

Grant MacEwan Bridge opens downtown core

New bridge means 10 lanes over the Athabasca River

As the new Grant MacEwan Bridge opens, a full **seven months ahead of schedule**, motorists gain an additional four lanes of traffic over the Athabasca River: two lanes over the new Grant MacEwan Bridge and an additional two lanes over the Athabasca River Bridge, for a total 10 lanes over the river.

Direct access to Franklin Avenue

The Grant MacEwan Bridge opening also includes access to the new Franklin Avenue tunnel configuration providing direct river-crossing access to and from Fort McMurray's downtown core.

- Southbound traffic on the new Grant MacEwan Bridge can directly access Fort McMurray's central business district via the new Franklin Avenue tunnel.
- As well, southbound motorists crossing the new Grant MacEwan Bridge now have the option of heading north to McDonald Drive after crossing the river.
- Northbound motorists leaving downtown also have a quicker commute as two additional lanes of northbound traffic over the New Athabasca River Bridge open along with connector roads.



Alberta reaches its goal of 10 lanes over the Athabasca River, seven months ahead of schedule.

Bridging the Athabasca River in Fort McMurray

Initially built in 1965 with a truss design, the original Grant MacEwan Bridge was the **first** structure to span the Athabasca River in Fort McMurray. The original bridge's piers remain in place at the core of the new Grant MacEwan Bridge. During construction of the new bridge, crews:

- demolished the original bridge's superstructure;
- used an ice bridge as a building platform to significantly reduce construction time, cost and environmental impacts by allowing crews to work through the winter months;
- rebuilt the bridge as a girder bridge;
- shortened the height of the existing bridge's piers, then lowered the new bridge deck to connect it to the Franklin Avenue tunnel.

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Three bridges working together

The new Grant MacEwan Bridge and the Franklin Avenue tunnel are an integral part of the three-bridge network built to safely carry 10 lanes of Highway 63 traffic over the Athabasca River. The network also includes:

The Athabasca River Bridge, which has the largest bridge deck in Alberta at 15,500 square metres. Construction on the Athabasca River Bridge started in 2008 and was completed in the fall of 2011. This bridge can handle loads that are more than 12 times the standard design weight. In 2012, on their way to the Fort McMurray oil sands, 503 super-loads, with gross vehicle weights of 180 metric tonnes or greater, travelled across the Athabasca River Bridge. This project included the east half of the Franklin Avenue tunnel.

The Steinhauer Bridge construction, where construction started in the winter of 2011 and was substantially completed by the fall of 2013. This project involved widening Highway 63 to six lanes from Morrison Street to the Athabasca River, replacing the old structure, widening the bridge to three lanes and completing the west half of the Franklin Avenue tunnel.

Smart investments

Since 2005, the Alberta government has invested \$1.4 billion to date to improve safety and accessibility on Highway 63 and other important regional roadways in the Athabasca oilsands region.

Through strategic investment in the province's core transportation network, the Alberta government continues to make a difference in the lives of Albertans by creating safer roads at home and expanding market access abroad.



The 1965 truss design bridge is demolished to make way for the new Grant MacEwan Bridge and Franklin Avenue tunnel.

Safer travel across the Athabasca River

Designed to better separate longer-haul commercial traffic from local commuters, the Athabasca River bridge network represents the Alberta government's \$236 million commitment to increase safety on this section of Highway 63 in Fort McMurray, including:

- \$26 million for the new Grant MacEwan Bridge,
- \$60 million for the Steinhauer Bridge (with Franklin Avenue tunnel west,
- \$150 million for the Athabasca River Bridge (includes the Franklin Avenue tunnel east).

Materials

To build these three bridges across the Athabasca River, crews used:

- 10,000 metres of girders, if laid end to end;
- 24,000 tonnes of asphalt; and
- 22,000 cubic metres of concrete.

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