



# EAST SIDE LAKE WINNIPEG TRANSPORTATION INITIATIVE

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## Government Of Manitoba Moves Forward With East Side Transportation Initiative

In the November 20th, 2008 Throne Speech, the Government of Manitoba announced its intention to move forward with the construction of an all-season road on the east side of Lake Winnipeg. The East Side Transportation Initiative (ESTI) is a program to provide improved, safe and more reliable transportation services between all of the communities on the east side of Lake Winnipeg and the rest of the province. The East Side Road Authority, Inc. (ESRA), a newly established interim agency, has been established to manage the ESTI.

## Large Area Transportation Network Study And Environmental Impact Assessment For All-Season Road From PR 304 To Berens River

The ESTI consists of two separate but interrelated components which are proceeding at the same time:

- **A Large Area Transportation Network (LATN) Study (The Study)** to review potential transportation options for the region on the east side of Lake Winnipeg within the Wabanong Nakaygum Okimawin (WNO) planning area;
- **Construction of an all-season road from Provincial Road 304 to Berens River First Nation (The Project)** including development of an environmental impact assessment and engineering design work

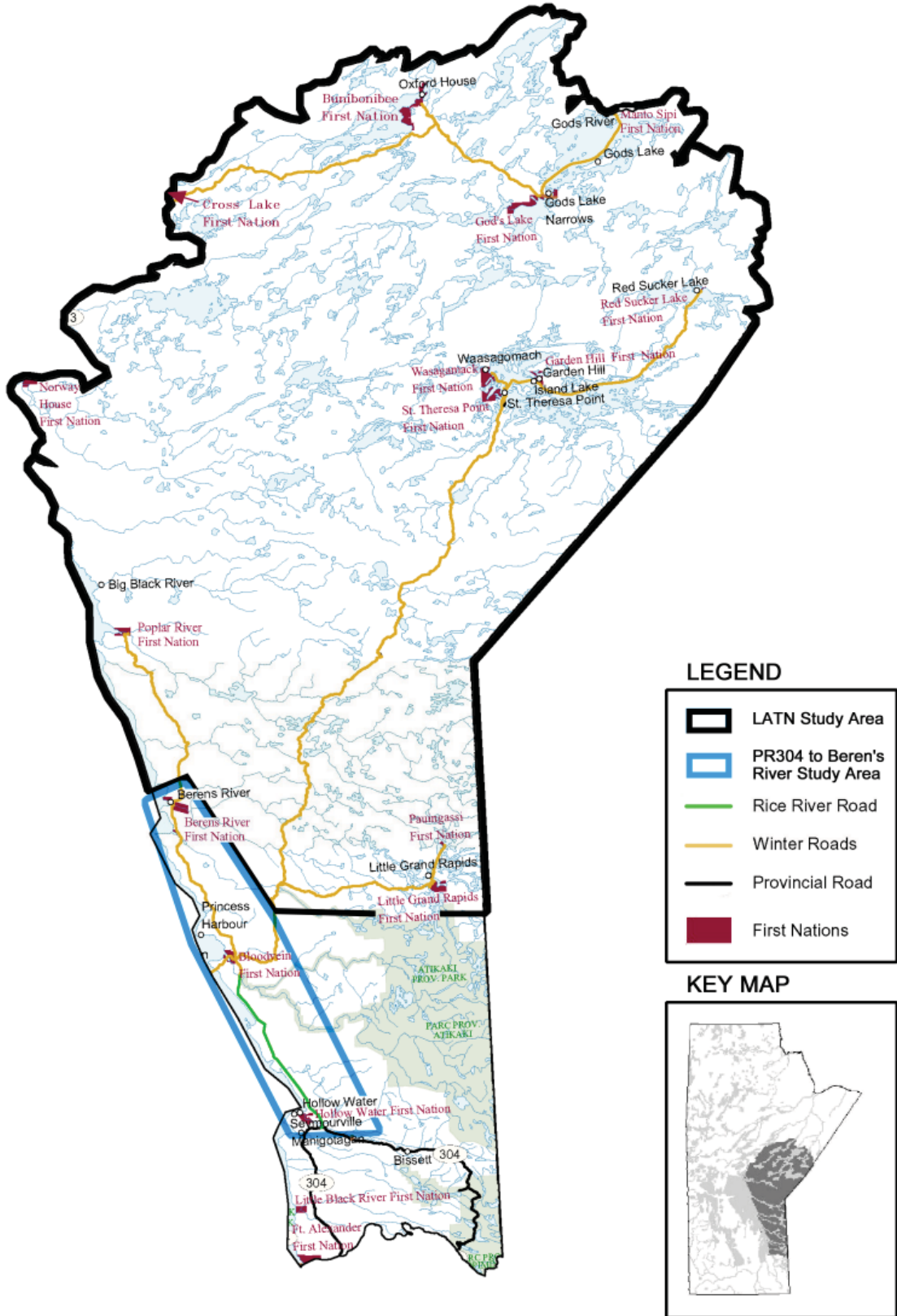
ESRA has hired SNC-Lavalin Inc., assisted by AECOM, both engineering consultancy firms, to conduct the studies and discuss the project with the residents of the east side. Work on both components has already begun.

This newsletter provides basic information about the project and the process. Subsequent newsletters will provide updates on the status of the initiative and the community engagement process. All newsletters will be available for the language commonly used at each First Nation location (Cree, Ojibway, Oji-Cree, and English).



# The Large Area Transportation Network Study Map

## East Side Transportation Study Area



# The Large Area Transportation Network Study

## THE STUDY

The Government of Manitoba has committed to examining transportation improvements in the east side region through the completion of a Large Area Transportation Network Study.

Improvements, identified through the study, are expected to serve the transportation needs of local communities, provide opportunities for social and economic development, as well as be environmentally sensitive and respectful of First Nations traditional activities, culture and land values.

## STUDY AREA

The geographic location of the study area extends from Bloodvein First Nation north to Oxford House and east to the Ontario Border.

## THE SCOPE

Improvements to the existing transportation system could include:

- Upgrades to the winter roads by moving them onto firmer ground and providing permanent bridges at major water crossings
- Provision of improved or new summer ferry service
- Use of all-season vehicles such as hovercraft
- Provision of all-season roads

Subject to community agreement, a long-term transportation goal will likely be to connect all existing communities, where feasible, by an all-season road to Manitoba's existing all-season road system. Where improved winter road routes, future all-season routes or transportation services such as ferries or hovercraft may be needed, community advice is being sought in order to minimize environmental impacts, while at the same time providing improved transportation service at minimum public cost for construction, operation and maintenance.

The Large Area Transportation Network Study consists of two parallel and interactive processes to study options to connect the east side communities to the rest of the all-season transportation network.

### 1 A Technical Process:

This process involves the identification of feasible all-season route alternatives based on important route selection criteria. The technical process will consider the following criteria:

- The suitability of the terrain, soils and surface geological deposits to accommodate the road and to provide sources of granular materials to build the road
- Protection of the natural environment with its important animal, plants and fisheries resources
- Protection of historical sites, artifacts, archaeological resources, local culture and traditional land uses
- Enhancement of opportunities for social and economic improvements by providing more reliable access to communities, potential development sites and renewable natural resources
- Provision of the most appropriate routes to enhance travel and trade opportunities between the East Side Planning Area and the rest of Manitoba
- Protection of traditional land and resources uses

### 2 Community Input Process:

This process involves entering into dialogue with people living in the study region in order to gain their insight into preferences and potential impacts associated with the development of an all-season transportation network. The community input process will include:

- Round One Community Meetings – (Spring/Summer, 2009) A round of community meetings to inform local residents about the study and to receive public input began in March 2009 and is currently underway;
- Traditional Knowledge (TK) Studies – (Summer, 2009) Studies will be undertaken to gather input from local residents on the environmental, social-economic and cultural implications of project development;
- Round Two Community Meetings – (Winter, 2010) A second round of community will be held to present detailed findings of the preferred route alignments based on input received from the first round of meetings and the TK studies.

More detail on the Community Input Process is described on Page 6.

## TIMING

The Large Area Transportation Network Study will be conducted over the next two years and is anticipated to be completed in the fall 2010, at which time a preferred alignment will be recommended.

# An All-Season Road From PR 304 To Berens River

## THE PROJECT

The Provincial Road 304 to Berens River All-Season Road Project entails the upgrading of the existing Rice River Road north of Manigotagan and construction of an all-season gravel surface road extension from the end of the Rice River Road to Berens River First Nation. The total length of the all-season road will be approximately 170 km.

Studies have started looking at options for the road location between Bloodvein and Berens River (approximately 80 km). The preferred alignment between Manigotagan and Bloodvein (approximately 88 km) follows the Rice River Road and was considered in an earlier study.

## STUDY AREA

The geographic location of the study area extends along the length of the road alignment from PR 304 to Berens River. Community engagement to gather information on the potential effects of the road includes not only the communities connected by the road but also the adjacent communities of Pauingassi, Little Grand Rapids, Little Black River, and Poplar River First Nations.

## THE SCOPE

Construction of the road to Berens River builds on previous work. Activities that are currently underway include the following:

1. Development of the detailed design of the first portion of the road from Loon Straits to Bloodvein.
2. Identification of the alignment of the roadway from Bloodvein to Berens River.
3. Development of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) in order to determine the potential impacts and mitigation measures associated with the project as a whole.

Upon completion, the EIA will be made available for public review and comment.

The study will include:

- Community meetings
- Community Traditional Knowledge Studies (TK Studies)
- Identification and comparison of various route options to determine the most appropriate route between Bloodvein and Berens River
- Road and bridge design
- Identification of opportunities and benefits created by an all-weather road
- Assessment of environmental, social and economic impacts
- Identification and comparison of various route options to select the preferred route
- Preparation of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for government, community and public review

## TIMING

- Study started January 2009
- Round One Community Meetings began in March 2009 and are ongoing
- Traditional Knowledge Studies began in spring 2009 and are being conducted on a community by community basis.
- Comparison of the route options and selection of the preferred route by July 2009
- Assessment of environmental, social, cultural and economic benefits and impacts are on-going and are scheduled for completion in late summer 2009
- Preparation of an EIA document by August 2009
- Submission of EIA to government and Round Two Community Meetings to discuss the preferred alignment and EIA findings in August 2009
- First contracts to be awarded in summer of 2010
- Construction is scheduled to begin in fall of 2010



## Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

Construction of PR 304 to Berens River is scheduled to start in the fall of 2010. However, prior to the start of construction, ESRA is required to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). An EIS describes the results of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and is prepared for large infrastructure projects which could have significant impacts and benefits on the environment, communities, and residents' way of life. The EIA is scheduled to be completed in August 2009, at which time it will be made available for public review.

The comprehensive Environmental Impact Assessment document (EIA) will:

- Identify and evaluate potential effects the project may have on the environment, communities, and residents' way of life
- Determine ways to avoid, reduce or mitigate potential negative impacts of the project
- Determine ways to enhance potential positive effects
- Establish follow-up and monitoring programs

Some of the studies that are being carried out as part of the preparation of the EIA include:

- Physical and Environmental Studies
  - Geology and soils
  - Water quality
- Aquatic Studies
  - Aquatic habitat
  - Species
- Terrestrial Studies
  - Rare plants
  - Large mammals
  - Vegetated habitat classification and mapping
  - Avian life
- Heritage Resource Studies
  - Burial Sites
  - Culturally important sites
- Social-Economic and Resource-use Studies
  - Land and resource use for traditional, recreational and commercial purposes (e.g. fishing and trapping)
  - Transportation and access



## Community Input Process: Community Engagement Plan

Community and stakeholder engagement is an essential part of these studies. The purpose of the community engagement process is to provide meaningful opportunities for people to receive information and identify issues and opportunities about the studies so they can be involved early in the project planning stage. Members of the study team have already introduced the two studies to the Wabanong Nakaygum Okimawin (WNO) Chiefs. Two rounds of community visits are being scheduled to gather input and feedback from each community potentially affected by the road development.

The study team will be meeting with community leaders and residents in each community, to explain the goals of the two studies, to show information already gathered, and most importantly, to listen to community feedback which could affect the location of the new routes.

### ROUND ONE COMMUNITY MEETINGS FOR THE PROJECT AND THE STUDY (SPRING-SUMMER 2009)

Round One Community Meetings for both the Large Area Transportation Network Study and the all-season road from PR 304 to Berens River Environmental Impact Assessment projects began the engagement process throughout the East Side Lake Winnipeg area to:

- Initiate dialogue about The Project and The Study
- Provide information on The Project and The Study
- Obtain feedback
- Document what was heard and incorporate feedback into The Project and The Study

### TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE STUDIES

An important component of the EIA process is the Traditional Knowledge Studies (TK Studies). TK studies will provide important perspectives from local residents on the environmental and social-economic implications of project development. The project team has initiated TK studies at several communities within the PR 304 to Berens River study area and the team is intending to complete the studies by June 2009. In July 2009, the project team will visit the communities to discuss the preferred alignment.

### ROUND TWO COMMUNITY MEETINGS FOR PR 304 TO BERENS RIVER ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT PROJECT (JULY 2009)

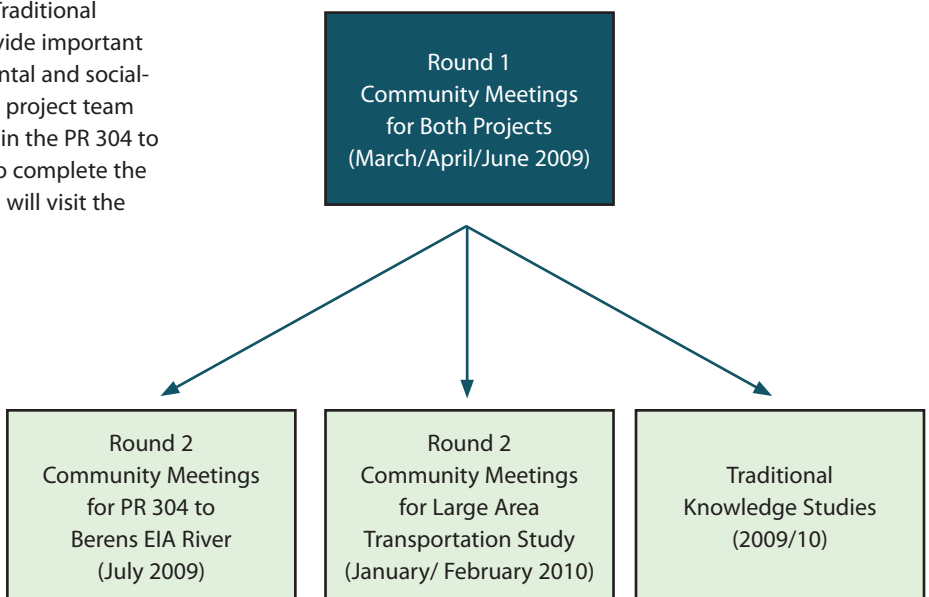
Round Two Community Meetings for the PR 304 to Berens River Environmental Impact Assessment project will present preliminary EIA findings about impacts of the project. The project team intends to:

- Describe project features and changes since Round One and the completion of TK Studies
- Discuss initial findings (Environmental, social-economic)
- Obtain input on possible mitigation measures
- Document what was heard and incorporate feedback into The Project

### ROUND TWO COMMUNITY MEETINGS FOR LARGE AREA TRANSPORTATION NETWORK STUDY (JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2010)

Round two of the community meetings for the Large Area Transportation Network Study will focus on the evaluation of the All-Season Road (ASR) network and route options and the selection of the preferred option. Key presentation materials at these meetings will include:

- Preferred ASR alignments overlaid on topographic/surficial/drainage maps
- Issues and opportunities along with mitigation measures relevant to the preferred ASR networks
- Overview of the TK studies
- Road development cost scenarios



## Community and Public Engagement Process to Date

To date, for the first round of community meetings, the project team has visited several communities, and has tentatively scheduled the meetings to visit other First Nations and Métis communities within the study area in the near future. The communities and tentative dates for community meetings are listed below:

To date, the meetings have provided good input from residents on the east side regarding the work underway. Some of the things we have heard so far include:

- Questions about job opportunities for local residents during the construction of the all-season road
- Benefits that an all-season road has for future generations
- Questions about the construction timing of an all-season road to Poplar River and to God's River
- A desire to ensure impacts on traditional lands are addressed
- The road would provide improved access to health care facilities and education
- Concerns with soil conditions between Bloodvein and Little Grand Rapids / Pauingassi
- Questions about impacts on traplines and wildlife
- Concerns that an all-season road might bring drugs and alcohol to the communities
- Interest in discussing social and economic development
- Questions about the design criteria for all-season roads
- Interest in discussing sustainable economic development
- Discussion on the effects on traditional ways of life
- Concern that outsiders may exploit the resources without benefit to local people

### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SCHEDULE

Community	Round One Community Meetings
Hollow Water FN	March 30, 2009
Bloodvein FN	March 31, 2009
Berens River FN, NACC	May 05, 2009
Poplar River FN	April 02, 2009
Little Grand Rapids FN, NACC	May 06, 2009
Pauingassi FN	May 07, 2009
Cross Lake FN, NACC	Pending and progressing
Norway House Cree Nation	Pending and progressing
Norway House NACC	Pending and progressing
Bunibonibee Cree Nation	Pending and progressing
Oxford House NACC	Pending and progressing
Manto Sipi Cree Nation	April 16, 2009
God's Lake FN	April 17, 2009
God's Lake Narrows NACC	April 17, 2009
Garden Hill FN	June 01, 2009
St. Theresa Point FN	Pending and progressing
Red Sucker Lake FN, NACC	Pending and progressing
Wasagamach FN	June 02, 2009
Island Lake NACC	Pending and progressing

FN = First Nations, NACC = Northern Affairs Community Council





## HOW TO CONTACT US

### PROJECT WEBSITES ESTABLISHED

The East Side Road Authority (ESRA) Inc. has established a website to provide more information on the ESTI. The site can be accessed at [www.eastsideroadauthority.mb.ca](http://www.eastsideroadauthority.mb.ca).

SNC-Lavalin Inc. has also prepared two websites regarding The Project and The Study. The web sites will be in operation by July 2009 and can be accessed at:

Large Area Transportation Network Study

[www.eslw.snclavalin.com](http://www.eslw.snclavalin.com)

The PR 304 to Berens River All-Season Road Project

[www.m-br.snclavalin.com](http://www.m-br.snclavalin.com)

### HOW TO CONTACT US

For further information please feel free to contact members of the study team.

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