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Grits pledge \$5 million for Bear Mtn. overpass

By Jennifer McLarty
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The federal Liberals have promised to fund a \$5 million Bear Mountain overpass as part of their Made-In-B.C. election platform revealed Friday in Victoria.

The span is one component of an ambitious \$30-million interchange and connector that would link the exclusive Langford residential development with the Trans-Canada Highway.



Don Denton/Victoria News

Liberal Industry Minister David Emerson reveals his party's Made-In-B.C. agenda Friday at a Victoria Chinese food restaurant. The package includes a promise to fund a \$5-million Bear Mountain overpass.

The span is one component of an ambitious \$30-million interchange and connector that would link the exclusive Langford residential development with the Trans-Canada Highway. The B.C. caucus fully supports this as a priority for Vancouver Island, and it's a project that will greatly benefit our community," said Esquimalt-Juan de Fuca MP Keith Martin. "I've been fighting hard for it, so I'm glad to see it included in the package. But the promised \$5 million grant will be treated as an "agreement in principle," pending further project details and a successful lobby by Martin and his B.C. colleagues. "Yes, there are some items to work out, but the fact is included in the agenda is a significant step," said Martin. "It's on the radar."

The proposed overpass and its supporting road network would begin west of Savory Road near Florence Lake, then pass through four other properties before reaching the outskirts of Bear Mountain. The link will help address growing traffic volumes as the village-style community builds out over the next 10 to 15 years. Under the current zoning bylaw, Bear Mountain is approved for 2,983 units, which could support nearly 6,000 people by 2020 depending on market demand. The sprawling property is also home to a pro-golf course and a 10,000 square-foot recreation centre.

Most of the \$30 million connector bill will be paid for by principle Bear Mountain developer and former NHLer Len Barrie. Langford council has also requested a provincial buy in, but has yet to reach an agreement with the B.C. government. "Bear Mountain's total value will be nearly \$4 billion, and generate \$270,000 in direct GST to the federal government," said Rob Buchan, Langford's acting clerk administrator. We're asking for some of that to be re-invested, and this is a major economic priority to support.

The connector is tentatively slated for completion in 2008. The Liberal Party's Made-In-B.C. agenda also promises funding for a sewage treatment system in Victoria, but doesn't include timelines or cash amounts.