

June 7, 2023

The Honourable Omar Alhabra
Minister of Transport
Transport Canada
330 Sparks St
Ottawa, ON, K1A 0N5

Dear Minister Alhabra,

RE: Support for Funding of Harris Road Underpass in the City of Pitt Meadows

On behalf of the Board of Education of the Maple Ridge Pitt Meadows District, I am writing to express the Board's full support for the City of Pitt Meadows in their advocacy efforts for federal funding for the construction of the Harris Road Underpass. We believe that this critical infrastructure project is of utmost importance for the safety, connectivity, and well-being of our students, staff, and the entire Pitt Meadows community.

Pitt Meadows is a vibrant city with a single high school that serves both sides of the tracks. Currently, the only bus route in the city runs along Harris Road, creating a situation where students, staff, and residents must frequently cross the railway tracks. This poses significant challenges, as increased train traffic is anticipated in the coming years, and the existing at-grade crossing on Harris Road is projected to experience blockages of approximately 7.5 hours per day. This not only impacts the efficiency of transportation but also raises significant concerns about emergency response times.

The benefits of the Harris Road Underpass are numerous and far-reaching. Perhaps most importantly, the underpass would enhance emergency response capabilities, enabling police, ambulance, and fire services to reach our schools quickly and efficiently, ensuring the safety and well-being of our students in the event of an emergency. Additionally, it would improve commute times for all road users, separating trains from vehicles and providing a dedicated space for pedestrians and cyclists. By reducing vehicle emissions and congestion, the underpass aligns with our collective efforts to promote sustainable transportation and combat climate change.

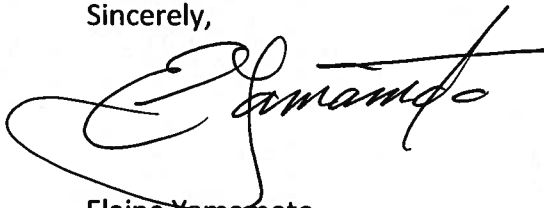
Finally, the Harris Road Underpass would foster stronger community connections and make Pitt Meadows an even more livable city. It would eliminate the division caused by the rail line, ensuring that students and residents on both sides can access essential services, recreational facilities, and employment opportunities with ease. The project aligns with national, provincial, regional, and local interests, as it improves transportation infrastructure, enhances safety, and supports economic growth in the region.

Failure to implement the Harris Road Underpass would have severe consequences for the community. With projected doubling of train traffic in the next decade and Canadian Pacific (CP) proceeding with their plans for a third track along Harris Road, the current at-grade crossing would experience increased blockages, leading to significant disruptions for businesses and impeding economic development in the area. Moreover, it would further divide the community, exacerbating the challenges already faced due to the existing rail line. The negative impact on the quality of life for students, workers, and commuters cannot be underestimated, and the crossing's current identification as one of the top 500 highest-risk railway crossings in Canada highlights the urgent need for action.

In conclusion, we urge the federal government to prioritize funding for the Harris Road Underpass project. The positive outcomes of this infrastructure investment are vast, ranging from improved emergency response times and enhanced safety to reduced congestion, lower emissions, and strengthened community connections. It is an investment in the present and future well-being of our students, staff, and the entire Pitt Meadows community.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I trust that you will consider our request for funding and support the City of Pitt Meadows in their pursuit of a safer, more connected, and livable city.

Sincerely,



Elaine Yamamoto
Board Chairperson
Board of Education of the Maple Ridge – Pitt Meadows District

cc: The Board of Education, School District No. 42 (Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows)
The Honourable Lisa Beare, Minister of Citizen Services
Marc Dalton, MP, Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows
Nicole MacDonald, Mayor, City of Pitt Meadows
Harry Dhillon, Superintendent of Schools
Flavia Coughlan, Secretary Treasurer
Mark Roberts, CAO, City of Pitt Meadows