

MD councillor wants speed reduced on foothills highway

By Don Patterson

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A Foothills MD councillor is lobbying the provincial government to reverse a decision to increase the speed limit on a popular Priddis-Millarville area highway.

The Alberta government recently increased the speed limit on Secondary Highway 762 after repairs to sections of the road that slumped by several inches were completed this summer.

MD Coun. Suzanne Oel said residents have a lot of concerns about the condition of the road and the speed limit should be dropped back down to 80 km per hour.

"For the most part I'm getting

complaints about it being too fast," she said. "People preferred it at 80 km per hour."

The highway runs through the northwest corner of the MD, connecting Secondary Highway 549 near Millarville to Highway 22 near Bragg Creek. The road is a key link in the area, and it's a popular destination for day-trippers in the summer. However, portions of the road have extremely rough patches and at times it has been reduced to one lane when entire areas have collapsed.

Oel said the road's conditions warrant the lower speed.

"This is a little bit more rural, we have more speeders, steep slopes, wildlife, conditions, topography," she said. "A lot of them have told me that at a lot of those slumped

areas there's still concerns."

Speed limits on the road were dropped to 80 km per hour in 2011 after sections of the road slumped, as much as three or four inches in some areas. The lower limit was kept in place while the sections of the road were repaired and monitored to ensure the repairs would hold. The limit was recently increased to 100 km per hour after Alberta Transportation officials determined the repair held.

Oel said the road is under the jurisdiction of the provincial government and the MD has no say in setting the speed limit. However, she said the MD can still encourage the Province to go back the lower speed limit.

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Oel said she plans to survey residents along the road to see if they support setting the speed limit at 80, 90 or 100 km per hour.

She said she is hopeful the survey results will convince the Province to review the road. Her goal is to get an order from the Alberta Transportation minister to reduce the speed limit on the road to 80 km per hour.

An official with Alberta Transportation said repairs to the road have been completed and it was determined the speed limit could safely be raised to 100 km per hour.

"The speed limit was reduced so they could make repairs to the roadway and it was actually kept at 80 km until repairs were completed for some time to monitor the highway for further slumps," said Nancy Beasley Hosker, Alberta Transportation spokesperson.

She said the highway would have been assessed before the speed limit was raised and Alberta Transportation will continue to monitor the highway.

"As part of the monitoring of this highway there would have been an assessment of how the highway was working and also what the appropriate speed limit would be based on the type of traffic and the roadway



JORDAN VERLAGE/OWW

MD Coun. Suzanne Oel stands next to a new 100 km per hour sign on Secondary Highway 762. The provincial government raised the speed limit on the road.

itself," said Beasley Hosker.

One area resident agreed with the area's councillor, saying speed limit should be dropped back down to 80 km per hour.

"If you have a 100 km per hour speed limit, most people exceed that anyway," said Linda Torunski, who lives along the highway, south of Bragg Creek. "If it's an 80 km speed limit, maybe it won't be as bad. There won't be as much impact on wildlife or human life."

She said the lower speed limit makes a big difference in the noise level from traffic along the road as well, particularly the motorcycles that frequent the highway in the summer.

She said the road's poor condition should also warrant the lower speed limit.

"It's not totally smooth and safe, you still have the odd sinkhole, which are stating up again," she said. "You have a lot more twists and turns."