

via email
February 11, 2019

Dear Mayor Haynes and Councillors,

I am writing on behalf of the residents of the Falaise Community about two problems we request your help to fix. One is the excessive traffic noise we are experiencing from the Pat Bay highway. The other is the dangerous parking situation on Falaise Drive. We think that the solutions to the two problems could be tied together.

Who We Are

The Falaise Community borders the Pat Bay Highway, north of Royal Oak Drive. We have 175 homes, two funeral businesses, a group home, a Montessori pre-school and the Royal Oak Burial Park in our neighbourhood.

The Falaise Community Association represents the people of this neighbourhood. It was formed in 1959, two years after the first lots in the subdivision were sold to Second World War veterans.

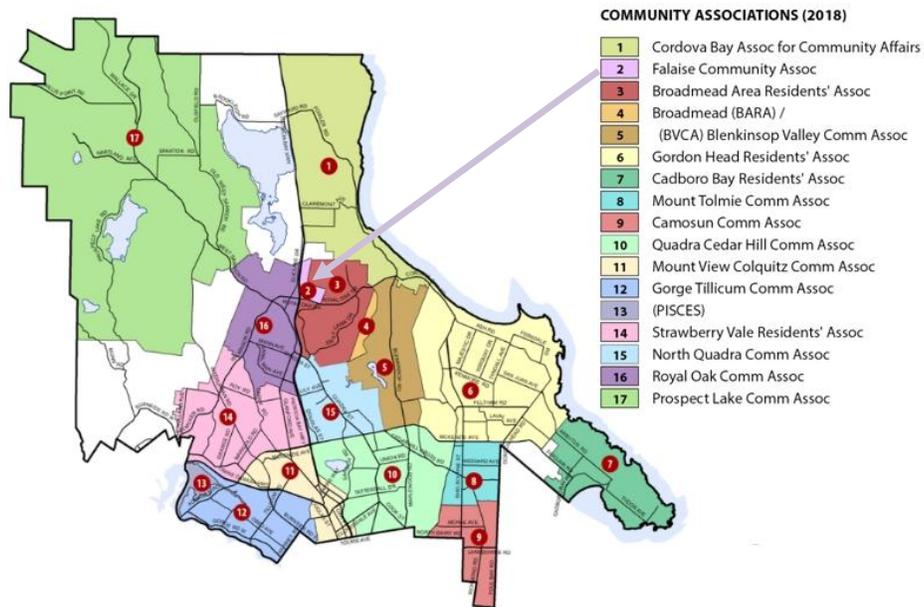


Figure 1. Location of the Falaise Community Association

The Pat Bay is Noisy

Residents of the Falaise Community find noise from the Pat Bay Highway very annoying. The highway was a two-lane road when the community was first established. It is now a four-lane controlled access highway. Traffic has been increasing at an average rate of about 650 vehicles per day since the Royal Oak interchange was built in 1970 to the point where there were 58,000 vehicles per day in 2016¹, more than double the 27,000 vehicles per day in 1970. Daily traffic volumes on the Pat Bay are highest between Sayward Road and Royal Oak Road (sic) (where our community is located) and are projected to increase significantly over the next 25 years².

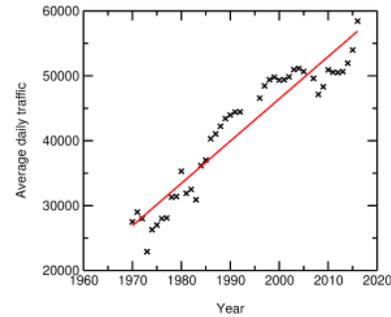


Figure 2. Traffic data for the Pat Bay Highway near Royal Oak Drive. (MoTI data)

Not only has traffic volume increased, the type of traffic has changed to bigger, noisier vehicles³.



Figure 3. In this picture taken in front of our community, 12 of 13 vehicles are trucks or SUVs.

To make matters worse, the highway beside our community is on a hill; vehicles going up-hill, especially those accelerating to highway speed from Royal Oak Dr., produce extra engine noise. Going downhill, large trucks using their engine brakes add to the noise.

¹ Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure data from 2016

² *Report for Highway 17 Planning Study* Prepared for Ministry of Transportation & Infrastructure Programming, Partnerships and Planning South Coast Region by Urban Systems Ltd., March 2014

³ *Canadian Vehicle Market Review*, Dennis DesRosiers, May 27, 2016

Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure Noise Mitigation Policy

In 1993 the then Ministry of Transportation and Highways drafted its first Noise Mitigation Policy. It was replaced in 2014 and updated again in 2016. The policy recognizes that highway noise can have serious impacts on communities and recognizes that quiet and tranquility are important, if not essential attributes, for cemeteries and formal memorials.

The policy provides a procedure to determine if the anticipated community noise impacts associated with the upgrading or construction of numbered highways warrant noise mitigation measures. We are convinced that our community would be eligible for noise mitigation if the highway were being upgraded today but the policy does not apply retroactively and, accordingly, we are deemed not eligible. This is irritating to our residents as, in comparison, the McKenzie-Pat Bay interchange, with lower volumes of highway traffic, had noise mitigation measures installed prior to the policy being drafted.

Apparently the reason for not applying the policy retroactively is because the MoTI assumes people living near a highway knew the highway was there when they moved into the neighbourhood. We know that many residents did not fully appreciate how noisy the highway would be and certainly most would have no way to reasonably anticipate how noisy it was going to become.

Our Requests to the Provincial Government

In 1997 we asked the provincial government to install a noise-mitigating barrier between the highway and our community but our request was denied.

In November of 2017 we asked again by approaching our MLA, Lana Popham. Minister Popham was very supportive of our request and suggested we prepare a petition requesting the work be done. We petitioned residents in early 2018 and 88% of the people we talked to signed the petition (243 signatures). Of the people who did not sign, most were ambivalent rather than opposed.

Royal Oak Local Area Plan

The Royal Oak Local Area Plan recognizes that highway noise is a problem for residents. Its vision statement includes the sentence, "The noise and visual concerns associated with the [Pat Bay] highway are resolved."

The plan also states, "The Municipality of Saanich will not pay for the construction of barriers on provincial highways, but can coordinate the creation of a Local Improvement Area or Specified Area charge . . . by which those residents who benefit from the noise attenuation barriers would collectively pay for their construction." We believe, however, that the real beneficiaries are the 58,000 drivers who pass by our community daily without paying reasonable compensation to those affected by their noise. We argue that they, not we, should be paying for the work. We also argue

that a noise barrier would benefit the greater community by acting both as a visual barrier to the highway and providing a more peaceful environment for people attending funerals or visiting graves.

Falaise Drive Parking Concerns

The Falaise Community includes two funeral homes, First Memorial and McCall Gardens. Both are located on Falaise Drive, beside the highway. During large funerals, parking overflows onto Falaise Drive close to where a noise barrier would be constructed. Many of the places accommodating the overflow parking are marked as no-parking areas. We have had at least one accident and many near-accidents when drivers could not see oncoming traffic around parked cars or when pedestrians were forced to walk on the street because cars were parked on the sidewalk. The police have told us that they will not enforce the no-parking restrictions on bereaved people.



Figure 4. Cars parked during a funeral. Even the police do not obey no-parking signs and park on the sidewalk

A Possible Solution?

One potential solution to both problems might be the 2014 New Building Canada Fund. It provides funding for projects of regional significance, with a focus on projects that support, among other things, stronger communities. Criteria for funding include improving usability and accessibility of roads for all users and promoting livability and improving safety.

This funding model would require Saanich and the provincial and federal governments to each contribute 1/3 of the project cost. Perhaps Saanich could propose a project along Falaise Drive to include making on-street parking safer and improved livability of the area by installation of a noise barrier. Saanich's portion of the cost would be its contribution to improving the parking along Falaise Drive.

A potential source of funding for Saanich's portion of the project might be the Federal Gas Tax Fund. The 58,000 drivers passing by our community every day generate approximately \$188,413 per year in federal excise tax⁴ of which about 80% would go to the Federal Gas Tax Fund which municipalities may access for various projects.

Other Funding Solutions?

We are not experts in funding projects of the type we are requesting. The 2014 New Building Canada Fund and Federal Gas Tax Fund sound hopeful to us but there are likely other mechanisms to solve the community's two problems.

Our Request

The Falaise Community Association requests that you ask your Staff to work with us, the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure and our MLA, Lana Popham, to find funding and implement solutions for our community's highway noise and parking problems.

Thank you for reviewing this information. I will be appearing before Council on March 11 to present our concerns and answer questions you may have. We look forward to your help in solving these challenging community problems.

Sincerely,

Bob Lucy
President,
Falaise Community Association
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⁴ Assumptions:

- wall length = 1 km
- 58,000 vehicles / day
- vehicles fuel consumption = 8.9 L / 100 km (Wikipedia)
- federal excise tax = \$0.10 / L