

# Route 126 requires road improvements too

Pity poor Route 126.

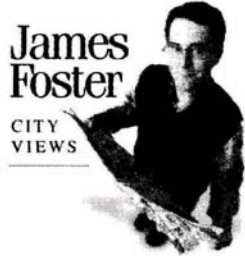
While Highway 11, its twin brother that runs parallel to it further east, seems to get everything, the road known to everyone simply as "The 126" feels like the neglected sibling in New Brunswick's family of important roadways.

To be sure, the 126 has come a long way from the horrid cow path it used to be, but judging by a trip between Moncton and Renous on Monday, it still has a long way to go before it can even begin to look like the major highway it pretends to be.

There's no doubt the twinning of Highway 11 is the priority for major road work in southeastern New Brunswick. Heck, the number of car crashes and the resulting injuries and deaths on Highway 11 are reason enough to make it so, let alone its crumbling base, lack of paved shoulders in places, no passing lanes, and rutted pavement — just to start.

But what of the 126, which is admittedly somewhat less busy, but in much worse shape and still a key link between north and south? Earlier this week, even the tractor-trailers were veering into the on-coming lane or on to the shoulder to avoid hitting some of the bigger potholes that mar its surface.

Add to that a major cranberry production area and processing



facility that is expected to start being built in the Rogersville area this summer and the potential for even more heavy commercial traffic is clearly there.

The road has poor, if any, shoulders, no dedicated passing lanes, deep ditches on either side and it passes right through the middle of several residential areas.

Rogersville has rightfully lobbied the province for years to upgrade the road, even to twin it, and some significant improvements have been done — thank heavens and the provincial government — but not nearly enough for what is the second most important north-south trade corridor in the eastern half of the province.

The demands are great when it comes to road-building in this province, and the resources with

which to meet those demands are small. Those of us who use the 126 with frequency can only hope that the necessary focus on Highway 11 doesn't blind the powers that be to the need to maintain and build on what has already been accomplished on the 126.

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Even us non-curling fans were captivated by the skill, sportsmanship and world-wide buzz surrounding the successful 2009 Ford World Men's Curling Championships last week at the Coliseum.

Anyone who thinks that the need for a modern, larger downtown arena is nothing more than an expensive pipe dream by some at city hall and at this newspaper should finally be convinced the need is not only real, but urgent, after seeing the sweat on the players and on the ice surfaces during the opening draws.

Hockey rinks don't make money for cities, admittedly. However, we must look at the bigger picture. For example, this curling event actually turned a profit, money that will likely be poured back into curling facilities across the city, curling rinks that are seeing a boom in membership thanks to this event.

As well, not counting any

surplus from the tournament at the end of the day, an estimated \$15 million in economic activity was generated in the city and surrounding area, not local money that might have been spent here anyway on other stuff, but new money from places like Scotland, the United States and China.

And yet again the Agrena complex attached to the Moncton Coliseum proved a key to the event's success, as those attending or playing in the main event only had to walk a few metres to enjoy the entertainment aspect of the tournament, a key component of the whole package. Just ask anyone who was there.

When Moncton gets its new downtown arena (sorry, I just hate the name Metro Centre,) a major component to its success will be the addition of a similar adjoining feature, like the Agrena complex. It's too important to too many events to let the costs of its construction dictate that we do it "later."

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This will prove the pivotal year in the history of the Maritime Motorsports Hall of Fame, being built now in Petitcodiac.

The hall will honour those who risked their limbs and their bank

accounts (and their marriages, some would argue) to provide us fans with racing thrills and chills no matter the type of motorized conveyance, be it motorcycles, cars, tractors, boats, snowmobiles and more.

The hall can still use some donations, not just donations of money and volunteer time, but also period items, including clothing, tools, furniture and mannequins. Call Ernie McLean at 756-8982.

The Hall will showcase race cars, classic cars, hot rods, motorcycles, tractors, boats and celebrity cars. The new facility will be a showcase for Petitcodiac and for the significant motorsports community across the Maritimes (motorsports are the biggest outdoor spectator sport in this part of the country,) and will include a visitor information centre, conference room, meeting room, a kitchen for catering, museum, souvenir store and outside picnic area.

Mark your calendar now, the Hall of Fame's fourth annual Petty AutoFest Show for all types of motorsports vehicles will be held June 13 in Petitcodiac.

■ *City Views appears daily, written by various members of our staff. James Foster is editor-at-large. His column appears every Wednesday.*