Experimental Farm and then in turn have some of the newest land sold in the province for agricultural use. So in essence we are a mix of old, steeped in history and new, surrounded by vibrant growth and potential, add that to vastly undeveloped which means the growth potential is astronomical!

A very quick overview of our transportation system is this.... more detailed information is available on each project from various sources.

- North & South: Up until very recently Mackenzie Region had one paved road that connected us north and south (being Highway 35). Highway 88 is scheduled to be completed with paving in 2014. Now allowing two southern routes
  - Additional North-South routes, methods, upgrades are required in order to access land, transport product efficiently and effectively and connect this region with multiple points.
    - Completion of Highway 88
    - Highway 35 continued maintenance for road structure and ensuring that daily maintenance is adequate for the safe travel and transportation of goods. Additional rest areas that are large enough to accommodate trucks and large vehicles will also provide safer travel on this route. They need to be staged in suitable areas along Highway 35 from Paddle Prairie to the NWT border.
    - North-South Rail, our region continues to struggle with adequate rail service and all parties involved need to be involved to ensure that our industries can effectively and efficiently ship their goods by rail. Ensure rail is upgraded to a capacity that allows products and goods to be shipped to and from the NWT.

- East-Peace Connector – Blue Hills to Peace River. This route will allow access to existing farm land and the potential for high grade land to be converted to agriculture. It is also an east of the river route to points south for goods and services.
    - Zama Pipeline upgrade to Norman Wells (Canol and/or Mackenzie) that connects to Alaskan Ports. The majority of the line and/or right-of-way is existing and needs to be seriously looked at as an additional route to port for all Alberta piped resources
- East & West: Other than the basic connection of our internal communities our East-West transportation system is severely lacking or absent completely.
  - Additional East-West routes, methods, upgrades are a main priority for all Municipalities involved.
    - #1 Priority by All Municipalities: Hwy 58 West, including available right-of-way for rail, pipe, power; connects the Mackenzie Region with points in BC to allow access and growth of all of our industries, Oil & Gas, Agriculture, Forestry and Tourism, as well as additional access and growth for the northern part of BC. Much work by the Municipalities and REDI has been completed.
    - Upgrade of the Zama Road to pavement has been a partnership between the Province and Mackenzie County. Additional partnerships (as Resource Road funding has been cut, and is not the best method to complete this upgrade) need to be explored and found in order for this primary route of egress to the North-west corner of the region which continues to hold vast oil & gas resources and the Hamlet of Zama to be hard-surfaced in a cost effective and timely fashion.
    - North High Level Bypass, this project increases the safety of travellers and gives the Town of High Level the ability for greater access to Highway 35.
    - Highway 58 East, connections to the east open up and allow transportation routes that have a multitude of benefits socially and economically. Connecting First Nation communities year round, as well as offering access to Wood Buffalo National Park. With the possibility of future connections to points East.
    - Hwy 697, the widening of Hwy 697 to ensure safety as this road was constructed as many were with no shoulders which means there is no room for error. This would ensure safe travel and the accommodation of wide and heavy loads.

- Peace River Bridge, currently 697 is connected with seasonal access across the Peace River (Ice-Bridge in the winter, Ferry in the summer). A permanent structure is required to ensure that 365 day access is allowed for this numbered highway.
- Widening of Hwy 88 from Fort Vermilion to Highway 58 and the upgrade of the bridge to allow heavy wide loads ease of access and additional safety to all travellers
- Widening of Hwy 58 from the junction of 88 to highway 35 to allow safer travel and accommodation of wide loads and heavy traffic
- Chateh (Assumption Road) Mackenzie County is solely responsible for this road and upgrades are required to ensure a safe route.
- Current highway structure maintenance and daily upkeep are crucial to ensure that our current road infrastructure remains safe and in good repair.
- Alberta East-West pipeline (not on map) but has been referred to by multiple industry stakeholders. As Fort McMurray required a 'thinning' substance in order to pipe-ship bitumen, and the Mackenzie Region is a large producer now and has the potential for even larger production of this 'thinning substance' it would make sense to investigate and assist in building a pipeline that connects the East and West side of the Province together to cross ship products. With an upgraded system allowing access to port (either along Hwy 58 or north to Norman Wells) getting western products to market may be easier.

Regional Internal Transportation requirements:

- As mentioned with our Region being the size of New Brunswick our internal transportation requirements are quite high, add the lacking multiple routes, the declining rail service and the vast land mass... our road infrastructure system is crucial to the health, safety and well being of our citizens and industry.
  - Roads to New Lands – the province recently worked with Mackenzie County and various stakeholders to open up and sell additional land for agricultural purposes. Now the County is faced with finding funding which is not there to built road infrastructure to access these lands. In the past across the Province, when land was sold by the Province access was built prior to sale, this was not the case and the proceeds or a portion of from these land sales that the Province received was not set aside to address this requirement. Mackenzie County is now faced with a 22 million dollar infrastructure deficit to construct trunk and main roads

to access and ensure productions and development of the newly sold farmland.

- Provincial Bridge Funding – recently the Province cut the Bridge Funding for Municipalities. With the vast size and number of current bridge files, the Municipality does not have the funding capacity to maintain existing files. With the additional road network that is and will be required in the future this Bridge funding is a necessity and should not be solely the responsibility rate-payer.
- MSI Funding – a large majority of the Municipalities MSI funding is utilized in some form or another for transportation projects and basic infrastructure as we are all young and growing municipalities the requirement for continued current level or growth in MSI funding is a priority.

The future of our region relies heavily on a few key points: Municipal Cooperation, strong industrial core, and most importantly Provincial Support! Major components of this are transportation routes/methods/corridors/infrastructure that ensures the safe, economical and varied transportation of our goods, services and people.

The Tri-Council made up of all three Municipalities in the Mackenzie Region (Town of High Level, Town of Rainbow Lake and Mackenzie County) have discussed our long-term transportation requirements and have put together this map roughly showing what is lacking in our transportation system.

We fear that trying to prioritize the multitude of projects is difficult as each one has strong merits and solid business cases with many social and economical areas of interest. As each project also comes with its own set of triggers that would move the project within a priority list. We trust that the Province will look at and plan for each of the transportation requirements that are included and realize that most of these are new infrastructure, as we don't have the luxury of requesting many 'upgrades' as the base infrastructure routes are just not here yet. All three municipalities main goal is to ensure that our regional transportation projects hold a priority level within the Province and a timely transportation infrastructure plan is in place for the sustainable and growing future that this region holds. We cannot compete with population needs of other Municipalities, but our future depends on the Province looking at not just population when prioritizing projects, but a multitude of factors. So in closing we look forward to the next 50 years of timely infrastructure project completion (meaning not all in year 49).