



ALBERNI-CLAYOQUOT REGIONAL DISTRICT

Highway 4 Closure and Cameron Bluffs Wildfire Frequently Asked Question

Highway 4, between Cathedral Grove/MacMillan Provincial Park and Koen Road (approximately seven kilometres), closed in both directions at approximately 3:30 p.m. on June 6, 2023 due to the growth of the Cameron Bluffs wildfire. The Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District (ACRD) opened a Level 1 Emergency Operations Centre in response to the closure of Highway 4.

To support those impacted by the wildfire at Cameron Lake Bluffs and the Highway 4 Road Closure, a reception centre opened at Echo Centre in Port Alberni (4255 Wallace Street). Over less than 24 hours, the EOC, ESS, and many other volunteers, offered shelter, food, and comfort to close to 200 people stranded in Port Alberni.

On June 7, 2023, the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MoTI) opened an alternate route, and the reception centre closed.

Now that the Cameron Bluffs Wildfire is being held, efforts are in place to open Highway 4.

The ACRD has developed these Frequently asked questions to address many of the inquiries we have been receiving. At the end of the FAQ, there is a list of contacts and some important links to information that are designed to help you navigate this situation.

Where can I get more information about the alternate route and Highway 4 closure?

The Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure is responsible for Highway 4 and the alternate route. Highway 4 and the alternate route status update can be found [HERE](#).

Drive BC also updates their website with advisories and updates [HERE](#).

Where can I get up-to-date information about the status of the Cameron Bluffs Wildfire?

BC Wildfire Service updates their website on a regular basis. Information can be found at these links:

- [Cameron Bluffs Wildfire](#)
- [Wildfire Service Map](#)

Why was the Cowichan Lake/Bamfield/Port Alberni route chosen as the best alternate route option?

When the closure of Highway 4 was first announced, the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MoTI) began exploring an alternate route. After meeting with forestry companies and the trucking industry, it was determined that this route was the safest option.



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A consensus was reached by those who were tasked with delivering goods, that the Horne Lake connector is not safe for commercial travel. The Horne Lake connector is being kept for and used by first responders and emergency services where and when appropriate. It will not be open to the public.

Please note that Google maps is sometimes directing people through the Horne Lake connector. Drivers are advised to ignore this suggestion as this is not a route available to the public. Please follow the marked alternate route.

What is being done to ensure the alternate route is safe to travel?

Once the route was chosen, MoTI carried out brush clearing on the side of the road and upgrades to the road surface, such as adding gravel and grading the road. MoTI continues to grade the road, and it sprays water in an effort to keep dust to a minimum. Flaggers are positioned along the route to assist drivers and offer information, and the route is marked to guide people.

What do I need to know about the piloted supply convoy on the alternate route?

After hearing concerns from the trucking industry, MoTI established a piloted convoy for commercial vehicles.

The priority for the alternate route is to ensure the movement of essential goods, such as pharmaceuticals, fuel, and food. To support this, beginning Sunday, June 11, four daily piloted convoys specifically for commercial vehicles have been taking place along the alternate route, to and from Port Alberni. These scheduled convoys will continue daily until further notice.

The piloted departure times are as follows:

- Eastbound from Port Alberni – 10 am, and 8 pm
- Westbound from Lake Cowichan – 5 am, and 3 pm

Commercial vehicles will also be permitted to travel outside of the scheduled departures, however, there will be no pilot vehicles at those times. Other drivers will be placed behind the convoys because the priority is the movement of essential supplies.

For up-to-date information, go to [BC Transit Advisories](#). Remember to check for any travel advisories before travelling the alternate route.

If I don't want to drive the alternate route, what other options do I have to get to the east side of Vancouver Island or the Mainland?

While the Highway 4 closure remains in place, there are options to fly in and out of the region via the Alberni Valley Regional Airport in Port Alberni and the Long Beach Airport near Tofino/Ucluelet. There are also options for float plane and helicopter flights to and from the Alberni Valley and the west coast communities.



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The ACRD encourages the public to contact these companies directly to discuss options as many are going above and beyond to respond to the needs of the community. A list of air carriers can be found [HERE](#).

Is there parking at the Alberni Valley Regional Airport or Long Beach Airport?

The **Alberni Valley Regional Airport** does have parking at the terminal building and the overflow parking is in the gravel area across the road. There are no fees for parking. There is no security system, but there is an onsite caretaker.

Long Beach Airport (CYAZ) does have pay parking at the terminal.

Short-term rates

- \$3 first two hours
- \$3 per additional hour

Long-term rates

- \$12 per day
- Monthly rate of \$160

The transactions are all conducted on the HONK app or call 1-888-680-7275.

You can find out more information about LBA at [CYAZ, Tofino / Long Beach Airport \(acrd.bc.ca\)](#) and the Alberni Valley Airport at [CBS8, Alberni Valley Regional Airport \(acrd.bc.ca\)](#)

What does essential travel mean?

The priority for the alternate route is to transport supplies to the affected communities. Other travel is allowed, but drivers are asked to consider whether they can delay their trip until Highway 4 reopens.

Are the supply chains secure to the Alberni Valley and West Coast communities?

The Cowichan Lake alternate route is open to all legal highway trucks, and therefore it is a safe route for supplying goods to the region. Although fuel, food, and other supplies may be a bit delayed, they are coming in daily.

The option to travel as part of the piloted convoy has improved safety to commercial traffic. As a result, more commercial trucks are travelling the alternate route.



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Is there any risk we will run out of fuel?

At this point, fuel trucks are making it through the alternate route and supplying fuel to the region.

If I am a business owner and have concerns about the supply chain and movement of commercial vehicles, who should I contact?

For more information on how this is affecting the supply chain and local businesses, contact the [Alberni Valley Chamber of Commerce](#). at 250-724-6535.

What can I do if my work is interrupted by the highway closure?

We recommend that you reach out to Service Canada immediately. You can apply for Employment Insurance if your work has been interrupted for seven consecutive days. There is typically a one-week waiting period, but people are encouraged to ask if this is being waved. MP Gord Johns has raised this in parliament and the response has been positive. To find contact information for Services Canada, go to their [website](#). The local office is located at 4805 Mar Street, Unit A.

What supports are out there if I do have trouble making ends meet?

The local MP's office is working with the federal government, in conjunction with BC, to see if more support for food banks can be arranged with flexible funding for non-governmental organizations/non-profits.

Services Canada can also help determine what options are available. To find contact information for Services Canada, go to their [website](#). The local office is located at 4805 Mar Street, Unit A.

Is there going to be any kind of support for individuals and businesses who are affected financially as result of the closure of Highway 4?

Local representatives of the Federal and Provincial government have been asking this question and will continue to do so. At this point, no supports have been announced.

The MP for our area is also requesting an extension of the CEBA small business loan deadline to December 31, 2024. Many small businesses were already feeling the strain of having to pay back CEBA loans by the end of this year, and the wildfire has only exacerbated this.

What do I do if I have health care needs or medical appointments?

If you have questions about your health care, please refer to the [Island Health FAQ](#). This FAQ sheet offers answers to many health-related questions and includes contact information for questions that may not be captured on the FAQ sheet.

The Horne Lake Connector is available for official emergency vehicles if needed.



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Is there going to be a disruption of our solid waste services?

In the Alberni Valley, the Third Avenue Depot will be closed until further notice. Please keep your materials as we work with Recycle BC on a plan for recovery. Curbside pickup of the blue bin will also be paused until Monday June 19. The AV Sort'nGo Centre will remain open with limited capacity. The cardboard bins are full and no more will be accepted at this time.

Collection of organics and garbage has not been affected by the highway closure.

The Bamfield Transfer Station has been affected in the following way:

- The metal recycling bins are once again available for residential drop-off.
- Cardboard recycling is at capacity and temporarily unavailable. We ask that area residents hang on to your cardboard until the service provider can get out to the site.
- All other residential recyclables can still be dropped off at the site.

Please visit <https://www.acrd.bc.ca/recycling> for a full list of materials accepted at the Bamfield Transfer Station or download the Sort'nGo app for further information and follow the Sort'nGo [Facebook](#) page.

When is Highway 4 expected to reopen?

A tentative opening to single-lane, alternating traffic is expected next weekend (June 24-25). On July 7, MoTI representatives will spend two weeks monitoring the behaviour of the slope above the highway, with hopes of a full opening of Highway 4 in both directions by mid-July.

Full details are available in the MoTI [News Release](#).

Once open, will Highway 4 be available to everyone?

Yes, once Highway 4 is open to single-lane, alternating traffic it will be available to everyone. Drivers are advised to expect delays. MoTI anticipates wait lines could be as long as one to two kilometres. MoTI is developing its traffic management plan for the opening. For more information, go to [BC Transit Advisories](#). Drive BC also updates their website with advisories and updates [HERE](#).

What precautions are being taken to keep Highway 4 safe after it opens?

As a result of the fire, the top layer of organic materials on the forest floor has been removed. This has caused rocks and trees to become unstable, and as a result, they are falling on Highway 4. Wildfire BC and MoTI are working together to assess the stability of the slope above Highway 4. This assessment will identify danger trees and rockfall hazards. Once the assessment is complete, crews will begin removing these hazards. MoTI will remove fallen trees and other hazards from the road before it is open.

Once open to single-lane, alternating traffic, MoTI will continue to monitor the slope stability and any possible hazards for at least two weeks. Once MoTI determines it is safe, the highway will open in both directions.



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MoTI will be implementing temporary mitigation measures for sections of the stretch of highway around the site of the Cameron Bluffs Wildfire. This includes rock catchment treatment using interlocking blocks and rock containment netting. These safety measures will remain in place until it is determined that it is no longer necessary. This work will begin once MoTI has determined it is safe to do so.

Will the alternate route close once Highway 4 openings start?

The alternate route will remain open until Highway 4 is fully open in both directions.

What do I do if I need to get home and don't have a way to get there?

The team at the MLA Josie Osborne's office in Port Alberni can investigate individual cases. Because of the large volume of calls and emails they are receiving, there may be a delay in hearing back from them. They ask that you be patient as they work their way through the requests. They are prioritizing the inquiries they receive and responses to non-urgent inquiries may be delayed.

If you want to reach their office either email Josie.Osborne.MLA@leg.bc.ca or calling 250-720-4515 or 1-866-870-4190.

Where can I go if I have other questions?

The Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District will continue to update their [Cameron Bluffs Wildfire and Highway Closure webpage](#) with current information.

You can also contact your local MLA's office by emailing Josie.Osborne.MLA@leg.bc.ca or calling 250-720-4515 or 1-866-870-4190.

You can reach your local MP's office 250-947-2140 or 1-844-620-9924, or email gord.johns@parl.gc.ca.

What can I do to help if I live on the west side of the Highway 4 closure?

If you live in Port Alberni or on the West Coast, the best thing you can do is support your local businesses by shopping locally. These businesses are just recovering from COVID restrictions, and now they are being affected by a decrease in visitors to our communities during the busy tourism season. While we do not encourage buying more than you need because the supply chain is still somewhat slower than it usually is, we do encourage you to shop in your local stores, eat in restaurants, and support local businesses and services.

Now that fuel is being delivered to our communities regularly, consider a staycation and show your support to businesses in other communities on the west side of the highway closure. Many are offering great deals as they are experiencing a drop in visitors.

Most of all, be kind. Remember that everyone is doing their best right now, and we all need to support each other until our communities are once again connected to the other side of the Island by Highway 4.



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List of Resources

Josie.Osborne.MLA@leg.bc.ca or 250-720-4515 or 1-866-870-4190

gord.johns@parl.gc.ca - 250-947-2140 or 1-844-620-9924

Services Canada, go to their [website](#) or 4805 Mar Street, Unit A.

[Alberni Valley Chamber of Commerce](#) - 250-724-6535

Important Links

- [ACRD Cameron Bluffs Wildfire and Highway 4 Closure website page](#)
- [Island Health FAQ - Highway 4 Closure](#)
- [Cameron Bluffs Wildfire](#)
- [BC Trans Advisories](#)
- [BC Transportation flickr](#)
- [MOTI News Release](#)
- [DriveBC](#)
- [Alberni Valley Emergency Program Facebook](#)
- [ACRD Facebook Page](#)
- [City of Port Alberni Facebook Page](#)

For more information, please email: communications@acrd.bc.ca.