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Article rank | 2 Dec 2015 | The Vancouver Sun | MATTHEW ROBINSON [mrobinson@vancouver.sun.com](mailto:mrobinson@vancouver.sun.com)  
 VANCOUVER SUN

# More routes created for heavy truckloads

The province is paving the way for easier hauling of heavy equipment and materials from the Lower Mainland to major northern development projects such as the Site C dam.



RIC ERNST/PNG FILES

**Loads up to 85 tonnes can be more easily transported through Delta, Tsawwassen and Surrey following changes to the permitting process.**

Last week the Transportation Ministry hacked down some of the red tape slowing 85-tonne loads through Tsawwassen, Delta and Surrey, and is now looking at easing restrictions for even bigger cargo.

The changes will allow companies to move big machinery intact, rather than breaking it down into multiple loads, something that will reduce the number of large trucks on the road and make roads safer, said Louise Yako, president and CEO of the B.C. Trucking Association.

The decision adds Hwy. 17, the South Fraser Perimeter Road, to the existing network of roads pre-approved to handle 85-tonne loads, connecting shipping terminals on the Fraser River to Hwy. 1.

The move is something Yako's association was asking for to help truckers move heavy cargo shipped to the region and destined for northern B.C. or Alberta.

"A lot of it tends to be equipment that is required for the larger resource extraction projects and for BC Hydro's Site C," Yako said.

While oversized loads are already making their way through the province, preapproving a route like Hwy 17 "makes the permitting process a lot simpler, less administrative and bureaucratic," Yako said.

The number of requests to move project cargo has been on the rise, the ministry said. Yako said customers were facing waits of a week to a month for a permit and the changes will reduce that delay to as little as 48 hours.

The province also announced it was extending the Hwy. 16 route from Terrace to Kitwanga, creating a continuous heavy-haul route from Kitimat to Alberta.

"I think what this does is it illustrates the province's support for commerce in B.C. and for ensuring that all of the large resource-related projects go forward and don't end up having to deal with really minor glitches (like permit delays). It just moves us all in the right direction," Yako said.

Todd Stone, the transportation and infrastructure minister, said expanding the network will benefit businesses, LNG development, the shipping industry and the provincial economy.

While northern ports are closer to many of the major projects in northern B.C. and Alberta, Yako said it can be easier and safer to transport heavy cargo through the Lower Mainland.

Yako said Hwy. 16 is curvy, steep in spots and "not as robust a highway as Hwy. 17 (which is) four-laned, it's new, we know that it can take the weight.

"Hwy. 16 is just a little bit harder to drive when you've got a two-lane highway and you have the public driving on it who may not be accustomed to driving around big trucks. It can cause a safety issue."

Yako said the decision makes moving heavy equipment a safer proposition.

The province is now reviewing the heavy-haul network to determine if it can be expanded for pre-approved 125-tonne loads.

Structural engineers have begun checking main haul routes that connect ports in the Lower Mainland and Prince Rupert to northeastern B.C.

Highways 1, 5, 16 and 97 are being considered as possible corridors, "but it's too early to say which of these will ultimately be approved," ministry staff said in an email.

Delta Mayor Lois Jackson welcomed the change to Hwy. 17, calling the move logical.

"When you've got the amount of money the province has spent on that highway, certainly you're going to want to maximize the goods being moved and keep costs down for shippers and receivers," she said.

"I think it's just part of the ongoing growing up of the province and it's something that's needed to keep this economy rolling."

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