

## MINUTES OF MEETING

### PUKATAWAGAN ALL-WEATHER JUSTIFICATION STUDY MINUTES OF JANUARY 15, 2001 STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING FLIN FLON, MANITOBA

#### *Attendees*

#### Steering Committee Members

Don Norquay -	Manitoba Transportation and Government Services
Amar Chadha -	Manitoba Transportation and Government Services
Brett Wareham -	Manitoba Transportation and Government Services
Reg Hiebert -	Flin Flon - Chamber of Commerce
Chief Shirley Castel-	Mathias Colomb C.N.
Bill Henderson -	Tolko
Bob Kimball -	INAC
Larry Buhr -	Dillon Consulting Limited
Harold Westdal -	Westdal & Associates

#### Guests

Gerard Jennissen, MLA -	Flin Flon Constituency
Rod Murphy -	Transportation and Government Services Minister's Office
Gabe Bighetty Elder -	Mathias Colomb C.N.
Hyacinth Colph, Elder -	Mathias Colomb C.N.
Emile Sinclair, Elder -	Mathias Colomb C.N.
Ernie I. Hunt -	Capital Works - Mathias Colomb C.N.
Frank Dumas, Councillor -	Mathias Colomb C.N.
Hanson Dumas, Councillor -	Mathias Colomb C.N.
Gordon Mitchell -	Chair of Norman Health Regional Authority
Susan Crockett -	Norman Health Regional Authority

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#### *Meeting Process*

- Introduction by Don Norquay/Amar Chadha - Manitoba Transportation and Government Services.
- Welcome/Prayers by Chief Shirley Castel/Mathias Colomb C.N.
- Presentation by Larry Buhr/Harold Westdal on Project Status:
  - Terms of Reference
  - Study Area and Existing Transportation system
  - Population
  - Passenger and Freight Traffic
  - Freight Rates
  - Hudson Bay Railway Revenue/Costs
  - All-Weather Road Costings
  - Economic Spin-offs (Forestry/Mining/Fisheries/Tourism/etc.)
  - Further Step

#### *Discussions*

- Community Issues:
  - Population 2718 (total = on and off-reserve). Study used 1700 on-reserve. (Additional Mathias Colomb ~100 @ Sherridon/150 @ Sandy Bay/120 @ Granville Lake.) (Marcel Colomb has population of 257 @ Hughes Lake near Lynn Lake.)
  - Study area should encompass Treaty Lands Entitlement proposals, also Granville Lake.

- Passenger Rail Service:
  - Rail service from a passenger standpoint is entirely unsatisfactory:
  - Chief Shirley Castel noted community was concerned about the safety of the rail passenger service. Safety is an issue due to:
    - Over crowded trains/standing room only.
    - Reduced maintenance.
    - No snow clearing.
    - No lighting at the Pukatawagan stop.
    - No station building/band operates heated shelter at own cost.
    - No water/heating system failures.
  - Community view is that travel is unsafe (people thrown out of train, several deaths are currently the subject of law suits), but expensive @ \$45/one-way trip/service poor.
  - Elders noted that lack of track maintenance causes an uneven ride - which has thrown passengers around in the cars. Frequent derailments and reportedly in one instance, a bridge washout that went undetected/fortunately train stopped in time (engine got across, one car did not).
  - Travel is slow/unreliable (eight to twelve hours travel time - arrival in Pukatawagan after midnight with no station or safe house/no lighting). The lack of a proper station at Pukatawagan results in passengers walking around and in front of both passenger and freight trains when they are both in the Pukatawagan stop. (Arrival in The Pas also unpredictable, late pick-up in Pukatawagan and slow travel can mean 16 hours plus.)
- Rail Service for Freight
  - Freight is expensive, particularly for large items (e.g., cars/trucks needing major repairs or appliances/etc.). One vehicle sent out for maintenance can have a round trip cost in the range of \$1,000; a trailer (one-way) can cost \$2,500.
  - Full box car costs are often applied to partial loads.
  - Gravel is not available locally (train haul or local crushing are both very expensive and limit local construction programs).
  - Shipment of wild rice and fish \$400/box car or \$95 per 60 lb. bag.
  - Mail service by Calm Air out of Thompson is slow. Typically two weeks for mail to reach community; cannot be used for obtaining emergency small electric/mechanical parts for motors, etc./must be brought in by special charter.
- Air Service Safety/Reliability Issues
  - There are times when planes cannot get into the community. In the event of a medical emergency, the lack of an All-Weather Road puts community members in jeopardy. Railroad service too slow to be considered as an alternative.
  - Air freight - too expensive.
  - Air passenger service - too expensive.

### ***General Support for All-Weather Road***

Chief Shirley Castel, councillors, and elders all stated that they supported All-Weather Road development. Chief Castel stated Aour people would chose an All-Weather Road development over the train irrespective of the condition of the road. The community members also stated that they did not want to see the rail service removed, but that they saw All-Weather Road service as essential. Pukatawagan deserves comparable service to Sherridon and Sandy Bay communities. Considerable concern expressed by Mathias Colomb council and elders about potentially high cost of road construction (e.g., \$80 M+). They believe it should be possible to build it at a lot lower cost even if conventional standards have to be sacrificed. Should also consider All-Weather Road to south end of Pukatawagan Lake with ferry to community.

Tolko agreed to provide a most recently approved plan of forest roads to permit study team assessment of resource road system expansion.

### ***Economic Development***

While railroad does currently service mining and forestry, elders and councillors noted that an All-Weather Road was essential for economic development. One of the elders related his experience with wild rice, which he regarded an important opportunity that could be developed and expanded with an All-Weather Road. Other opportunities related to the commercial fishing industry, expanded forestry, and a community sawmill; all would be more viable with an All-Weather Road. Tourism would also benefit from an All-Weather Road.

Mathias Colomb First Nations concerned about recent designation of possible future parks (Russell Lake area) without local consultation.

Tolko concerned that 20 percent of productive forests may be eliminated from future production by this park designation.

### ***Winter Road Issues***

Community members note that use of the winter road was affected by the Sask-Power operation of the Island Falls generating station in Saskatchewan. Large releases of water from that station during January to March create slush conditions on the lake and can cause the winter road crossing to become unusable, even if general weather conditions are suitable for winter road operation.

Vehicle maintenance (vehicle life of approximately two years) and insurance costs are also of concern.

### ***Presentation by Norman Regional Health Authority (Gordon Mitchell/Susan Crockett)***

Sue Crockett made a presentation on behalf of the Norman Regional Health Authority. She noted:

- There are master plans being developed for Pukatawagan to receive services from the Norman Regional Health Authority. The objective is to provide 365 days/year service in areas of emergency/acute/general case.
- An All-Weather Road would provide health benefits to Pukatawagan. These would result from better access to facilities, better access to staff expertise, and lower food costs which would improve nutrition.
- Crockett noted that Norman is one of the least healthy districts in Manitoba. Thirty percent of the \$42 million budget is spent on dealing with Type II diabetes and complications. She estimated that at current rates of increase that in fifteen years their entire budget and hospital capacities would be consumed with this problem (Type II diabetes is strongly correlated to poor diet and is largely preventable).
- Northern patient transport consumes in excess of \$2.2 M/year (not including medical team travel to communities and off-reserve temporary housing for patients).

Discussion arose as to the impact of an All-Weather Road on this medical problem and if such a road would reduce the incidence of this disease and reduce health care costs.

Sue Crockett offered to share health statistics with the Pukatawagan study team.

Chief Shirley Castel noted that treating a resident of Pukatawagan at an outside facility can cost in the order of \$10,000 per stay.

***Comments by MLA Gerard Jennisen - Transportation and Government Services***

- He has been a long-time supporter of an All-Weather Road to Pukatawagan.
- Need to focus on creative solutions to reduce costs and maximize benefits.

***Comments by Department of Transportation and Government Services (ADM Don Norquay, Amar Chadha, and Rod Murphy)***

- Highways standards cannot be readily compromised; careful consideration of safety management required.
- Existing Sherridon Road does not meet Highways standards; its safe operating speed is probably less than 60 kph. Area residents are probably used to it and have few accidents, the risk is greater for strangers.
- All-Weather Road into Pukatawagan has a relatively lower priority in Manitoba government funding, given that other communities with larger populations having to rely entirely on winter road and air for access.
- Considerable federal government funding would be required to achieve an All-Weather Road.
- Loss of railroad service if it happens might increase relative priority of All-Weather Road.
- Upgrade of railway service is very expensive and hence unlikely.

***Next Steps***

Dillon indicated tentative agenda:

- Minutes of January 15, 2001 meeting by January 26, 2001.
- Examination/discussion of lower standard/low construction cost All-Weather Road, alternative forms of transportation and alternative delivery program.
- Review of health care costs for various northern communities with and without All-Weather Road.
- Draft report to Steering Committee (amended to March 15, 2001).
- Comments from Steering Committee (amended to March 31, 2001).
- Final report by early April.

Please provide comments/corrections to L. A. Buhr by February 8, 2001.

Circulation by fax to:

- Steering Committee Members
- Norman Regional Health Authority