

## **Routes: Trade & Commerce**

June 11, 2021

Keystone Agricultural Producers (KAP) is Manitoba's general farm policy organization, providing a unified voice for farmers on issues that affect agriculture. KAP represents and promotes the interests of 4,500 farmers and 20 commodity associations.

Manitoba Infrastructure is gathering input on a proposed grid of trade and commerce routes as the provincial government plans to expand the network of Road Transportation Association of Canada (RTAC) highways in Manitoba. The recommendations in this submission are guided by KAP policy and input from KAP's transportation policy committee.

Manitoba farmers rely on trade routes to move commodities to elevators, crushing plants and agricultural processing facilities. KAP members have expressed concerns about their ability to move products throughout Manitoba without accessible RTAC highways. Expanding the current grid of RTAC highways in Manitoba will ensure farmers have a reliable transportation network to carry larger weight loads and safely move their products.

Under the current grid of RTAC highways, farmers often travel longer distances to reach their destination. Without access to RTAC highways, some farmers are limited in the weight load they can move. Farmers must then choose between a long trip with a larger load, or multiple short trips with a lighter load. The latter degrades Manitoba highways, increases greenhouse gas emissions and limits productive time.

Manitoba Infrastructure provides options for producers to use RTAC loading on A1 or B1 roadways through the Trucking Productivity Improvement Fund and Vehicle Weights and Dimensions Review Request. However, farmers' vehicle review requests are not always approved and current programming does not offer long-term solutions to address concerns about highway conditions and load sizes.

Manitoba Infrastructure's RTAC grid proposal includes improvements to highways 283, 23, 34 and 5. KAP members have passed resolutions calling for improvements to Highway 283, highlighting its vital importance in the movement of agricultural products between Manitoba and Saskatchewan. KAP's transportation policy committee recommends that highways 23, 42 and 5 also receive priority status for improvements under the proposal. Furthermore, the transportation policy committee recommends that Manitoba Infrastructure consider highways 332, 242, 248 and 31 for future upgrades.

KAP recommends Manitoba Infrastructure prioritize RTAC upgrades that ensure an efficient and well-maintained highway system for Manitoba farmers to move commodities to elevators, crushing plants and agricultural processing facilities. Expanding the grid of RTAC highways will increase flexibility and allow farmers to transport larger weight loads on Manitoba's highways. If you have any questions, please contact KAP policy analyst Neil Van Overloop at [neil.vanoverloop@kap.ca](mailto:neil.vanoverloop@kap.ca).