

ROADBUILDING

Nova Scotia's 5 year Highway Construction Plan

By Maurice Rees

This data has been compiled from the Nova Scotia's 5 year Road and Bridge construction plan released earlier this winter.

Introduction: The 2022–2023 Five Year Highway Improvement Plan outlines government's approach to building, repairing, and maintaining the province's 23,000 kilometres of roads and highways and its 4,100 bridges. The plan includes major highway and road projects, repaving, major bridge replacements, capital maintenance, and infrastructure work that the province plans to pursue annually, over the next five years.

Sharing the specific plans for road improvement in the Five Year Highway Improvement Plan early gives the province's roadbuilding sector a better opportunity to prepare for the more than 150 upcoming highway improvement projects in the coming fiscal year. It also keeps Nova Scotians informed about the important road and bridge improvements being made in their communities.

Gravel Road Program Doubled:

Nova Scotia has more than 8,400 kilometers of gravel roads and they make up 35 per cent of the provincial road network. In recognition of their importance, the Provincial Government has doubled the funding for the Gravel Road Capital Program, which sees it rise from \$20 million to \$40 million.

Funding for the program is used to improve existing gravel roads in rural Nova Scotia. It enables the proactive rebuilding of roads to improve the structure and drainage, resulting in longer-lasting roads, improved safety and reduced maintenance costs.

Major projects category:

New, Ongoing, and Recently Completed Construction will continue this season on the following twinning projects:

Highway 103, Ingraupport to Hubbards; Highway 101, Three Mile Plains to Falmouth;

Highway 104, Sutherlands River to Antigonish.

Construction on the Hwy 107 Sackville-Bedford-Burnside Connector, Highway 102 Aerotech Connector

The Bridgewater Interchange on Highway 103 will also continue this year

The multi-year construction of roundabouts and upgrades along Kings Road in Sydney.

Work to convert the Port Hastings rotary to a roundabout started in 2021 as part of the ongoing commitment to improve sections of un-twinning highways and will continue this season.

RIM Program Funding Doubled:

The Provincial Government has also doubled funding for the Rural Impact Mitigation Program (RIM), increasing it from \$11 million to \$22 million. RIM supports road maintenance improvements, including pavement and gravel patching, brush cutting, ditching, guardrail replacement and shoreline protection.

Ongoing expansion of twinned highways:

The department is continuing with its ambitious plan to twin highways, to be completed by 2024, at four locations around the province:

Highway 104, Sutherlands River to Antigonish twinning project (38 kilometres);

Highway 101, Three Mile Plains to Falmouth, including the Windsor Causeway (9.5 kilometres);

Highway 103, Tantallon to Hubbards (22 kilometres);

Construction of the four-lane Hwy 107, 2 Sackville-Bedford-Burnside Connector between Burnside and Bedford in suburban Halifax (9 kilometres).

The department will continue to invest in safety improvements for highways not being twinned. That work involves improving at-grade intersections and adding passing lanes, climbing lanes, and turning lanes as well as roundabouts.

Planning and Design:

Planning and preliminary design work is underway on several intersections such as: Highway 104/Route 334 at Aulds Cove; turning lanes at Highway 105 and Tobin Road; intersection improvements at Trunk 4/16; intersection improvements at Route 215/Trunk 14; a dedicated left turning lane on Trunk # 3/Hard-scratch Road. These are all scheduled to be built this construction season.

Other safety improvements, such as the construction of passing lanes on Highway 107, between Exit 18 to 19, as well as a wildlife crossing on Highway 107, between Exit 17 and 18, are also in the planning and design stages for construction this season.

Construction of new rest stops on Highway 104, between Exits 8 and 10, near the Cobequid Pass toll plaza, will begin this year. The roundabout at the Granton – Abercrombie Road Intersection on the Trenton Connector and the Highway 102 Lantz Interchange and Connector were completed in 2021. Passing lanes were also added on Highway 103, between Exits 9 and 10.



Pavement Preservation:

Unlike many other provinces, the Province of Nova Scotia is responsible for maintaining the majority of public roads in the province (90 per cent). The cost per kilometre is over \$300,000 to repave, \$500,000 to \$750,000 or more to upgrade a trunk highway, and \$4 million to \$6 million to twin a highway.

While severely damaged roads will continue to be addressed, a portion of the highway improvement budget will be set aside to help conserve paved roads before they become damaged and need costly repairs. This approach ensures that funding is used more efficiently and effectively. It is more sustainable in the long term.

Pavement Preservation is a cost-effective approach to road maintenance. It involves resurfacing a road before it begins to wear, usually with a single layer of asphalt, chip seal, or microsurfacing.

Every dollar spent on pavement preservation before a paved road is 15 years old can eliminate or delay having to spend \$6 to \$14 on rehabilitation or reconstruction when the pavement surface has failed.

Construction Projects for the remainder of the 2022-2027, 5 year plan are listed (page 15) on these special pages on a year by year basis.

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