

Progressing Transportation and Utility Corridors in Alberta (2023)

Issue

Timely and effective plans for roads, railways, utilities, and pipelines are essential to connect Albertans, and connect Alberta with North America and the rest of the world. Prioritizing the creation of Transportation and Utility Corridors (TUCs) allowing for “pre-approved” zones will reduce land-use conflicts, red-tape, costs, and delays, while supporting effective growth management of communities with the required infrastructure.

Background

By 2046, Alberta’s population is projected to swell to over 6.4 million strong⁴²⁶. Recently Alberta experienced the largest growth in a single quarter dating back 40 years⁴²⁷ adding 58,203 residents coming both internationally and from all parts of the federation. According to the Government of Alberta, “Alberta attracted the most net interprovincial migrants in the country by a wide margin.” While Alberta possesses excellent advantages with a growing population, a diversified economy, and low taxation, we face constraints in building the infrastructure to sufficiently serve the citizens and business.

Transportation/Utility Corridors (TUCs) are vital for long-term planning between communities. These “pre-approved” land areas provide guaranteed corridors for roads, railways, utilities, pipelines, and more. The government of Alberta is already supportive of transportation/utility corridors using them to protect areas “from advancing urban development” and offering these corridors as “a long-term solution to many of the land use problems associated with developing major linear facilities in the urban context.”⁴²⁸ The success of these zones is evident when examining the past: “In the mid 1970s, the Government of Alberta established Restricted Development Areas (RDAs) around the cities of Calgary and Edmonton.”⁴²⁹ Lands within the RDA’s were set aside as TUCs, and today include the Stony Trail in Calgary, and Anthony Henday Drive along with its accompanying infrastructure and pipelines in Edmonton.

While Alberta already uses TUC’s in the Edmonton and Calgary regions, there is more work to be done to further connect and serve additional urban centres and expand the networks to rural regions. The province also must ensure that networks are well connected beyond our provincial borders to reach Canadian and International import and export markets, and to ensure the ease of labour mobility. At a national level, there are corridor opportunities that could greatly enhance the economic position of Alberta & Canada’s broader economy.

An expanded network of TUCs will continue to reduce delays from red-tape and land-use conflicts, improve the integration of communities, and provide the necessary infrastructure to support citizens, jobs, our economy, and secure a strong quality of life for Albertans into the future.

⁴²⁶ <https://www.atb.com/company/insights/the-owl/alberta-population-projections-as-of-july-2022/>

⁴²⁷ <https://www.alberta.ca/population-statistics.aspx>

⁴²⁸ <https://www.alberta.ca/purpose-transportation-utility-corridors.aspx>

⁴²⁹ <https://www.alberta.ca/transportation-utility-corridors.aspx>

The Alberta Chambers of Commerce recommends that the Government of Alberta work with all levels of government, affected Indigenous groups and First Nations, partners and key stakeholders to:

1. Establish “pre-approved” transportation/utility corridor rights of way throughout Alberta that are capable of connecting outside its borders;
2. Develop a province-wide transportation/utility corridor plan that will serve to integrate all regions to support people, jobs, and the economy in Alberta;
3. Progress nation-wide connection projects, for example, corridors throughout the country that are designated for the construction and expansion of major linear projects.