

SYNOPSIS

The First Nation community of York Landing, with its population of 450, is served by a combination of scheduled ferry/winter road and scheduled air operation. Access to the community from P.R. 280 is assured for eight to nine months in most years. During fall freeze-up and spring break-up, the only means of access is by scheduled or charter air operations.

There is a general perception in the community that the ferry service is too slow and not always reliable. The winter road grades and condition inhibit efficient transport of goods and people, and air travel is too expensive. An All-Weather Road connection is viewed to be necessary.

An All-Weather Road to York Landing is estimated to cost from \$45 to \$65 Million. Transportation benefit cost coverage on a present-value basis is less than 20%. Given the existing winter and summer service provided by a combination of air, winter road, and ferry, the project will face strong competition for funding priority from numerous more remote communities and would have to be largely justified on a socioeconomic basis.

Given that York Landing does have road access, via the ferry to Split Lake, over eight to nine months each year, it is recommended that the focus be switched to improving the existing road transportation system. This could largely be achieved by construction of a new landing/wharf and 25 km of All-Weather Road from York Landing to Split Lake (on the Nelson River). This would provide substantially shorter and more frequent ferry access to the Split Lake community and P.R. 280. This approach would involve an estimated \$8 M capital cost and would achieve better, more reliable access with little or no increase in annual operating and maintenance costs.

In the longer-term, the community's best interests would be served by an AWR. There are currently four potential alignment scenarios for such a road, which are presented in this paper. The relative viability of these alternatives is influenced by as yet undetermined time frames, a go versus no-go decision of Manitoba Hydro's Gull Rapid generating station, and considerable range of travel times to and from Thompson. To maximize the benefits and economic justification, there should also be a road connecting York Landing and Ilford.

It is therefore recommended that there be a route selection study undertaken to establish the most cost-effective All-Weather Road corridors and examine in more detail the probable time frames/interim winter road, ferry, and rail service strategies. This would permit more appropriate decisions on short-term stream crossing installations to extend winter road operational windows, enhanced ferry and rail services, and acceptable environmental impacts.

The route selection study would initially reduce the number of alternatives under consideration and then identify the further steps necessary to allow a decision on short-term and long-term access strategies and priorities.