

Rural roads and bridges are not only vital to local communities, but serve as important arteries to help Alberta's economy grow by connecting natural resources to national and international transportation corridors. AAMDC members are responsible for the largest road and bridge network of any stakeholder in the province. The building and maintenance of transportation infrastructure is the single biggest expense for most rural municipalities.

What is the AAMDC's position on the importance of having a municipal perspective on matters related to transportation and infrastructure?

- Rural municipalities manage the majority (77% or 173,226km) of Alberta's roads and bridges (61% or 8468). At a cost of between \$500,000 and \$1 million to construct one kilometre of road and a similar cost to construct a bridge, the costs of managing transportation infrastructure form a significant portion of rural municipal expenses.
- Rural Alberta's transportation network connects communities, provides rural Albertans with access to important community services (such as healthcare), and supports the province's tourism industry by connecting major highways to many of Alberta's parks and natural wilderness areas.
- Rural roads and bridges provide the oil and gas, forestry and agriculture industries with access to the natural resources that they depend on. A safe and viable rural road and bridge network is key to supporting the provincial economy.
- As the primary manager of bridges and roads in Alberta, rural municipalities should be thoroughly consulted before any changes are made to existing infrastructure grant programs, approval processes, or design standards.
- Industrial use of infrastructure creates significant damage that requires municipalities to allocate a level of financial and human resources not typical in urban areas.
- As transportation infrastructure funding continues to lag behind need, rural municipalities in many areas of the province have been forced to weight restrict or close bridges.

What financial considerations do rural municipalities have with respect to infrastructure construction and maintenance?

- Municipal taxation revenues alone are not sufficient to build and/or maintain rural municipal infrastructure networks and as a result municipalities face an increasing infrastructure deficit.
- Long-term, predictable funding from other levels of government is necessary to ensure the sustainability of rural Alberta's transportation network and the viability of rural communities.
- Municipal infrastructure funding programs developed by other levels of government must reflect rural infrastructure needs. Per capita funding distribution and merit-based distribution mechanisms that place rural municipalities in competition with higher-capacity urban municipalities do not adequately address rural needs.

What collaborative relationships are essential to rural municipalities in matters relating to transportation and infrastructure?

- Municipalities are in the best position to determine local infrastructure priorities and should be empowered to meet those priorities.
- In situations where industry benefits from the use of municipal roads and bridges, they should collaborate with municipalities by contributing to maintenance and replacement costs.
- The AAMDC looks forward to collaborating with the Government of Alberta to develop new parameters for the Strategic Transportation Infrastructure Program.
- Federal and provincial levels of government must work closely with rural municipalities to ensure that rural roads, bridges, and rural other infrastructure such as airports and transloader facilities that support the movement of natural resources to international markets are adequately supported, similarly to highways and ports that also serve as links in these supply chains.

How does the work of the AAMDC support the sustainability of Alberta's transportation and infrastructure systems?

- The AAMDC advocates on behalf of rural municipalities for consistent funding processes that promote the sustainability and growth of rural transportation networks.
- The AAMDC is pleased that the Government of Alberta returned funding to the Strategic Transportation Infrastructure Program (STIP) for the 2017 budget, as this was a major advocacy priority for the AAMDC in recent years.

- Long-term capital planning and asset management initiatives are important tools to maximize municipal resources in the provision of infrastructure. The AAMDC encourages these efforts and works with various committees in support of this type of planning.
- The AAMDC encourages member municipalities to work collaboratively to find innovative, cost-effective solutions to their infrastructure needs (ex. cost sharing, use of own forces, alternative design).

What current transportation and infrastructure related issues are impacting rural Alberta?

Strategic Transportation Infrastructure Program

- The AAMDC is pleased that the Government of Alberta has committed to restoring restored funding to the Strategic Transportation Infrastructure Program (STIP) in the 2017-18 budget. Historically, STIP has included includes sub-components that provide municipalities with funding for local road bridges, resource roads, and community airports, all three of which are critical components of to healthy rural communities.
- The AAMDC looks forward to collaborating with the Government of Alberta to design program parameters for STIP that will best meet the needs of rural municipalities.
- The AAMDC is encouraged by the Government of Alberta's plans to continue to fund STIP in the 2018-19 and 2019-20 budget years. The AAMDC will continue to advocate that this planned funding be carried out and that a commitment to STIP be made for beyond 2020.

Asset Management

- By properly monitoring the age and condition of infrastructure and developing a long-term asset management plan for maintenance and replacement, municipalities will increase accountability and efficiency in managing their assets and improve service levels.
- Asset management is likely to become an important consideration in future grant funding programs, such as the Gas Tax Fund, which will include an asset management plan requirement in the next several years.
- Due to the long-term nature of asset management planning, it is critical to establish buy-in throughout the municipality, from council to front-line employees. The AAMDC's report, *Navigating the Asset Management Journey*, can help develop this buy-in.

- The federal Municipal Asset Management Program has the potential to be a useful resource and provide valuable financial and capacity support for municipalities seeking to improve their asset management capacity.

Rail

- Rail lines are pervasive in rural municipalities and create different challenges than in urban areas.
- The transportation of hazardous materials by rail is increasing. This has resulted in a renewed focus on the oversight and safety of the rail industry.
- As a significant roadway authority in the province of Alberta, rural municipalities have a vested interest in any regulatory changes to railways (ex. at-grade crossings, information sharing).

Federal Infrastructure Support

- The AAMDC looks forward to working with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities to provide input to the federal government during the formation and implementation of new federal infrastructure support mechanisms such as the Canadian Infrastructure Bank and targeted funding for green infrastructure.

Investing in Canada Program

- The AAMDC looks forward to collaborating with the Government of Alberta to ensure federal funding received through the Investing in Canada program can be fairly accessed by Alberta's rural municipalities.
- The AAMDC looks forward to collaborating with the Government of Alberta to determine eligibility criteria for the Rural and Northern Communities component of the Investing in Canada program. The criteria must ensure that adequate funding is available for truly rural areas unlikely to be eligible for funding under other components.

Fisheries Act and Navigation Protection Act

- Rural municipalities take their role as infrastructure managers seriously, but also prioritize the stewardship of Alberta's waterways. For this reason, the AAMDC supports federal legislation that balances the regulation of fish habitats and the navigability of Canada's waterways with the need for municipalities to operate within a fair and efficient regulatory regime that mitigates any adverse impacts on rural development.

Provincial Highways

- In rural areas, provincially-managed highways are often vital links between communities. The AAMDC urges the Government of Alberta to provide

consistent upkeep of rural highways, as their value to rural residents and the province's economy is significant. This upkeep should include regular maintenance on road surfaces, and the consistent provision of signage, such as mileage markers, for both convenience and safety purposes.

Community Airports

- In many rural and small urban municipalities, community airports provide an important link for industrial development, as well as serving as a hub for emergency services to fight wildfires or attend to seriously ill or injured rural residents. A return of provincial funding through the Strategic Transportation Infrastructure Program or other means would play a large role in maintaining rural Alberta's access to air travel.

For more information, visit www.aamdc.com for [reports](#) and an online, searchable [Resolution Database](#) which includes information on all active resolutions and emerging issues related to transportation and infrastructure.

AAMDC reports specifically related to the position statements identified in this document include:

- [***Study of High Speed Rail Impacts on Rural Alberta***](#)
- [***Building a Highway Network – Who Pays for Highway Improvements as a Result of Development***](#)

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