

Letter of Support

MLA Todd Loewen
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Canada T0H 1L0

Mr. Todd Loewen,

The Valleyview and District Chamber of Commerce would like to express its deep and unequivocal opposition to the proposed highway bypass for Valleyview. Any plan to bypass Valleyview would be fundamentally devastating to the local economy. Furthermore, the mere existence of this plan has created an atmosphere of low business confidence along our highway service corridor. The Chamber of Commerce believes that the only long term solution would be nothing short of eliminating the plan entirely. In the short term some business confidence could return with a letter from Alberta Transportation or the Minister of Transportation stating unequivocally that the bypass is not going to occur.

Despite the lack of an economic impact assessment preceding the realignment design, the existence of the plan has made it necessary to include in our town's planning. Due to this businesses are not confident that they can open or expand in Valleyview with a reasonable return on investment. The bypass is labeled as a "threat" in the latest draft iteration of the Intermunicipal Development Plan (2020) and the town's economic reliance on the highway is noted in both the Municipal Development Plan (2016) and Valleyview Economic Development Strategy (2017). Future commercial development of the highway corridor and the gateway areas are key goals of the Municipal Development Plan. Regardless of the lack of funding or political will to construct the bypass, it's mere existence and inclusion in planning documents causes investment to evaporate. So long as the plan exists on a shelf it will return to haunt our community.

From a historical perspective, Valleyview has already been bypassed once and shows the results of that. 50th Ave, which is commonly referred to as Main St., was at one point the travel corridor prior to the building of Highway 43 and the completion of the Whitecourt Cutoff in 1955. Since then Valleyview has worked hard to build a healthy and economically stable highway/travel service corridor, recently named Crocus Hill Gasoline Alley. While largely a success story, our Main St. still suffers from consistently high vacancy rates which mirrors the findings of economic studies on the topic*. The original bypass 65 years ago provided two advantages that this one cannot: Highway 43 connected Valleyview and the southern Peace Region to Edmonton much more efficiently, shaving hours off the travel. Secondly it was built directly south of the existing town and within town limits. The bypass that is currently planned circumvents Valleyview by kilometers and will devastate our gasoline alley businesses for the benefit of less than five minutes of time savings. Furthermore, studies confirm our fears and show that towns of Valleyview's size fair comparatively poorly** when bypassed and that the greater the distance, the greater the negative impact***. This bypass would likely increase vacancy, further depress real estate values, depreciate the tax base of the town and offer no

*Parolin, Bruno "ECONOMIC EVALUATION OF TOWN BYPASSES - Review of Literature" University of New South Wales For Roads and Maritime Services, 2011

**Chase, Margaret, and Kent Gustavson. "ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF HIGHWAY BYPASS DEVELOPMENT ON COMMUNITIES." DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC WORKS PROVINCE OF NOVA SCOTIA 2004

***Srinivasan, and Kockelman. "The Impacts of Bypasses on Small- and Medium-Sized Communities: An Econometric Analysis." *JOURNAL OF TRANSPORTATION AND STATISTICS*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2002.

recompense to the locals or Albertans as a whole. This massive investment only serves to harm a rural community with a negligible reduction in travel time and is not an effective use of our growing deficit.

Our town is intricately linked to the highway service corridor. As it exists today, it is a major income generator and a steady source of employment, even during downturns. Bolstering confidence will enable further growth and resilience for this corner of rural Alberta. Research supports our belief that being bypassed will do irreparable harm to our community. With six active municipal viability reviews in this province it is in the best interests of the provincial government to assist us in our effort to ensure our municipality's stability.

Please support our efforts to do away with this plan entirely and provide us with a letter stating that the bypass is indefinitely postponed in the immediate term.

We look forward to continuing the discussion and providing support where possible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Alvin Peters". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "A" and a long, sweeping underline.

President
Valleyview and District Chamber of Commerce