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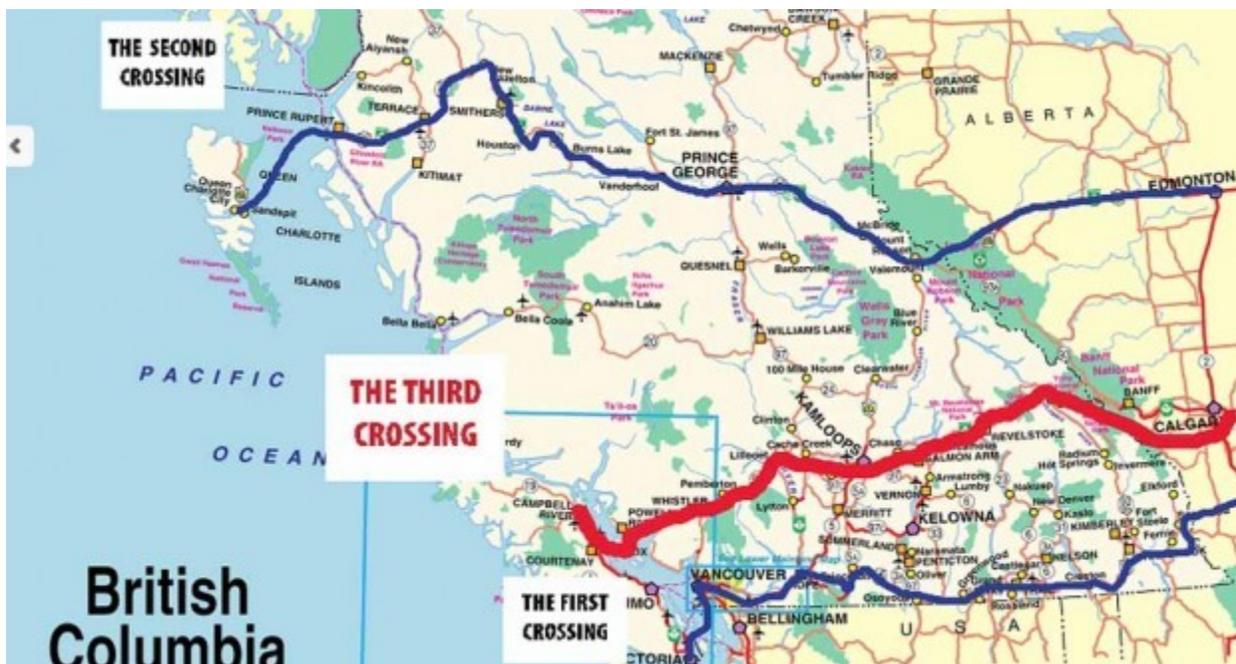
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Seeking local support for Third Crossing

By: [Adam Williams](#), December 9, 2015

Might Kamloops be the terminus for a new route to the Sunshine Coast?

That's what Gary Friance and the Third Crossing Society are hoping for after a government-issued request for proposals (RFP) has renewed talk of another route linking the Lower Mainland and Interior with the province's coast.

The RFP, issued on Nov. 26, is seeking a consultant to lead the process of examining possible routes to the Sunshine Coast, soliciting and processing feedback from communities and interested parties while examining the business case of the project.

Kamloops-South Thompson MLA and Minister of Transportation Todd Stone said the province is in the early stages of what would be a "multi-billion-dollar project.

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“What we do know is there’s a tremendous amount of untapped potential on the Sunshine Coast from an economic perspective that, if it were more convenient and more efficient to get to and from the Sunshine Coast, that economic potential could be unleashed,” he told *KTW*.

The RFP has a budget of \$250,000.

It lists four previously identified routes, including a Powell River to Highway 99 road link, a Port Mellon and Squamish road link, a Port Mellon and Highway 99 bridge link and an Earls Cove to Saltery Bay bridge.

Once a consulting firm is selected, it will have until late summer to submit the first draft of its report, with the final version following three to four months later.

It’s the link between Powell River and Highway 99 that Fribance, president of the Third Crossing Society, favours.

“Our proposed road would access us to both the Interior and the Lower Mainland,” he said.

The link would connect to Highway 99 south of Whistler and would allow travellers to access the Interior via Whistler, Pemberton, Lillooet, Cache Creek and, eventually, Kamloops.

“Transportation has always been a key to expanding economies,” Fribance said, citing the boon in Kamloops following the enhancement of the Fraser Canyon and construction of the Coquihalla Highway.

“I think our area and the north and central part of Vancouver Island have suffered with the demise of the forestry industry,” he said. “So have the Cariboo logging communities and so on.

“We’ve got an opportunity for significant economic growth by improving the transportation issues.”

The economic concerns aren’t exclusive to Powell River.

Stone said he and fellow MLA Jordan Sturdy (West Vancouver-Sea-to-Sky) have heard similar worries from many communities.

“For the entire time I’ve been the minister of transportation, I’ve had a good a number of meetings with mayors and councils throughout the Sunshine Coast who have consistently said to me, ‘We’d like the province to take a look at this. Let’s update the information, let’s update the numbers, let’s get a current sense of what this type of crossing could potentially cost and what the benefits would look like,’” Stone said.

A new crossing has been studied a handful of times in the last 30 to 40 years, but not recently.

Fribance has approached the Thompson-Nicola Regional District, seeking a letter of support for the Third Crossing Society, though the district wants more information.

Fribance plans to again approach the regional district in coming months. If the TNRD agrees to lend support to the project, he will then proceed to surrounding regional districts and, eventually, municipal governments.

But, until it has more information, the TNRD is unable to comment on the viability of the link.

“Any new highway that provides more direct access to the skiing resorts, golf opportunities that we have in the Interior, I think any highway initiative that would enhance access to our area for people interested in enjoying the benefits that we have available, I think is a good thing,” said Jon Ranta, chairman of the TNRD and mayor of Cache Creek.

“That’s broadly speaking. But, it’s difficult to indicate support for a particular initiative when we don’t know more details about what’s being proposed.”

Though it won’t directly impact residents in the Tournament Capital, Fribance believes a third crossing would improve quality of life for British Columbians and would open up valuable tourism opportunities along the Sunshine Coast and the north of Vancouver Island.

“We’re realizing that this road means more to us than it does to the people in Kamloops, but it also deserves their support, we believe,” he said.

“I think there’s probably some folks that live in the Kamloops area that wouldn’t mind catching a 40-pound salmon at Winter Harbour at the north end of Vancouver Island.”

There are, of course, opponents of the project, those who live on the Sunshine Coast because of its seclusion from the daily stressors faced by residents in more populated locales.

But, Fribance doesn’t think those concerns will be a major impediment to the project’s approval.

“I think its fair to say that we love the seclusion, but the isolation is killing us,” he said, noting the population could double in most communities and residents would remain relatively secluded.

“It is an issue, but it’s a minor issue.

