

October 31, 2006

Fort McMurray bypass lane will reduce traffic congestion

Fort McMurray...Traffic will move more quickly and smoothly on Highway 63 through Fort McMurray with the opening of the newly constructed downtown bypass lane.

Ty Lund, Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation, and Guy Boutilier, Environment Minister and MLA for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, marked the importance of the upcoming completion by making the first official drive of the new bypass. The bypass is expected to open to the public by November 7, weather permitting.

In addition to the bypass completion, three intersection improvement projects are also wrapping up in early November and will improve access to and from Highway 63.

"This modern bypass will immediately relieve some of the traffic pressures in Fort McMurray," said Boutilier. "The investment in critical infrastructure for Fort McMurray continues to be priority for the Alberta government, including the completion of this project, the completion of Highway 881 paving and the twinning of Highway 63."

The downtown bypass lane will allow southbound motorists to avoid the downtown traffic signals and will help keep through traffic flowing. Construction began in May on the bypass lane and intersection improvements at a cost of \$18.5 million.

"The highway bypass lane and intersection improvements will help ease traffic congestion in this growing and vital region of the province," said Lund. "Investing in Alberta's highway network supports the province's strong economy and contributes to Alberta's future growth."

A new dedicated double left-turn lane has been added at Highway 63 and Gregoire Drive for southbound to eastbound traffic and a dedicated and separated single left-turn lane has been added for northbound to westbound traffic, as well as widening of the west leg of the intersection. At Morrison Street and Hardin Street, a new double left-turn lane will improve access to and from Highway 63 and a right-turn lane has been added at Hospital Street for southbound traffic. A triple left-turn lane has been added for northbound traffic turning onto Thickwood Boulevard and the ramps for eastbound to southbound traffic have been extended. As part of the intersection improvement projects, sections of Highway 63 have also been repaved from south of Beacon Hill Drive to north of Confederation Way.

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