

# ALASKA HIGHWAY COMMUNITY INITIATIVE

## CONFERENCE CALL MINUTES

**Date:** January 11, 2005

**Time:** 8:00 a.m. (Alaska)  
9:00 a.m. (Fort Nelson and Yukon)  
10:00 a.m. (Dawson Creek, Taylor and Fort St. John)

### Participants:

City of Dawson Creek	Mayor Wayne Dahlen, Interim Chair Councilor Bud Powell
District of Taylor	Terry Johnston, City Administrator
City of Fort St. John	Mayor Steve Thorlakson
Town of Fort Nelson	Director Shelley Middleton
Town of Watson Lake	Councilor Nancy Moore
Marsh Lake Local Advisory Council	Donna Larsen
City of Whitehorse	Councilor Dave Austin Sheila Dodd, Economic Development & Tourism Dept
Village of Haines Junction	Mayor John Farynowski Colin Dean, Chief Administrative Officer
Village of Teslin	Mayor Clara Jules
Teslin Tlingit Council	Regrets
City of Delta Junction	Mayor Pro tem Mary Leith Dowling
City of North Pole	Mayor Jeffrey Jacobson
City of Fairbanks	Regrets

**Coordinating Body:** Northern Rockies Alaska Highway Tourism Association  
April Moi, Executive Director  
Erma Stanonik, Special Projects Coordinator

### OPENING REMARKS

Opening remarks were given by Mayor Wayne Dahlen, City of Dawson Creek Interim Chair Alaska Highway Community Roundtable.

Wayne Dahlen opened the meeting with greetings to all and a special thank you to all communities who contributed seed funding of \$1000.00. He also reviewed the goals of the meeting:

- Approval of proposed organizational structure
- Approval of proposed stages
- Approval of Scenic Byways framework as a guideline for projects
- Approval to pursue funding applications for proposed project
- Recommend distribution list for revised discussion document

Wayne Dahlen requested to add procedure of media release distribution to the agenda.

## **PROGRESS REPORT**

Progress report was given by April Moi, Executive Director of the Northern Rockies Alaska Highway Tourism Association (NRAHTA); Coordinating Body of the Alaska Highway Community Initiative.

- April Moi reviewed the action items from the Alaska Highway Community Roundtable held on September 30<sup>th</sup> in Dawson Creek. The responses to the items are as follows:
- Community Roundtable Action Items
  1. Review Vision Document - There was concern expressed by several community signatories and senior levels of government regarding the structure of the proposed organizational body. It was deemed to be too bureaucratic, particularly for the preliminary stages.
  2. Consider seed funding of \$1000.00 – The response to seed funding has been very positive. To date funding has been received from 11 of the 13 communities including a corporate partner, BC Hydro.
  3. Consider funding for 2005 fiscal (April 2005 – March 2006) – We have received inquiries regarding future funding from several of the signatories and suspect more interest will be generated following this conference call.
- April Moi reviewed the proposed next steps outlined in the revised discussion document as presented. Highlights include:
  1. Seek participation from First Nation communities and two remaining communities along the Alaska Highway (Beaver Creek and Tok)
  2. A Participation Strategy will set the stage for consultations with all First Nation groups and communities along the highway and it will ensure that appropriate individuals and groups are contacted.
  3. Community Consultations will be organized as workshops to develop a common vision, and to identify top priorities.
  4. An Inventory Assessment will determine the current assets and areas of improvement, and evaluate the highway's intrinsic qualities. Current documentation will be used where available.
  5. The Corridor Management Plan will provide a long term strategy for the highway corridor and identify short term priorities to be implemented.
  6. A Communication Strategy will be developed to ensure all stakeholders are informed about the project's progress.
  7. We have adapted the framework of the National Scenic Byways program within the proposed stages. The Scenic Byway program is a community based program that engages the public. It provides a guide to identify, study, preserve and manage historic roads.

### **Discussion:**

Jeffrey Jacobson – Scenic Byway designation recognizes assets and intrinsic qualities of roadways, it does not impede development in any way, i.e. Las Vegas strip.

Mary Leith Dowling – Mentioned that the Northern Richardson Highway has been recently awarded State Scenic Byway status. Mary expressed concern regarding the future roles of Delta Junction, North Pole and Fairbanks.

Steve Thorlakson – Compared the healthy competition regarding which community is the true “Mile 0” between Delta Junction and Fairbanks with the friendly banter between Dawson Creek and Fort St. John. Steve encouraged a cooperative relationship between the two communities such as the one between Dawson Creek and Fort St. John.

Wayne Dahlen – The stretch between Delta Junction and Fairbanks is part of the Alaska Highway. The City of Dawson Creek demonstrates this point by including both communities on the “Mile 0” post.

**Conclusion:**

April Moi mentioned that community consultations will provide an opportunity for discussing the role of each community along the Alaska Highway. There was no further discussion.

**Upon suggestion, April Moi walked through the revised discussion document. The sections are identified as per the table of contents.**

**2.1 Organizational Structure**

**Question:** Donna Larsen – Asked for clarification on the difference between the organizational structure proposed in the initial document with the one proposed in the revised document.

**Discussion:**

Wayne Dahlen – The organization structure proposed at the Roundtable on September 30<sup>th</sup> was a complex system with an executive director located in Dawson Creek. Responses from communities and senior levels of government have indicated that this structure was too bureaucratic. It is proposed that the Northern Rockies Alaska Highway Tourism Association (NRAHTA) oversees the project for the interim with community signatories as a committee of NRAHTA. NRAHTA is a well established organization and will provide a simplified structure to administer the funds and move the project forward.

April Moi – We recognize that this is a community based initiative. It is proposed that the project be administered through NRAHTA’s operational procedures with direction from the signatory communities. NRAHTA reports its financial status to the board six times a year. A contribution agreement will be sent to each party.

Steve Thorlakson – Rendezvous ’92 was a good example of a community based initiative operated by seed funding. The key of its success was retaining control of deliverable projects that the Ministry supported in principle and financially.

**Conclusion:** Wayne Dahlen asked if anyone else had any questions or concerns regarding the proposed organizational structure. There was no response.

**2.2 First Nation Involvement**

**Question:** Clara Jules – Will the First Nation strategy include all First Nations along the Alaska Highway?

**Reply:** April Moi – A Participation Strategy will be developed that invites participation of all First Nation groups located along the highway. This strategy will be developed by First Nation Advisors. The strategy will include First Nation groups, existing community signatories, and communities who have not signed the MOU (Tok and Beaver Creek).

**2.3 Communication Strategy**

**Question:** Shelley Middleton – Asked for clarification regarding proposed communication strategy with senior governments.

**Reply:** April Moi responded that there has been dialogue with the BC Ministry of Small Business and Economic Development and with the Yukon Department of Tourism and Culture. The BC Ministry has offered to organize a meeting with bureaucrats in BC, Yukon and Alaska to address issues within each jurisdiction and to build partnerships and cooperation. Regarding other areas of communication, the Association is looking for direction from signatory communities.

#### **2.4 Creating a Common Vision through Community Consultations**

No discussion or comments

#### **2.5 Inventory Assessment**

April Moi – Assured community signatories that the Inventory Assessment will gather information from current resources. The participation, support and expertise of all communities will be required to assist in gathering information for a complete document.

#### **2.6 Corridor Management Plan**

April Moi – Described that this is a living document that may be altered according to changes in development, needs, opportunities, conditions, and funding. It is proposed that we follow the requirement of the Scenic Byway program so that the leg work is completed in the event that the communities agree to pursue the designation of an international Scenic Byway for the Alaska Highway.

#### **2.7 Funding Support and Monitoring System**

April Moi – Reviewed the funding applications with the Community Development Fund (CDF) based in the Yukon and the Western Economic Partnership Agreement (WEPA) between BC and Canada. April explained that the BC Ministry of Small Business and Economic Development suggested a meeting of the bureaucrats in BC, Yukon and Alaska be organized to develop partnerships and means of cooperation. The Association would appreciate input from the Alaska participants to identify key individuals to contact in Alaska.

#### **Discussion:**

Steve Thorlakson – It would be a great asset to have Senator Murkowski participate on behalf Alaska.

Shelley Middleton – It is important to include the Ministers responsible for Public Works.

Wayne Dahlen – Minister Ethel Blondin-Andrew, Minister of State (Northern Development), visited Dawson Creek and Fort St. John and indicated strong support for the initiative.

Bud Powell – Indicated that it is important to include Indian and Northern Development Canada in the strategy.

Steve Thorlakson – Indicated that David Emerson has been a supportive advocate for British Columbia, has worked cooperatively with Fort St. John on projects and will support other initiatives.

**Conclusion:** April Moi explained that a comprehensive list of stakeholder groups has been compiled for the Legacy Tour and the Forum. There was no further discussion.

#### 4.0 **Proposed Timeline**

April Moi reviewed the three phases proposed. The initiative has been organized on a project basis upon the suggestions of BC and Yukon Ministries.

**Comment:** Donna Larsen – According to a Scenic Byways expert, it is suggested that the initiative follow the Scenic Byway framework and requirements in preparation for potential designation.

#### 5.0 **Funding Structure**

**Discussion:** Steve Thorlakson - Confirmed that Fort St. John City Council ratified a contribution of \$10,000 towards the initiative for the 2005 fiscal year.

Wayne Dahlen – Thanked the City of Fort St. John and stated that their contribution sets the bar for other cities and towns to do the same.

Terry Johnston – Requested clarification on funding requested from cities with a low population base i.e. Alaska partners.

Mary Leith Dowling – Confirmed that the City of Delta Junction is a small city surrounded by no government with a fairly involved chamber of commerce. The city is working with the chamber to determine the level of support.

Steve Thorlakson – It may become problematic if we discuss the structure too much, in addition, Fairbanks does not have a representative on the call. Steve suggested that the funding structure proposed is simply a guideline for communities to review. Each community should determine the level of funding support they are able to budget whether it is a lesser or greater value compared to the amount indicated.

John Farynowski – There is a typo in the list of villages: Village of Delta Junction should read Village of Teslin.

Clara Jules – Teslin Tlingit Council and Village of Teslin conduct joint meetings. Clara asked if the two communities could submit a joint funding contribution. Also, Clara mentioned that she will speak to the Chief to appoint a designate for the Council.

Wayne Dahlen – The funding structure should be as straightforward as possible; therefore, it is the decision of the two communities regarding how they would like to submit a funding contribution.

**Conclusion:** There was no further discussion.

## **CONCLUSION**

Interim Chair Wayne Dahlen requested that the signatories make a motion to approve each of the action items by way of a formal motion:

**MOTION to approve the proposed organizational structure that designates the Northern Rockies Alaska Highway Tourism Association as the body to administer the Alaska Highway Community Initiative as an independent project, and to deliver the initiative according to NRAHTA's bylaws and financial monitoring systems. Each signatory community will become a member of NRAHTA thereby forming a committee which will provide direction to the NRAHTA Board of Directors.** *(Reference Document: Section 2.1)*

1<sup>st</sup> – Councilor Dave Austin, City of Whitehorse

2<sup>nd</sup> – Councilor Nancy Moore, Town of Watson Lake

Discussion: None. Carried.

**MOTION to approve the proposed stages in-principle including: develop a participation strategy with First Nation groups, signatory communities and non-signatory communities, develop a communication strategy, undertake community consultations, develop an inventory assessment and prepare a corridor management plan.** *(Reference Document: Section 2.2 – 2.6)*

1<sup>st</sup> – Mayor Steve Thorlakson, City of Fort St. John

2<sup>nd</sup> – Director Shelley Middleton, Northern Rockies Regional District (Town of Fort Nelson)

Discussion: None. Carried.

**MOTION to approve the Scenic Byways framework as a guideline for projects**

1<sup>st</sup> – Director, Shelley Middleton, Northern Rockies Regional District (Town of Fort Nelson)

2<sup>nd</sup> – Mayor John Farynowski, Village of Haines Junction

Discussion: None. Carried.

**MOTION to approve the pursuit of funding applications for the proposed projects**

1<sup>st</sup> – Mayor Steve Thorlakson, City of Fort St. John

2<sup>nd</sup> – Mayor Pro tem Mary Leith Dowling, City of Delta Junction

Discussion: None. Carried.

**MOTION to distribute the revised discussion document to stakeholder groups and senior levels of government**

1<sup>st</sup> – Councilor Nancy Moore, Town of Watson Lake

2<sup>nd</sup> – Mayor Clara Jules, Village of Teslin

Discussion: It is crucial to have the buy-in from the three governments of BC, Yukon and Alaska for the initiative. Shelley Middleton and Bud Powell indicated that there has been positive progress to date. Carried.

**MOTION to give the Chair and NRAHTA the authority to draft and distribute press releases to signatories prior to final release**

1<sup>st</sup> – Mayor Steve Thorlakson, City of Fort St. John

2<sup>nd</sup> – Councilor Dave Austin, City of Whitehorse

Discussion: Steve Thorlakson - Signatories will receive a copy of the press release prior to final distribution to media; however, there should be a tight timeline for signatories to make suggested changes to press releases. Carried.

**Closing Comments:**

Wayne Dahlen – A revised logo for the Alaska Highway Community Initiative will be sent to all signatories for review. Would like to design a one page brochure that will encourage visitors to stop in each community and acknowledge the initiative and resulting community partnerships.

Bud Powell – Thanked communities and NRAHTA staff. Bud also welcomed all communities as new members of NRAHTA. The NRAHTA board is well established and includes: Bud Powell - President, Fred Jarvis – Vice President and Shelley Middleton – Director (Northern Rockies Regional District).

Clara Jules – When are the community workshops expected to be held?

April Moi – The community workshops will likely be held in the spring or summer; however, we will review the time frame with the communities prior to scheduling the workshops.

Wayne Dahlen – The community workshops will require multiple trips up the highway which is quite expensive; therefore, it is requested that consideration be given to fund the initiative.

Shelley Middleton – Gave thanks to April and Erma for revising the document. It is a more grounded and structured document which will assist the initiative to move forward. It also includes the valuable Scenic Byway framework.

John Farynowski – Thanked April and Erma for their hard work. He also offered the assistance of Colin Dean, Village of Haines Junction, for future funding applications in the Yukon.

Mary Leith Dowing & Steve Thorlakson – Both echoed Shelley Middleton's comments.

Next conference call will be at the discretion of the Chair.