

## **Our Downtown Main Street and Highway #3 Re-alignment**

A clear message that was heard in our recent Official Community Plan (OCP) community engagement process was the desire to establish our downtown as a welcoming destination for people, not just a thoroughfare for cars. Achieving Phase 1 of the Highway #3 realignment was a strong first step in this direction. Phase 2 will see Highway #3 realigned from Canyon to Cook Street. This project is included in the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure's work plan and our Council is lobbying to see this project made into a reality in the next three to five years!

Phase 1 of our Highway #3 Realignment, (the new intersection at Pine Street and Northwest Boulevard), was completed in June of 2015. This was a \$5.4 million project that has greatly improved pedestrian safety, facilitated better truck movement and created a landscaped gateway to our downtown. This project demonstrates just a few of the positive outcomes that will come with Phase 2 of the Highway #3 Realignment.

Phase 2 involves relocating Highway #3 from 5 blocks of our downtown main street onto the parallel Cook Street, and re-joining Highway #3 in its present location just east of 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Importantly, we realize that it's not the big trucks that are stopping and shopping in our downtown. Relocating this kind of traffic will allow us to reclaim our downtown with widened sidewalks, a smooth road surface, robust greenery, angle parking, pleasant outdoor seating, street wide community events and more. The goal is to *prioritize* the pedestrian experience in our downtown while *accommodating* vehicular traffic. I firmly believe that achieving Phase 2 of the Highway #3 Realignment will be a huge win for our community.

I was first elected as your Mayor in November 2008. Since that time, the Realignment of Highway #3 has remained as a strategic priority of Council. By enhancing the experience of visiting, dining and shopping in our downtown, we know that the economic spinoffs will be great for local businesses and our community as a whole. We also recognize that change, even when it's for the better, can create uncertainty.

One of the myths that I hear about the Realignment is the negative impacts that will result for Prince Charles Secondary School (PCSS). These impacts include loss of instructional space on the playing field, safety issues and reduced air quality as a result of proximity to traffic. So let's take a closer look at some facts that relate to these concerns....

With regards to land acquisition, it is estimated that the Realignment will require the existing school field to be reduced by an area of approximately 680 m<sup>2</sup> (0.168 acres).

Within the slightly reduced field area, an Olympic size (FIFA) soccer field would still fit, or two U-11 size fields. It should also be noted that in addition to this field, PCSS currently has 1.23 acres of unused field (excluding the tennis courts), located to the south of the masonry block accessory building. If we change our thinking to consider potential gains that could be achieved in exchange for the small area of land required for the Realignment, we would ask if there are opportunities that aren't being considered to create wins for our students. Such wins may include new tennis courts, an enhanced soccer field, useable basketball courts or other amenities that can't be provided in the current School District budget.

With regards to safety concerns, I believe that one only has to look to Phase 1 (Pine Street and Northwest Boulevard Intersection) to see the enhanced pedestrian crossings that result from intersection enhancement. It is evident that our students will be provided with improved crossing points in a rebuilt and redesigned intersection. In addition, separation between the field and the Realigned Highway will be maintained with a robust setback buffer.

With regards to air quality, given its current location adjacent to Highway 3, PCSS would be no more exposed to vehicular and truck traffic that it currently is. For example, as it sits right now, the closest point of distance from the westerly HVAC unit on the school building to the highway is 71 metres (232 ft.). This existing distance will remain the closest point of contact along the proposed future Realignment. As such, HVAC units will not be located any closer to traffic as a result of the Highway 3 Realignment.

When undertaking a project of this scope, it's important that our community is provided with facts upon which it can make informed decisions. The realignment of Highway 3 is a great example of why myth busting and community enhancement need to go hand in hand. I personally believe that Phase 2 of the Highway #3 Realignment will greatly enhance both our downtown and our entire community for visitors and residents alike, including future generations.

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If you have other topics that you would like me to comment on, please contact me:  
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Email me at [ron.toyota@creston.ca](mailto:ron.toyota@creston.ca) , or  
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