
NEWS RELEASE

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Office of the Premier
Ministry of Transportation

NEW STRATEGY TO IMPROVE CAPACITY ON CARIBOO CONNECTOR

PRINCE GEORGE – Premier Gordon Campbell and Transportation Minister Kevin Falcon today announced \$200 million for the first phase of a project to four-lane the entire length of Highway 97 between Prince George and Cache Creek.

“Having a safe, efficient highway system is vital to all our lives and to B.C.’s economy, and Highway 97 is the primary transportation link for communities in the heart of the province,” said Campbell. “This is one more component of the government’s plan to open up the Interior through strategic investments in critical infrastructure.

Soaring economies in the oil and gas, forestry, mining and tourism industries have increased the need for a four-lane highway through the heart of the province via the Cariboo Connector, the 460-km portion of Highway 97 between Cache Creek and Prince George. The new highway will also increase safety and decrease travelling times.

“The Cariboo Connector will open up the North the same way the Coquihalla opened up the Interior,” said Transportation Minister Kevin Falcon. “This new highway will provide northern communities with a first-class trade corridor that will support increased commercial traffic due to our rapidly expanding economy.”

Phase 1 of the program will begin immediately with about \$200 million in projects initiated over a five-year timeframe, including:

- **Old Cariboo to Buckhorn-Damms Road** – a three-kilometre four-lane project just south of the Intersection of Old Cariboo Highway and Highway 97 south of Prince George will undergo design in 2005. Road right-of-way acquisition and stakeholder consultation will also be undertaken this year with final completion in 2007.
- **Plett Road** – a three-kilometre four-lane project about 35 km south of Prince George. The project will begin this year and reach final completion in 2006.
- **Simon Fraser Bridge** – a four-lane bridge improvement project will commence engineering work this year. The Simon Fraser Bridge improvement is seen as a major project in the Prince George area.
- **Red Bluff Road** – a two-kilometre four-lane project south of Quesnel. Design work will commence this year with project completion in 2007.

“Northern citizens have been asking for years for a safe, efficient highway to service their communities,” said Prince George-Mount Robson MLA and Deputy Premier Shirley Bond. “The careful financial planning this government has undertaken has allowed us to be here today to announce the beginning of construction on the Cariboo Connector – a transportation infrastructure project that will open the North like never before.”

“The Cariboo Connector strategy is going to support so many enterprises in this area, from forestry, to oil and gas to tourism to mining,” said Prince George-North MLA Pat Bell. “It’s really going to help open up the North.”

The sections of Highway 97 with the highest traffic volumes will be widened first, typically in urban areas around industrial and commercial centres. In rural areas, four-laning will be done where passing lanes are required. Eventually, the remaining portions will also be four-laned.

“In order to have a successful transportation system, we need to come up with forward-thinking regional solutions,” said Prince George Mayor Colin Kinsley. “The Cariboo Connector strategy is an excellent example of the type of big-picture planning needed in Northern B.C.”

The Cariboo Connector strategy is one part of the ministry’s overarching transportation plan to revitalize B.C.’s highways, bridges, ports and airports and help ensure the safe, open and efficient movement of people and goods.

1 backgrounder(s) attached.

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