

OVERVIEW

Highway 744 is a two-lane highway, connecting Highway 676 to the south with Highway 49 (and Falher) to the north. Serving inter-regional travel, this crossing of the Little Smoky River Valley is important to the local community, accommodating agricultural, resource and recreational access along and local travel needs.

The existing section of Highway 744 through the Little Smoky River Valley and crossing the river is increasingly at risk of temporary closure, with active slide locations on both sides of the valley. Alberta Transportation and Economic Corridors is undertaking a functional planning study (anticipated to be complete in 2025) to determine if there is a feasible alternative alignment crossing the valley. The existing bridge across the Little Smoky River is nearing the end of its service life and its replacement is part of the study process.

A functional planning study is the first step in understanding the needs for any future highway upgrading. Construction or reconstruction of a highway alignment through the Little Smoky River Valley is not on the provincial construction program at this time. The need for further design leading to future construction will be determined based on the outcomes of this study.

CIMA Canada Inc. (CIMA+) is conducting the functional planning study, which will:

- Assess conditions and constraints in the study area
- Include stakeholder and public engagement to identify the concerns and interests of potentially impacted property owners within the study area and highway users
- Assess the reliability, geotechnical stability, safety and cost of potential highway alignments and a new bridge
- Evaluate improvements to the existing Highway 744 alignment through the valley and river crossing location compared with alternative alignment options within the valley
- Develop an alignment plan that:
 - provides the most appropriate design given the site constraints
 - addresses geotechnical stability and safety, community interests, environmental and historical resources, drainage, and other impacts
 - identifies access management and land requirements

TIMELINE

- **Winter 2023/2024 - Information Gathering (Complete)**
 - Stakeholder notifications
 - Technical investigations
- **Spring/Summer 2024 - Alternative Development (Complete)**
 - Develop alignment alternatives
 - Technical analysis
- **Summer 2024/Fall 2024 - Compare Alignment Alternatives (We Are Here)**
 - Preliminary evaluations and pre-screening
 - Stakeholder and public engagement

- **Winter 2024** - Select Preferred Alignment
 - Final evaluations
- **Winter/Spring 2025** - Finalize Alignment
 - Develop functional plan
 - Stakeholder and public engagement
 - Confirm municipal support
 - Alberta Transportation and Economic Corridors approval

ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Key technical factors in the development of alternatives were:

- Geotechnical stability
- Roadway design standards and constructability
- River stability and bridge placement
- Environmental and historical resources

The study team developed and reviewed a number of options and has identified three potentially feasible alignment alternatives.

NEXT STEPS

In the coming months, the study team review and summarize stakeholder meeting and information session comments, will finalize the review and evaluation of alternatives to select a proposed alternative, assess environmental, stormwater, bridge planning, and geotechnical requirements, and develop functional plans.

A final information session is tentatively scheduled for Spring 2025 to present the preferred technically feasible alignment.

The study outcomes will help the Province understand the most practical and feasible alignment for Highway 744 crossing the Little Smoky River Valley.

Additional Information and study updates can be found on the project website, via:

<https://www.alberta.ca/highway-744-little-smoky-river-valley>

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