

Best Practice

Alternate Truck Route Network

CONTACT

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Project Date: November 2006 (ongoing)

THE PRACTICE

Provincial highway #339 serves the residents of a highly productive area of the province southeast of Moose Jaw. The regions deep glacio-lacustrine fine textured soils are not conducive to road construction and traffic. The condition of highway #339 has been deteriorating over time to the point that it was avoided by many when conditions allowed them to use an alternate route. Those alternate routes, however, could become impassable with minimal precipitation.

THE PROCESS

In June 2006, the Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure issued a tender to revert a portion of highway #339 to gravel. The residents of Briercrest, Claybank, Avonlea and seven RMs who rely on the highway for all weather access expressed dissatisfaction at a public meeting in October 2006 regarding the gravel reversion highway plan. Representatives from the RMs of Redburn and Elmsthorpe met with officials from the Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure in November 2006 to begin the discussion about forming an alternate truck route network (ATRN) partnership agreement.

The RMs of Redburn and Elmsthorpe encouraged the group of concerned citizens and businessmen to form the Highway #339 Committee. This group provided the opportunity for the RMs to receive feedback on the potential development of the ATRN. Research by the committee led them to the conclusion that the only immediate solution was to limit the weights on highway #339 to eight tones with limited secondary weight access for some residents. Additionally, the Highway #339 Committee decided to actively pursue the potential for a primary weight rebuild of highway #339.

THE RESULTS

The RMs of Redburn and Elmsthorpe brought together four additional RMs and three urban municipalities and, through a series of meetings, negotiated the largest ATRN partnership agreement in Saskatchewan, signed on March 31, 2008. This agreement limits truck access to 105 kms of TMS highway, instead of routing it through 166 km of municipally maintained graveled road network.

LESSONS LEARNED

The RMs of Redburn and Elmsthorpe learned that municipal co-operation, though sometimes challenging and difficult, can hold rewards by showing outside agencies that there is a stronger dedication to the cause than any one municipality could provide on its own. While residents have reluctantly accepted the ATRN, without the committee's hard work and dedication, there is a significant risk that dust free access to these communities would have been lost altogether.