



Office of the Superintendent
Jasper Field Unit
P.O. Box 10
Jasper, Alberta
T0E 1E0

January 30, 2023

Trevor Willson

Subject: Simon Creek Bridge proposal

Dear Trevor Willson:

Thank you for your proposal to replace the Simon Creek Bridge and enthusiasm for the Athabasca Pass.

The Athabasca Pass National Historic Site (NHS) memorializes the significance of the main fur trade route between Canada and the Oregon Country from 1811 to the mid-1850s. Parks Canada is committed to increasing awareness and appreciation for this unique cultural landscape and its role in Canadian history. Given that the vast majority of visitors are unable to travel this route, Jasper National Park has invested in the Athabasca Pass NHS viewpoint located approximately 15 kilometres south of the Municipality of Jasper which hosts several interpretive and pointer signs to foster recognition of the historic importance of the area.

Several years ago, Jasper National Park established a Trail Maintenance Matrix to inform decision making associated with trail maintenance activities. On this matrix, the Athabasca Pass Trail is identified as a remote route. Beyond the Whirlpool Campground, its remote nature and the very low number of visitors using the trail make it a low priority in the allocation of the limited resources available for trail maintenance.

Jasper National Parks annual investment for trail infrastructure is focused on trail maintenance and infrastructure associated with higher priority trails identified in the Trail Maintenance Matrix. These are the trails that have very high levels of use by the vast majority of visitors to Jasper National Park.

Bridges are an important component for both the front and backcountry trail offer. There are hundreds of bridges across Jasper National Park, more than 30 of which, due to the crossing characteristics and code specifications, require engineered designs and regular inspections. Bridge maintenance and replacement requirements are also informed by the Trail Maintenance Matrix and reviewed regularly based on the availability of resources.

Under new Treasury Board requirements, investment in new assets by Parks Canada are required to include future costs associated with maintenance and eventual recapitalization of assets when

they reach their lifespan. The costs to maintain, inspect, replace, decommission or remove a large permanent structure like the one proposed for Simon Creek would be significant.

At the present time, there are no resources available to increase trail maintenance and no planned infrastructure investments for the Athabasca Pass Trail. With our current program of work, resources required for the impact assessment, the project management required for design review, construction and environmental monitoring are fully engaged.

Each year the Jasper Field Unit management team reviews the capital plan, adjusting priorities against emerging requirements and available resources. The Simon Creek Bridge has been, and will continue to be reviewed in this context. Based on your interest in this trail, the Jasper Field Unit will contact you if and when the priority of the Athabasca Pass Trail and replacement of the Simon Creek Bridge changes.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Alan Fehr". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Alan Fehr
Field Unit Superintendent