

Deputy Minister Dan Doyle

Ministry of Transportation, Box 9850, Stn Prov Govt, Victoria, BC. V8W 9T5

February 11th 2005

Re: Highway 99 Rebuild Project and its Impact on the Rockclimbing Centres

Dear Mr Doyle,

The Squamish Access Society represents the interests of rockclimbers in the Sea to Sky region. We are writing to you regarding the high impacts the Highway 99 Rebuild carries for rockclimbing, both for the record, and to express disillusionment at the treatment of our major concerns.

In late 2003, when we were invited by your Ministry to engage in the Sea to Sky Highway Improvement Project's Recreation Focus Group, we understood the goal to be bettering the end result, and we embraced and cooperated in that objective without reservation.

Since then, we have spend hundreds of hours in meetings, phone calls, conducted tours with your staff, comissioned two professional reports, attended many other events with Ministry staff, answered their questions, and spoken clearly of the broad dimension of public recreation wants and needs. We have provided your staff with a sense of context, appropriateness, and priorities at the major interfaces of the Highway and climbing centres, with consistent argument on well-reasoned grounds. As volunteer citizens, we feel we have carried a heavy load in support of your Ministry's objectives.

At the RFG, we were listened to with interest; considerable at times. Your staff are hard-working people who have attended the smaller things diligently. But our strong disagreement over the type of intersection proposed at the Chief is still unresolved, and at other centres--Murrin excepted--the major impacts remain a serious concern. In September last, after most of a year with no progress on these matters, we wrote to Peter Milburn the STSHIP Executive Director with a reasoned and thoughtful letter on the situation. We are hopeful that your leadership will give rise to a fruitful reply.

The Rebuild directive of Safety, Reliability, and Capacity may be considered appropriate for municipal situations and general safety concerns, but it falls far short of wise design at the Chief. Its standing as a national-level asset of world-wide acclaim demands a higher level of treatment than your Ministry appears to intend. In our considered view, that fails both the broad public good and the flagship recreation economy of Sea to Sky. The Chief in particular is a window through which the world sees British Columbia. We appeal to you to reconsider the situation in this light.

From the beginning, we have encouraged a broad inter-agency approach toward a good solution for the complex of land issues at the Chief. We continue to advocate that view. In its simplest essence, the Chief intersection demands a type of treatment that recognizes truths that the STSIP considers to be beyond its authority. We believe that if senior levels in government re-assess the situation in this light, outstanding solutions will come forward.

There are two principal aspects to the Rebuild's interface at the Chief: the restoration of parking losses, and the type of intersection to be constructed. As we understand, the concept on the former--as outlined by Tom Bell of BC Parks--are good. However, the intended protected left-turn intersection is held in almost universal disdain for very valid reasons.

The Chief intersection carries a unique and high-value type of traffic in British Columbia, and so far your Ministry has refused to fully recognize this truth. In early 2004, we set out the reasonable principle of traffic calming as being essential to any solution. From our point of view, that could be accomplished by either traffic lights, a roundabout, or a southbound, diamond-type overpass. In the context of all relevant facts, the protected left-turn lane is a minimalist solution that falls far short of wise planning.

We ask respectfully for an opportunity to meet with you directly to discuss these matters. We hold the view there is much to gain or to lose; for the government, for the important recreation economy of this region, and the international view of how British Columbia guards one of its finest assets. We hope you will be able to accommodate this request.

Yours Sincerely



Kevin McLane

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The SAS represents the interests of climbers in the Sea to Sky region, and is affiliated with the Climbers Access Society of BC.

CC:

Gordon Campbell	Premier of British Columbia
Kevin Falcon	Minister of Transportation.
Bill Barisoff	Minister of Land, Water and Air Protection.
Peter Milburn	Executive Director, STSHIP
Ian Sutherland	Mayor, District of Squamish.
Brent Leigh	Deputy Administrator, District of Squamish
Tom Bell	Regional Planner, Minister of Land, Water and Air Protection
Bill Turner	Executive Director, The Land Conservancy
Anders Ourom	Executive Director, Climbers Access Society of BC.