

# Release

For Immediate Release  
November 5, 2009

## ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT FILED FOR ALL-SEASON ROAD PROJECT

### **Approximately 80 Per Cent of Proposed Route to Follow Existing Rice River Road and Winter Road Alignment**

Today, the East Side Road Authority Inc. (ESRA) announced that an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for the all-season road from Provincial Road (PR) 304 to Berens River First Nation has been filed with Manitoba Conservation.

“Since the beginning of the year, ESRA, and our environmental consultants, has been visiting east side communities to hear what local leaders, elders and residents have to say about an all-season road,” said Ernie Gilroy, CEO of ESRA. “Through this process, local communities have expressed widespread support for the construction of an all-season road and their input has resulted in a number of project improvements.” Gilroy noted that the construction of an all-season road was one of the key recommendations of the “Promises to Keep... Toward a Broad Area Plan for the East Side of Lake Winnipeg” Status Report (September, 2004).

The EIA outlines the construction of a gravel all-season road from PR 304 east of Manigotagan north approximately 160 km to Berens River First Nation and includes upgrading and extending Rice River Road to Bloodvein First Nation. For the route from Bloodvein to Berens River, three route options were examined and presented to the public. Based on public feedback and community support, the Revised Shoreline Route, which generally follows the existing winter road, was chosen to minimize environmental impact. The EIA demonstrates that with the implementation of mitigation measures outlined, the project can achieve an appropriate balance of minimizing environmental impact and meeting the needs of local communities for improved transportation access.

In preparing the EIA, representatives from ESRA and SNC-Lavalin Inc., the engineering consultancy firm hired by ESRA to undertake the environmental impact assessment, established a Public Involvement Program that includes two rounds of public open houses throughout the region. The first round of public open houses, held earlier this year, focused on introducing the all-season road project and gathering input from Aboriginal and local communities, non-governmental organizations, and the general public. Input received from the public contributed to the route selection process and was incorporated into the EIA.

The second round of open houses, scheduled for later this fall/winter, will focus on reporting back to the local communities and the public regarding the findings of the EIA. The Public Involvement Program on the EIA is independent of the consultations taking place pursuant to Section 35 of the Constitution Act. These consultations are being undertaken by the Government of Manitoba and are currently underway.

Communities within the study area that have been engaged by ESRA and SNC-Lavalin Inc. include Berens River, Bloodvein, Hollow Water, Little Grand Rapids, Pauingassi and Poplar River First Nations as well as the Northern Affairs communities of Manigotagan, Loon Straits, Princess Harbour, Seymourville, Aghaming, Berens River, Pine Dock, and Little Grand Rapids.

Before construction can begin, the project requires authorizations from federal and provincial regulators. Pending environmental approval, construction of the all-season road from PR 304 to Berens River First Nation will begin in the fall of 2010 and is anticipated for completion in spring of 2014.

The all-season road project from PR 304 to Berens River constitutes a Class 2 Development under the Manitoba Environment Act. The EIA also accommodates for a slight adjustment to the boundaries of Atikaki Provincial Park that will ensure that the overall park's geographic integrity is maintained. Anyone interested to view a copy of the EIA, can visit the Manitoba Conservation Public Registry website at [www.gov.mb.ca/conservation/eal/registries/index.html](http://www.gov.mb.ca/conservation/eal/registries/index.html) or any of the following locations:

- Union Station, 123 Main Street, Winnipeg Manitoba;
- The Millennium Public Library, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, 251 Donald Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba;
- The Manitoba Eco-Network, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, 303 Portage Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba;
- The Brokenhead Regional Public Library, 427 Park Avenue, Beausejour, Manitoba;
- Northern Affairs Community Offices in Berens River, Little Grand Rapids, Aghaming, Seymourville and Manigotagan; and
- Band Offices in Berens River, Bloodvein, Hollow Water, Little Grand Rapids, Pauingassi, and Little Black River First Nations;

Anyone interested to comment on the EIA can submit written comments by **January 7, 2010** to:

**Environmental Assessment & Licensing Branch  
Manitoba Conservation  
123 Main Street, Suite 160  
Winnipeg, MB R3C 1A5**

In the November 2008 Throne Speech, the Government of Manitoba announced its intention to move forward with construction of an all-season road on the east side of Lake Winnipeg. Since that time, ESRA has been established to manage the East Side Transportation Initiative (ESTI). For more information on the East Side Transportation Initiative, please visit the [www.eastsideroadauthority.mb.ca](http://www.eastsideroadauthority.mb.ca) or contact 945-4900 or toll free 1-866-356-6355.

Backgrounder and Map Attached

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**PR 304 TO BERENS RIVER ALL-SEASON ROAD  
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA)**

**KEY HIGHLIGHTS**

Benefits of an all-season road include:

- Reduced transportation costs for goods and services;
- Greater reliability of the transportation network and reduced reliance on the increasingly unreliable winter road system;
- Enhanced access to emergency, health, and social services;
- Improved social interactions between linked communities;
- Construction employment and economic opportunities for local people; and
- Enhanced opportunities for sustainable economic development opportunities.

The all-season road project from PR 304 to Berens River First Nation includes:

- Upgrading and extending the existing 76 km Rice River Road northwards to Bloodvein First Nation; and
- Construction of a 56 km all-season road extension from Bloodvein to Berens River First Nation.

The proposed all-season road will be a gravel surfaced 10 metre wide roadway and will include two 3.7 metre lanes, 1.0 metre shoulders and a 0.3 m shoulder rounding allowance.

Pending environmental approvals and authorizations, construction is anticipated to begin in the fall of 2010 and is expected to extend over a period of 42 months, with substantial completion by March, 2014.

**PROJECT IMPROVEMENTS AND  
MITIGATION MEASURES OUTLINED**

Based on public feedback received during the preparation of the EIA, a number of mitigation measures to improve the project have been identified including:

- 1) **Route Selection** – Pending final design, it is estimated that approximately 80% of the preferred all-season road alignment between PR 304 and Berens River First Nation follows the existing Rice River Road and winter road alignment eliminating the need to establish new rights-of-way and fragmenting undisturbed habitat.
- 2) **Protection of Caribou Habitat** – The Revised Shoreline Route is on an alignment that is located west of areas of the highest caribou concentration (i.e. calving and wintering areas). The proposed route is considered to have the least potential to cause adverse effects to caribou in comparison to the other routes identified. In addition, a caribou monitoring program will be developed in consultation with Manitoba Conservation and the Eastern Woodland Caribou Advisory Committee;
- 3) **Protection of Moose and Other Wildlife** – Specific measures will be employed to protect moose and other wildlife including the suspension of construction activities (i.e. blasting) during spring months when calving occurs and limiting right-of-way clearing work to winter months to avoid disruptions to nesting and denning activities.
- 4) **Fisheries and Water Protection** – All water course crossing structures will be designed to meet Department of Fisheries and Oceans criteria for fish passage and Best Management Practices will be employed to control erosion and sedimentation including the use of silt fencing, rip rap, and vegetation.
- 5) **Construction-Related Local Economic Opportunities** – It is anticipated that supply of crushed rock and aggregate will be through third party and local Aboriginal suppliers. ESRA has already entered in Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with Berens River and Bloodvein First Nation regarding the provision of aggregate. MOUs with other First Nations are anticipated prior to the start of construction.



