

EAST-WEST CONNECTOR BETWEEN ABBOTSFORD AIRPORT & HIGHWAY 99 (2017)

The Fraser Valley is one of the fastest growing areas in B.C., with Chilliwack, Abbotsford, Langley and Surrey seeing huge population growth over the next few years. Transportation is a major barrier to this growth, and it must be addressed on a regional basis. While each municipality has specific challenges with the movement of people, goods and services transportation and traffic concerns go far beyond individual municipal boundaries and must be considered on all fronts. The Province of B.C. is promoted internationally as a world-class destination, with Metro Vancouver as the gateway to the Province. It is vital for this region to have facilities and infrastructure to handle the existing and future demand to alleviate transportation gridlock and to protect our air quality.

Currently, passenger and commercial carriers en route to or from Highway 99, the Canada/US Border and destinations in the southwest sector of the Fraser Valley are directed to travel on Highway 1. Residential and commercial development throughout the lower Fraser Valley and additional services and capacity at Abbotsford Airport continue to add to the stress and gridlock on Highway 1 from Abbotsford through Langley to Surrey. There is a demonstrated need for development of a provincial southern connector to link the Abbotsford Airport and Canada/US Border crossings with Highway 99, and Vancouver International Airport. At the present time 16th Avenue through Surrey and Langley has been identified as a truck route and part of the major road network by Translink and by the City of Abbotsford to the east. This high-capacity route will be critical to transportation movement during the announced expansion of Hwy 1 over the next 5 years, as construction will result in delays and many commuters and transport trucks will be seeking alternate routes.

While some sections of the 16th Avenue corridor are 4-lane in parts of Surrey and Abbotsford, through the remaining sections and the Township of Langley it is a 2-lane road with deep drainage ditches on both sides. We have seen some improvements such as the added interchange at Hwy 99 and the upcoming improvements in Abbotsford from King to Marshall Rd but the route still has major safety and traffic issues. There are numerous uncontrolled intersections along the entire stretch, as well as many private driveways entering and exiting the roadway. The City of Abbotsford has acquired title to the property west of the airport that will provide a direct east-west connecting corridor to Highways 13, 15 and 99. The one remaining property to complete the Abbotsford portion of the corridor is still in active operation as a gravel pit however it will be available for acquisition within the near future.

Designation of 16th Avenue as a Provincial Highway will serve to protect the right-of-way and facilitate the development of a critically needed east-west trade corridor significantly improving economic growth opportunities for Surrey, the Langleys, and Abbotsford. As a designated highway, it would greatly improve access, enhance safety, reduce stress on the environment, and ensure consistent maintenance and upkeep of this high-traffic corridor.

There are three types of support for three types of road structures. Municipal roads are supported by municipalities. The major roads network is supported by Translink. Provincial Highways are supported by the provincial government.

THE CHAMBER RECOMMENDS

That the Provincial Government:

1. designate 16th Avenue as a Provincial Highway to connect Highway 1/Abbotsford Airport with Highway 99 and to provide more direct access to the Canada/US border crossings, relieve the bottle necks of traffic, and facilitate increased movement of people, goods and services;
2. commence property acquisition required to widen 16th Avenue to a 4-lane highway, develop frontage roads for residential traffic egress/ingress and reduction of north-south intersections across the corridor; and
3. identify critical north-south intersections and install appropriate infrastructure to accommodate safe north-south travel.

