

Highway 3 Twinning – East of Highway 885 (Whitla) to Medicine Hat Preliminary Design Engagement Summary

Introduction

Alberta Transportation and Economic Corridors (TEC) has confirmed AECOM and ISL as consulting team partners to complete the design and construction administration for the twinning of Highway 3 from east of Highway 885 (Whitla) to Medicine Hat. This work will include expanding Highway 3 from 2 undivided lanes in each direction to 2 (4 total) divided lanes in each direction. The twinning of Highway 3 will improve safety and efficiency along the corridor.

Engagement Process

The project will consider input from adjacent landowners and businesses, stakeholders including community groups, Cypress County, the City of Medicine Hat, and County of Forty Mile. First Nations consultation is ongoing.

Two phases of engagement will take place for the project with the first occurring in the preliminary design phase and the second in the detailed design phase. In the fall of 2024, the project team initiated the first round of engagement to share information about the project and gather feedback to inform the preliminary design. The second round of engagement will occur in 2025 to share the preliminary design and gather feedback to inform the recommended design.

The engagement opportunities conducted in the preliminary design phase of the project included a public information session from 4 to 7 p.m. on September 10, 2024 at the Medicine Hat College – Big Eagle Room (299 College Drive SE, Medicine Hat) and on September 11, 2024 at the Seven Persons Community Hall (426 Drinnan Street, Seven Persons). The project team in attendance included representatives from TEC, AECOM and ISL.

Display boards were used to share information about the project background, preliminary design overview, the Highway 3 corridor, the project map, the engagement process with anticipated timeline and design options for three different segments along Highway 3. The three segments include 1) Whitla to Seven Persons, 2) Seven Persons to Range Road 70 and 3) Range Road 70 to Medicine Hat. The same information was shared at each event and online on the TEC [project website](#).

Display boards from the information sessions and a link to an online survey (open from September 3 to 20, 2024) were made available for those who wanted to learn more about the project and provide feedback online.

The engagement opportunities were advertised using:

- The Government of Alberta project website;
- Road signs along Highway 3 between Whitla and Medicine Hat;
- Advertisements in the Medicine Hat News and the 40-Mile County Commentator/Cypress Courier;
- Social Media posts shared on the Cypress County, County of Forty Mile, Medicine Hat, and Seven Persons Community Association social media platforms; and
- Letters sent to immediately adjacent landowners and stakeholders in the project area.

Note:

- *Indigenous consultation is being conducted separately from the public and stakeholder engagement process.*
- *Letters that were sent to adjacent landowners and stakeholders were based on land title information, which resulted in some landowners being missed in the mailout. Participants who attended the information sessions provided their addresses which will be used by the project team to update the project contact list for future project correspondence.*

A total of 219 responses were received through the paper and online comment forms. Approximately 115 people attended the September 10, 2024 information session at the Medicine Hat College in Medicine Hat and approximately 250 people attended the September 11, 2024 information session at the Seven Persons Community Hall in Seven Persons.

We asked participants the following questions:

1. Do you have feedback or information to share about the twinning of Highway 3 from Whita to Medicine Hat that can help inform the preliminary design?
2. Do you have anything else to share with the project team?

Below is a summary of the feedback received. All feedback received was shared with the project team for their information and consideration in finalizing the preliminary design for this project.

Key Themes

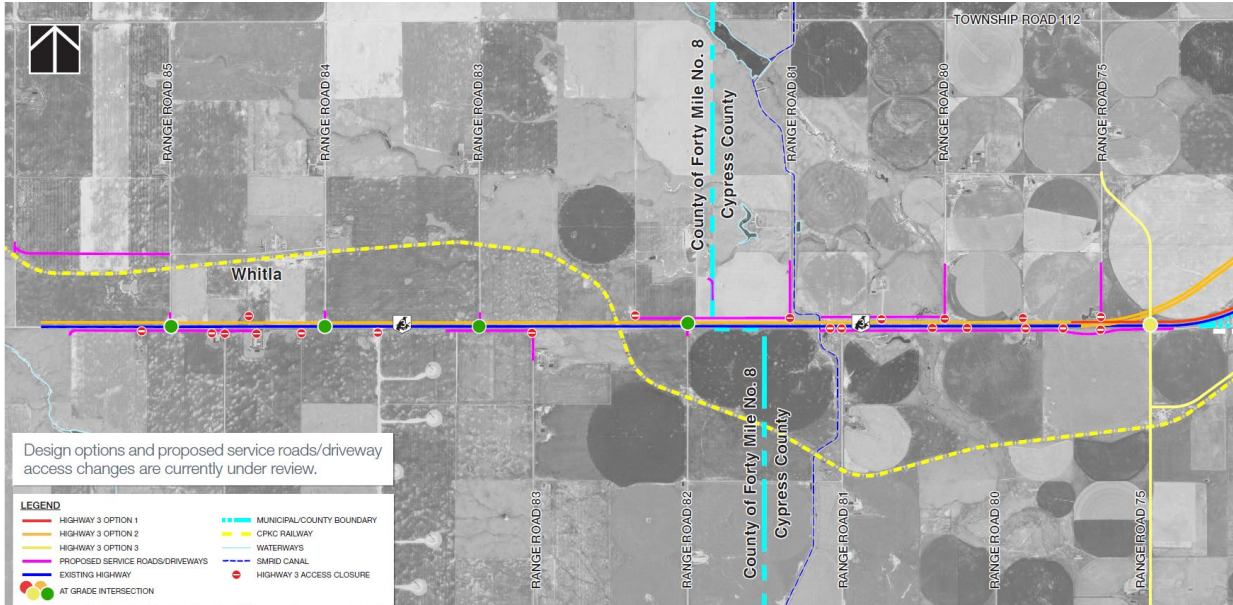
Question: Do you have feedback or information to share about the twinning of Highway 3 from Whita to Medicine Hat that can help inform the preliminary design?

TOP THEMES

- The majority of participants were supportive of the twinning of Highway 3 to improve safety and mobility along the highway.
- Many people were opposed to impacting land, in particular agricultural land for this project and thereby impacting the livelihood of agricultural operators and the community as a whole.
- Many were also worried about highway access points and connectivity due to the proposed access roads and closures to support the twinning of Highway 3. There were concerns with the lack of intersections provided on the open house display boards.
- Many were concerned about the negative impacts on local businesses if the highway were to bypass Seven Persons. Currently, some businesses in Seven Persons rely on travelers along the highway to make stops at their establishments. Conversely, some people wanted the highway to bypass small towns so vehicles could maintain speed on the highway.
- Several participants were concerned about the impacts to their properties and homes.
- Most people, regardless of whether they were in favour of the project, agreed that the highway twinning should follow the current Highway 3 alignment as much as possible. It was further explained that this would reduce impacts on landowners and communities and reduce project costs.

PRELIMINARY DESIGN OPTIONS THEMES

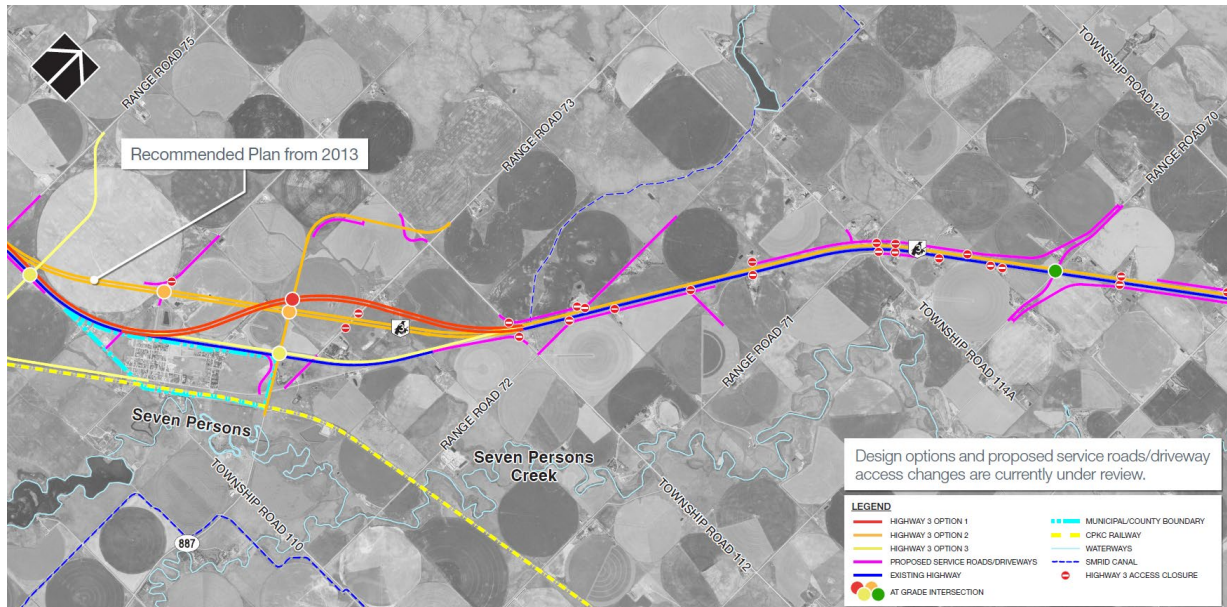
Whitla to Seven Persons Preliminary Design Options



Red line = Option 1
 Orange line = Option 2
 Yellow line = Option 3

- Overall, few people provided comments on the design options from Whitla to Seven Persons. Most comments provided concerned option designs from Seven Persons to Medicine Hat, which are summarized in the next two sections.
- A few people noted that the roadway will need to provide access to the recent wind energy development in the area.
- One individual was concerned about service roads impacting their land and the trees on their land.

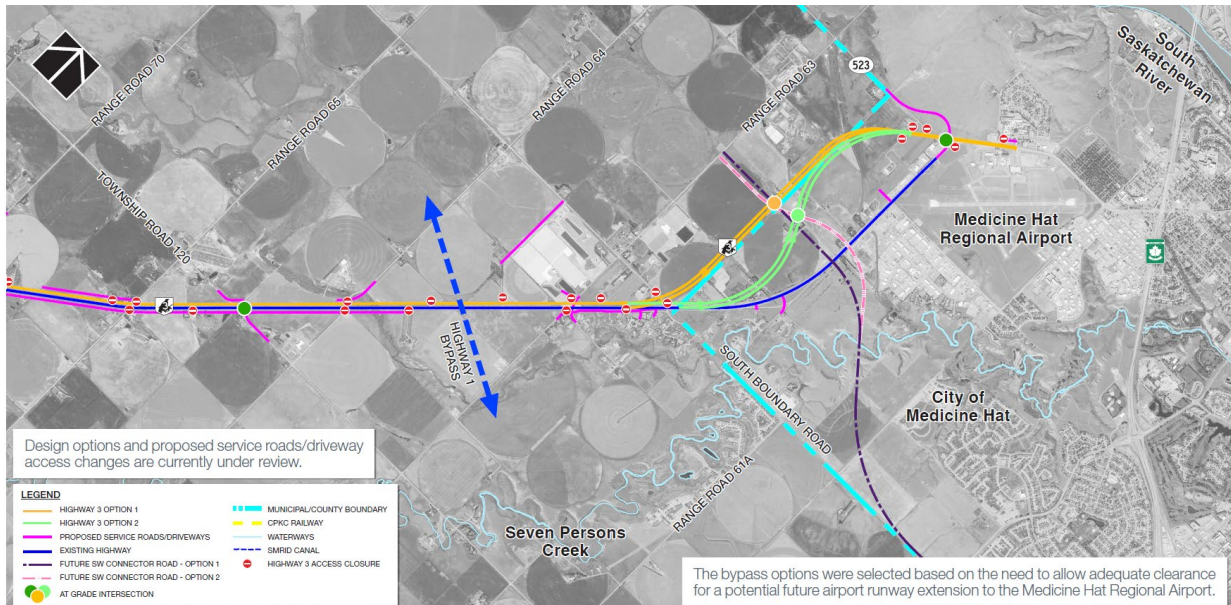
Seven Persons to Range Road 70 Preliminary Design Options



Red line = Option 1
 Orange line = Option 2
 Yellow line = Option 3

- Many people preferred either option 1 or 3 for Seven Persons as these options will remove less land from landowners and support roadway access and/or visibility to local businesses and tourist attractions in Seven Persons. Between Options 1 and 3, more participants preferred Option 3.
- A few respondents also shared that they wanted to see increased safety measures for the highway in this area, with suggestions including a reduction in speed limit, turning lanes or traffic lights.
- Many were also worried about the lack of access points through this section of roadway.
- Some people noted that the lack of intersections in this area would create long travel routes for adjacent property owners.
- Some people felt that the service road network presented had more land impacts than should be required for the first stage of twinning.

Range Road 70 to Medicine Hat Preliminary Design Options



Orange line = Option 1

Turquoise/Light Blue line = Option 2

- Option 1 was preferred over option 2 by some landowners. Some landowners noted that option 1 and 2 were both a concern as their land will be impacted.
- Others preferred option 1 as it would better accommodate the Medicine Hat Airport runway extension in the future.
- Option 2 was least preferred as it takes away relatively more land and people noted that the highway would traverse through a cemetery.
- Some people were concerned about access closures from Range Road 63 to Seven Persons, with continued access to Range Road 63 and Township Road 120 being the most important. Many people use these intersections to access businesses or landowners cross the road with their agricultural machinery.
- A few people expressed concerns about the congestion at the intersections of Range Road 63 and Township Road 120. Improving the intersection was a priority. Township Road 120 currently has significant queueing during peak hours. People want to see changes to improve the safety and operation of this intersection.

OVERALL PROJECT THEMES

Land Impacts

- One of the major concerns for many is the potential project impacts on people's property and access to their property.
- Some people were concerned that the highway would negatively impact their land, removing trees or irrigation/agricultural lands.

Access Points

- Many participants were concerned about the number of proposed access closures and new service roads that would be required along the highway. It was noted that access closures and select service roads would impact people's ability to easily access their property from the highway or make it more difficult for emergency vehicles to reach their communities.
- Some commented that the closure of several access points would make it difficult and unsafe for agricultural operators to access and cross the highway with their machinery.
- Some were also concerned that traffic would increase in other areas due to limited access points to Highway 3.

Other Concerns

- Some other considerations included the cost of the project and the maintenance of service roads.
- Others were also concerned about increased noise and visual impacts of the highway being closer to their property.

Question: Do you have anything else to share with the project team?

Participants were asked if they had anything else to share with the project team. Many reiterated their support and/or concerns for the project. Similar themes were found for the second question that were noted in the first question above. Below are some additional themes captured.

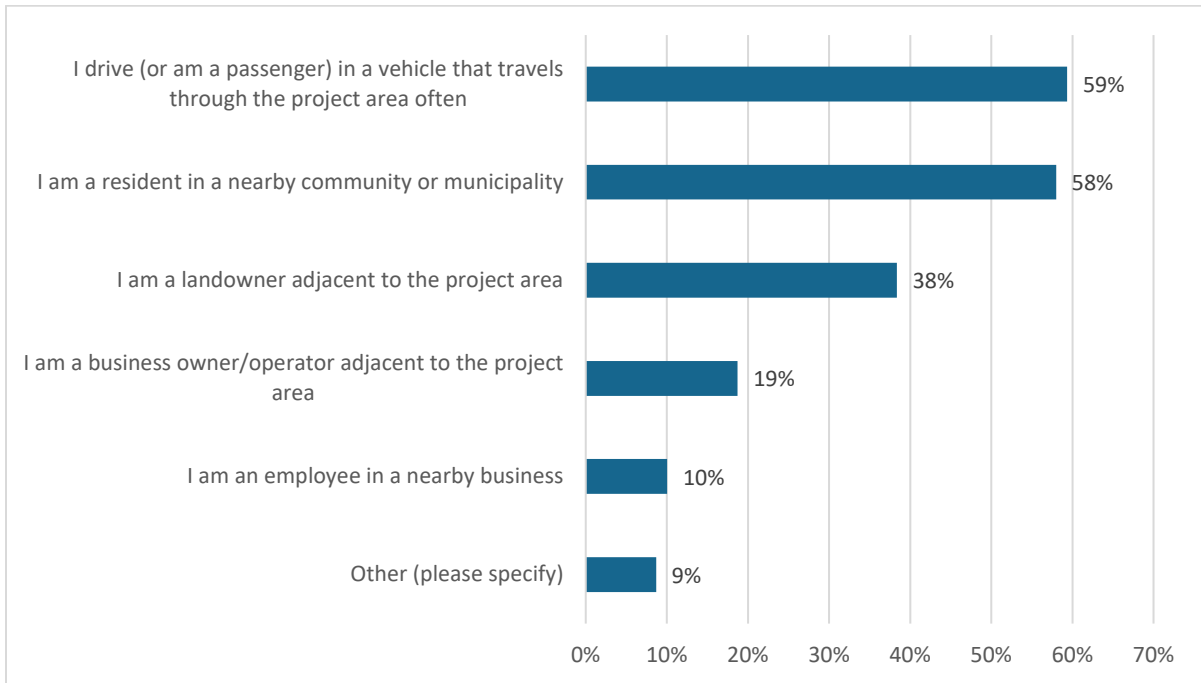
SAFETY

- Some people said that the highway twinning would support safe travel on the highway, with lights, speed limit reductions, and more merge lanes to support safety.
- A few were concerned about increases in wildlife collisions as more vehicles use the highway.
- A few people noted that service roads should be paved to help with travel efficiency and safety and reduce dust on the roads.

ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

- Some participants wished that there was more consultation with landowners before a plan was developed and shared with the public.
- Others also noted that the information sessions were timed during the harvest season and some community members were unable to attend the sessions as a result.

Demographics



Other respondents' descriptions:

- Engineering manager with St. Mary River Irrigation District
- Stakeholder association
- Host of a major fundraiser in the area
- Business owner in Medicine Hat whose business travels the highway frequently
- Parent, business owner in Medicine Hat
- I am a landowner who will be impacted by the twinning of the highway but will not have land expropriated for construction.
- I am a landowner of land that will be effected by the twinning of highway 3.
- School bus driver
- Fire department
- Does not specify
- Farming
- Family impacted
- Medicine Hat resident
- Chamber of Commerce
- Farmer who has land both sides of highway few miles off of highway
- Have family directly affected by the project
- Have family that owns land nearby
- I live south of Seven Persons on a ranch and drive this highway all the time



Next Steps

Feedback received through the stakeholder and public engagement process, Indigenous consultation process, and technical work will inform the development of detailed design, which will be shared in the 2025 engagement sessions.