



Report to the 2007 WCR&HCA Infrastructure Forum & Annual Meeting on the Western Canada Transportation System (WCTS) Initiative

Western Canada Transportation System (WCTS)

In March 2005 the Western Transportation Minister's Report (WTM Report) was released which for the first time witnessed the four western governments ignoring provincial boundaries and begin looking at developing a transportation system for western Canada in a regional, multi-modal, efficient, *'just in time'* competitive global context.

That report formed the basis upon which the Council of the Federation Report - the Premiers - in December 2005 again called upon the federal government to develop a *'national transportation vision.'*

The WCR&HCA, based upon the WTM Report, organized in October 2005 a western Canada stakeholder based group of individuals and associations to advance the notion and concept of a Western Canada Transportation System (WCTS). I have the privilege of chairing the WCTS Group which includes:

David Colledge – Colledge Transportation Consulting, B.C.
Ruth Sol, President WESTAC, B.C.
David Fung, Chair Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters of Canada (CME), B.C.
Dr. Roger Gibbins, President & CEO, Canada West Foundation (CWF)
Peter Wallis, President, Van Horne Institute, Alberta
Dr. Graham Parsons, President, Organization for Western Economic Cooperation (OWEC), Sask.
Dr. Barry Prentice, Director, Asper School of Business, Transport Institute, Manitoba
Chris Lorenc, B.A., LL.B., President WCR&HCA

The WCTS Group Mission statement is:

“To champion an integrated, internationally competitive, efficient, sustainable and secure multi-modal Western Canada Transportation System (WCTS), to achieve a healthy economy, environment and quality of life for Canadians.”

The WCTS Group met individually with all four western Canada Transportation Ministers promoting the stated Mission Statement and secured ongoing political commitment to the WTM Report which called for a \$16 billion - expressed in 2003 dollars - investment in western Canada's transportation system of which \$12 billion was earmarked for highways, bridges and related structures. The system was laid out strategically to enhance east west, north south trade and seize emerging trade with the Asia-Pacific Rim countries.

We offered the WCTS Group as a private sector ally to the provinces to promote the concept to the private sector, the federal government, the public and media. It flowed naturally from the WTM Report which itself called for enhanced collaboration with the private sector to achieve the objectives of the WTM Report.

As a result of those successful meetings each Minister committed their respective Deputy Minister to meet with the WCTS Group to pursue next steps. That meeting took place on December 16 & 17, 2007 in Vancouver, British Columbia.

Following presentations to the Deputies and general round table discussion the minutes record that:

“...it was unanimously agreed that a working group between the Deputy Ministers and the WCTS Group be established and co-chaired by Manitoba Deputy Minister Andy Horosko and WCTS Chair Chris Lorenc who would coordinate by May 2008 completion of the following steps:

- i) The Deputies undertook to update the WTM Report of March 2005 and add territory concerns;
- ii) The WCTS Group agreed to identify regulatory, legislative harmonization and investment impediments to the free flow of trade;

- iii) The two reports will be reviewed for approval by the 'Working Group' before moving to the next stage; and
- iv) A 'go forward' communications, media, public and government relations strategy would then be developed with responsibilities for 'go forward steps' being assigned – who best to carry out which element(s) – championed separately by each group, while others could be championed as a collective effort."

Following the election of the Saskatchewan Party to government, I was invited to meet Saskatchewan's new Infrastructure & Transportation Minister the Hon. Wayne Elhard to brief him on the Western Canada Transportation System (WCTS) initiative. This was facilitated by Deputy Minister John Law.

I met Minister Elhard on January 8, 2008 in Regina. The Minister was very supportive, assured that Saskatchewan wanted to play a leadership role in this initiative and committed that his Deputy Minister would be engaged in moving this project forward. It was a very supportive discussion which lasted for in excess of one hour.

Based upon the priorities and objectives laid out in the WTM Report, the WCTS Group is targeting to have its report with recommendations completed by the end of February to mid-March 2008.

I have already received recommendations from our partners, merged them into one document and re-distributed it for further review. The WCTS Group is scheduled to meet via conference call on February 25, 2008 to consider the recommendations, finalize the document, and submit it to Alberta Deputy Minister Jay Ramotar who undertook at the December 2007 meetings to ensure that the recommendations do not raise 'red flags' from government perspectives.

It is anticipated that by April, May 2008 the two sets of reports will be reviewed, hopefully signed off by the four western provincial governments and a next steps strategy adopted to pursue sustained federal and private sector partnership funding to build the system.

The environment in western Canada and at the federal level is supportive of investment in trade and transportation. Since the Harper government's election in January 2006, there have been a flurry of new trade and transportation related policy initiatives, including the *National Framework Policy for Trade Corridors and Gateways*, the *Build Canada Fund*, the enhanced *Asia-Pacific Gateway & Corridor Initiative (APGCI)*, the *Public Private Partnership Fund*, sustained and enhanced allocation to municipal governments from federal fuel taxes towards investment in municipal infrastructure and others all totaling \$37 billion over the next five to seven years – the largest level of infrastructure investment in our nation's history.

There is finally recognition by the national government that Canada's economic growth opportunities are closely aligned with burgeoning trade which can only be facilitated by a seamless multi-modal transportation system. We have seized upon those themes, promoted them in western Canada and lead the nation in this regard.

As a result of the WCR&HCA efforts, similar approaches have been developed in Atlantic Canada and as between Ontario and Quebec. This initiative is yet another example of the often overlooked and/or understated effectiveness of the WCR&HCA in the development and promotion of sound infrastructure public policy.

There is reason to be optimistic that this public policy initiative will result in significantly enhanced investment in transportation system assets in western Canada.

It will be the continued objective of the WCR&HCA to make the WCTS a reality to benefit not only western Canada but the nation as well.

Respectfully submitted,



Chris Lorenc B.A., LL.B.,
President WCR&HCA
January 26, 2008
WCR&HCA Infra Forum 07 '08/WCTS Report to AGM Feb '08