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Four-Laning of Section of Highway 97 To Be Completed Ahead of Schedule

PRINCE GEORGE – Another component of the Cariboo Connector four-laning of Highway 97 will be completed this week, Prince George MLAs Shirley Bond, Pat Bell and John Rustad announced today.

“Our government is working to meet the demand of increased activity in the oil and gas, forestry, mining and tourism industries,” said Bond, MLA for Prince George-Mount Robson. “Widening this stretch of highway means a safer, reliable and more efficient first-class trade corridor that supports our soaring economy.”

Originally scheduled to be complete in the fall, the \$5.5-million dollar four-laning of three kilometres of Highway 97 from Crysdale Creek to Plett Road south of Prince George is slated to be done by the end of this week.

“We are committed to opening up the north to increased trade and tourism opportunities,” said Bell, MLA for Prince George North. “This project, like the \$32.5-million twinning of the Simon Fraser Bridge, will help our city keep on top of the rapid pace of economic growth happening across the north.”

This expansion is part of Phase One of the Cariboo Connector Program. The Cariboo Connector Program is a long-term vision that will eventually see 460 kilometres of Highway 97 expanded to four lanes from Prince George to Cache Creek.

Passenger vehicle traffic on Highway 97 South has grown by about three per cent overall between 2000 and 2003 while heavy truck traffic has grown by as much as 28 per cent.

“Our priority is to ensure British Columbians continue to be safe when they travel our roads, even as our booming economy creates more heavy industrial traffic,” said Rustad, MLA for Prince George – Omineca. “The four lane section will provide additional passing opportunities and make for safer and more efficient movement of traffic.”

This stretch of Highway 97 is the second section to be four-laned as part of the Cariboo Connector. Last fall, a two-kilometre section south of Williams Lake was completed.

For more information, contact Doug Brown, Government Caucus Communications: 250-356-0393

Visit Shirley Bond's Web site at www.shirleybondmla.bc.ca, John Rustad's Web site at www.johnrustadmla.bc.ca and Pat Bell's Web site at www.patbellmla.bc.ca.