



FNMC-01

Topic: Construction Schedule

Reviewer Preamble:

FNMC appreciates and supports the optimal schedule presented by GNWT in MVEIRB-1. In particular, FNMC supports construction advancing concurrently from Norman Wells to Tulita as well as from Tulita to Norman Wells; Wrigley to Tulita as well as Tulita to Wrigley. In MVEIRB-1, the GNWT has stated a number of assumptions.

Reviewer Request:

1. What is the GNWT doing to prioritize an expedited schedule for the Project? Specifically, what is the current status of:
 - a. Design for construction for the entire alignment?
 - b. Securing land tenure?
 - i. In answering this question, please confirm the status of discussions with Tulita District Land Corporation (TDLC) to identify and obtain tenure for the current road alignment over Sahtu Lands listed in the Sahtu Dene and Metis Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement. If GNWT has not yet approached TDLC to commence this process, when does it expect to do so?
 - c. Funding for regulatory authorizations and construction?
 - d. Applications for regulatory authorizations in anticipation of a positive EA recommendation?
 - e. Procurement?
 - i. In answering this question, please comment specifically on whether the GNWT will commit to tendering the project in smaller packages so that local contractors can benefit. This would seem especially feasible under the optimal scenario with concurrent construction from multiple headings. Is there an assumption that the entire project would need to be tendered to one single contractor, and why?
2. For each of the answers above, what are the specific hurdles the GNWT is facing, and what concrete measures can be taken to overcome those hurdles?
3. Under the optimal scenario, where would construction camps be located? Would there be a camp north of the Great Bear River to advance the road work north of Tulita?
4. There is an assumption that the initial construction period of 20 years would maximize community benefits. Where does that assumption come from, and is the GNWT willing to revisit that assumption? Doesn't the benefit of building the highway sooner far outweigh the benefits



from a staggered construction period? Particularly when there is considerable uncertainty about what the environmental conditions will be in 20 years?

Response from the Government of the Northwest Territories:

1. and 2.

The GNWT notes that the ‘optimal schedule’ of 3-4 years referenced in the response to MVEIRB IR#1 does not replace the GNWT’s proposed project and project construction schedule of 10 years of construction over a 20-year period, that is described in the Developer’s Assessment Report. Rather, the GNWT considers the 3–4-year construction timeline an alternative method to construction.

The GNWT is submitting a supplemental filing (Supplement to the Developer’s Assessment Report Chapter 7: Assessment of Alternatives) to be posted on the public registry, which will provide a qualitative assessment of the accelerated construction timeline.

a. The Project is currently at an early level of design. Design of a highway of this length happens in a staged approach and each stage may take time to complete. The GNWT is advancing studies to inform the design along the whole project route concurrent with the environmental assessment (EA) so as to ideally have a construction-ready project by the end of the EA. Bathymetry, fish and fish habitat assessments, and archaeological assessments were carried out in the Dehcho and Sahtu in August and September of 2024. Geotechnical drilling is planned for the upcoming winter. Sequencing of these studies is season dependent. For example, archaeology assessments require snow free conditions while geotechnical drilling is ideally completed in the winter.

Work to advance the alignment in the Dehcho also involves engaging with and supporting Pehdzeh Ki First Nation in carrying out traditional knowledge studies to identify a suitable route alignment. The response to IR# MVEIRB-66, provides further context on the alignment discussions in the Dehcho. In addition, Section 5.2 in the Developer’s Assessment Report provides further information on design considerations and design development from environmental assessment to construction.

b. The GNWT has had preliminary discussions with TDLC about the need for further examination of the route alignment in consideration of Sahtu Lands once the alignment design is completed. Given the current level of design, it is premature to advance specific land tenure discussions. When the alignment in the Sahtu is known, the GNWT will continue to advance discussions with TDLC.

c. The GNWT currently has funding for the EA and to pursue regulatory authorizations upon completion of the EA. This funding does not include the construction of the Project and, therefore, additional funding will be required for construction. The cost of the Project has increased since the 2015 estimates that are used in the Developer’s Assessment Report were generated, and the construction cost is currently unknown. A revised cost estimate and updated business case for the Project is under development and anticipated to be completed in early 2025. This work will inform the GNWT’s discussions with Canada on financial support necessary to advance the project.

d. The GNWT is, concurrent to the EA, advancing design for the Project in anticipation of a positive EA recommendation. The GNWT will apply for the required regulatory permits as soon as possible following the Ministers’ Decision on the EA, in order to acquire the required



authorizations for construction according to the regulatory timelines.

e. Procurement

- i. At this time, the method of procurement for the construction of the highway has not yet been established and will depend on funding received. The Project will entail a variety of needs for provision of goods and services during construction at different scales and at different stages of construction. Although the structure of contracts has not yet been developed, GNWT's intent is that the Project will provide opportunities for NWT businesses and contractors at all scales to participate equitably, maximizing employment and developing capacity throughout the region.
3. Please refer to the Supplemental Filing: Consideration of Accelerated Construction Alternative, which notes that construction camps may be established at locations such as existing work camp facilities within Norman Wells, or at locations outside of municipal boundaries, such as at one or more borrow sources or quarries to be accessed from the Mackenzie Valley Winter Road. Specific camp locations for the accelerated construction alternative were not identified; however, a construction camp would be required between Tulita and Norman Wells to support the construction of Segment 3.
 4. The comparison of the Project to alternative methods of construction (in Section 7.3.2 of the Developer's Assessment Report; and in Supplemental Filing Section [Section 1.2]) indicates that construction over a longer duration can increase opportunities for longer-term construction-related training, employment, and business opportunities because the construction will occur over longer timeframe. The longer timeframe provides opportunities to apply new skills, work, or to operate a new business. Once the highway is constructed from end-to-end, the alternatives do not differ in terms of socio-economic benefits, or adverse environmental effects, except that the benefits associated with an accelerated construction alternative may be realized earlier than with the Project and short-segment alternative.



FNMC-02

Topic: Socioeconomic Related Mitigation

Reviewer Preamble:

“FNMC appreciates the proposed Socio-economic related mitigation presentation provided by GNWT and DPRA to the community in May 2024. FNMC looks forward to further information on this as the diagrams were confusing and poorly understood by the community.”

Reviewer Request:

1. Who will be on the Mackenzie Valley Highway Corridor Working Group. Is there a draft list of participants?

2. Different communities along the route will be affected differently. The proposed working groups appear to be regional rather than specific. Will there be a specific working group for Tulita, specifically with respect to social monitoring?

3. Who will be responsible for ensuring the mitigation measures identified by the working groups will be implemented? And who will provide funding?

(a) Arguably, the GNWT has not provided enough support for drug and alcohol and mental health challenges in Tulita to date. What commitments can the GNWT make to mitigate these challenges in the future, when they are going to be exacerbated by the project?

4. Has the disruption to the barges in recent years been considered in terms of its impact on the cost of living in the communities? Does the DAR give sufficient weight to the positive impacts on cost of living in the communities from the project? Is that positive impact considered a mitigation measure in and of itself?”



Response from the Government of the Northwest Territories:

Request 1

The participants in the Mackenzie Valley Highway Corridor Working Group (MVHCWG) and the three Sub-Working Groups envisioned as part of the Community Readiness Strategy have not yet been identified. It is anticipated that representatives would be identified collaboratively with communities.

The Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) has carried out engagement on the proposed mitigations and remains open to working with communities as the project advances to refine them, if needed. The proposed mitigations may complement the GNWT's existing programs and services to prepare communities to participate in economic benefits associated with the project. As required, adaptive management responses will be developed collaboratively with communities. As outlined in the Developer's Assessment Report (DAR), the GNWT is proposing to advance development of the Corridor Working Group one year prior to the start of construction. The purpose of this action is to ensure that communities are able to benefit from the training, employment, and business opportunities associated with the project, as well as adapt or prepare for other project impacts. The GNWT has heard a desire from communities to commence this work as soon as possible. The GNWT would like to clarify our commitment, in that we commit to establishing these working groups and related sub-committees a minimum of one year prior to construction. Specific commencement dates will be established through further discussions with communities.

At this time, and as described in Section 9.16.2 of the DAR, the GNWT has proposed that the MVHCWG be composed of representatives from:

- Indigenous Governments
- Community governments
- Community organizations (e.g., Renewable Resources Councils, land corporations)
- Aurora College
- Government of Canada
- the GNWT Departments of Justice (JUS), Infrastructure (INF), Education, Culture and Employment (ECE), Health and Social Services (HSS), Municipal and Community Affairs (MACA), Executive and Indigenous Affairs (EIA), Industry, Tourism and Investment (ITI), and Housing Northwest Territories (Housing NWT)
- GNWT Consultants
- Construction Contractor

Three Sub-Working Groups have also been proposed as part of the Community Readiness Strategy, that are envisioned to include representatives with particular expertise and interest in particular subjects. These are also described in sections 9.16.2.1 – 9.16.2.3 of the DAR:

- The Road Safety and Security Sub-Working Group will be comprised of representatives from



the GNWT Departments of INF, MACA, JUS, HSS as well as RCMP, and representatives from community governments and other affected parties (e.g., groups working with youth and women) (as described in Section 9.16.2.1 of the DAR).

- The Training and Employment Sub-working Group will include representatives from the GNWT, education and industry partners, and community leadership and organizations as determined by the MVHCWG (as described in Section 9.16.2.2 of the DAR).
- The Social Monitoring and Adaptive Management Sub-Working Group is to be comprised of representatives of the communities and community organizations, and from the GNWT Departments of INF, ECE, HSS, MACA, JUS, Housing NWT, as well as community governments, RCMP, and relevant social and health agencies or other affected parties. Given that Project-related social and health effects may be felt in both the LAA (Norman Wells, Tulita, Wrigley) and also extend to the RAA (Fort Good Hope, Colville Lake, Délı̄ne, Fort Simpson), the Working Group will include representatives from both local and regional communities (as described in Section 9.16.2.3 of the DAR).

Request 2

The GNWT is committed to a participatory, collaborative, and community-driven approach to forming the MVHCWG and the Sub-Working Groups. Since community engagement sessions are ongoing, the specific details of the MVHCWG and the three Sub-Working Groups have yet to be developed, including whether they will focus on specific communities or take a broader, regional view. However, in proposing the Community Readiness Strategy, the GNWT recognizes the importance of the need for local peoples and local knowledge to shape the final composition and focus of the MVHCWG and each Sub-Working Group and their associated Plans. The GNWT thanks the Fort Norman Métis Community (FNMC) for the feedback regarding the focus of the MVHCWG and Sub-Working Groups and will consider this feedback alongside other comments provided on the Community Readiness Strategy as part of community engagement. If community engagement sessions prompt any modifications to the mitigation measures, the GNWT will file them with MVEIRB at a later date.

Request 3

The GNWT has committed to implementing the Community Readiness Strategy, which includes the establishment of the Working / Sub-Working Groups, and their associated Plans. The responsibility for implementation of mitigation measures may be shared among various parties (e.g., GNWT departments, Indigenous organizations, Indigenous Governments, other appropriate authorities, etc.) and will depend on the outcomes of the work of the Working / Sub-Working Groups. The Monitoring and Follow-up Framework for socio-economic valued components that is described in Section 9.15 of the DAR includes elements intended to support how commitments outlined under the Community Readiness Strategy will be achieved:

“The monitoring and follow-up framework will ensure that:

1. The Working Group and three Sub-Working Groups develop and implement the five specific relevant plans described in Section 9.16.2



2. Monitoring is in place to ensure that substantive and procedural commitments are achieved:
 - a. *Substantive in Support of the Plans:*
 - i. Information is available to support the development and implementation of the five plans (including the *Social Monitoring Plan* and *Well-Being Adaptive Management Plan*)
 - ii. Identification of relevant data/indicators already collected for other purposes (e.g., existing government-led, local or regional community-based monitoring)
 - iii. Identification and collection of relevant project-specific data/indicators
 - b. *Substantive in Support of Understanding Potential Effects of the Project:*
 - i. Potential adverse effects, including cumulative effects, with emphasis on effects identified as significant, or that are a priority for communities
 - ii. Potential benefits/positive effects
 - iii. Identification of new/emerging effects not identified in the DAR
 - iv. Allow for attribution of effects to the Project, or proportional attribution in cases where there are multiple factors contributing to changes in the socio-economic environment
 - c. *Procedural:*
 - i. The Working Group, Sub-Working Groups and five plans are developed and implemented within the identified timelines and compliant with the approaches described in Section 9.16, and the Working Group/Sub-Working Group processes (e.g., Sub-Working Groups are established, are following the guiding principles and meeting process as described in the DAR) are implemented/functional.
 - ii. Ensure that the groups/plans include mechanisms for adaptive management to address any adverse effects that are worse than predicted or were not predicted, as well as instances where positive effects/benefits or opportunities were not fully realized as predicted.”

In support of the implementation of measures that are developed as part of the Community Readiness Strategy, GNWT has also committed to funding the MVHCWG and the three Sub-Working Groups (as described in more detail in Section 9.16.2 of the DAR). In summary, the GNWT will provide base annual funding and one representative each from HSS and INF to the MVHCWG. The GNWT will provide representatives, funding for logistics, and share information with the three Sub-Working Groups. In addition, for the Road Safety and Security Sub-Working Group, the GNWT will provide additional funding to LAA communities to develop safety plans, and financial support for one part-time community-based implementation coordinator. Further, the GNWT will also provide the Social Monitoring and Adaptive Management Sub-Working Group with additional funding for monitoring, public reporting, and communications expenses.

Detailed plans and a framework for the operation of the MVHCWG and Sub-Working Groups are not yet available as it is anticipated that these would be developed collaboratively with communities to ensure that the development and implementation of the components of the Community Readiness Strategy are appropriately responsive to community needs.



Request 3a)

The GNWT’s assessment of potential effects of the Project on social pressures (described in Sections 8.2.2 and 9.5.6 of the DAR) identified the seriousness of the drug and alcohol problem already present in LAA and RAA communities. Although the proposed mitigation measures will not be able to eliminate the increasing adverse impacts of alcohol and drug use in communities, the GNWT has committed to implementing a Well-Being and Adaptive Management Plan to address the Project’s effects on community wellness, and substance abuse and bootlegging. The nature of the adaptive management approach is such that communities and the GNWT will collaboratively monitor how existing programs and services perform over time and identify potential needs and areas for change.

Request 4

The DAR was submitted in 2023, before the impacts associated with barge disruptions in 2023 and 2024 were evident, and thus their influence on cost of living was not fully considered in the socio-economic assessment.

While addressing the broader cost of living concerns in communities is beyond the scope of the mitigation strategies for the proposed Project, the GNWT has proposed the Community Readiness Strategy (described in Section 9.16.2 of the DAR) as a means to flexibly address and respond to a variety of community needs. For example, the Strategy is intended to account for existing conditions in developing and implementing plans, and the adaptive management and monitoring approach can facilitate the necessary discussions with communities about any cost-of-living impacts that may be identified as attributable to the Project.

While a positive effect of the Project cannot be considered as mitigation in and of itself, the socio-economic assessment in the DAR did consider both positive and adverse effects as part of the assessment to determine what the overall potential effects of the Project may be on socio-economic valued components/conditions.



Topic: Mitigation effectiveness, Significant Impacts and the Purpose of Environmental Assessment

Reviewer Preamble:

A number of FNMC members have cabins along the existing winter road right of way that could be affected by the project.

Reviewer Request:

1. What is the process for identifying cabins along the proposed alignment?
2. Is there potential to refine the proposed alignment in response to cabin identification?
3. Will the GNWT offer to move cabins that cannot be avoided or otherwise provide compensation?



Response from the Government of the Northwest Territories:

1. The Government of Northwest Territories (GNWT) has identified cabins along the alignment through engagement and will continue to engage with Fort Norman Métis Council (FNMC) and Tulita District Land Corporation (TDLC) to identify cabins to determine if they intersect the Project Development Area.
2. The GNWT will work with the TDLC and FNMC on potential mitigation measures, as needed, to reduce adverse interactions with cabins. Depending on the location, minor road realignments could be considered.
3. See response to 2. To date no such interactions or conflicts have been identified.