

2014 Update on extension of Autoroute 35 from St. Jean sur Richelieu, Quebec to the Vermont border at Highgate Springs/I-89 and VTrans Phase II traffic impact study

Auto-route 35 is a divided, four-lane, limited access highway (Interstate-type standard) through the Montreal and Montérégie regions of Quebec which began construction in the 1960s. When finished, it is envisioned to be the primary route for traffic between Montreal and Boston, completing a 310-mile Interstate highway linking these two major metropolitan regions.

As of October 8th, the newest segments of highway from the City of Iberville (near St. Jean sur Richelieu) to the intersection with Route 133 in Sainte-Sebastien were opened to traffic, leaving travelers a gap of less than 10 miles to the US-border crossing at the I-89/Highgate Springs port of entry (POE). The roughly 23.5 mile section recently opened is represented by Segments 1 and 2 on the attached map.

The Ministry of Transport Quebec and the Canadian federal government have also announced commitments for funding and construction of the remaining two segments over the next 3-4 years, with full completion targeted in 2019. These final segments present challenges as they will traverse some environmentally sensitive areas and the last, segment #4, requires new construction on an existing alignment immediately approaching the border, while maintaining both fairly active local traffic area and increasing cross-border travel flows.

Currently, over 1.1 million trucks and passenger vehicles cross the US-Canada border at the I-89/Highgate Springs port of entry (POE) annually, making it one of the busiest land border crossings in the northeastern United States. Upon its completion, we surmised that the shorter and more convenient A35 route would likely result in additional traffic crossing the border at the I-89/Highgate Springs POE, from the greater Montreal region, including the potential for diverted trucks currently crossing at Champlain, NY (I-87) and Derby Line (I-91).

Anticipating this growth, the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) conducted a high-level study of potential traffic impacts to I-89 and the port at Highgate Springs, which was completed in early 2014. Based on the information contained in that study, which indicated that significant diversion of both passenger and truck traffic from near-by highways and POEs to the I-89/Highgate POE was likely as a result of A-35 completion, we are now preparing to conduct a much more detailed analysis of current and likely future traffic flows into this corridor.

We anticipate work on the Phase II study to begin in early 2015 and will be collaborating with the Ministry of Transport Quebec on gathering of recent data from the provincial highway network surrounding the greater Montreal region, and participation of both US and Canadian security and border agencies to corroborate cross-border data findings and provide assistance in detailing the potential impact to POE clearance times based of the type of vehicles moving through the port. The Northwest RPC and the CCMPO/RPC will also be engaged in the Phase II work as appropriate and necessary to ensure coordination regarding possible impacts to regional travel networks.

PARACHÈVEMENT DE L'AUTOROUTE DE LA VALLÉE-DES-FORTS (A-35) Tracé et échangeurs planifiés

