

For Immediate Release

Twin Carefully: Why 2+1 is The Best Fit For Most Northern Ontario Highways

September 24, 2026 – Twinning most highways in Northern Ontario would cost too much and require northerners to wait too long for better, safer roads. That is the finding of Northern Policy Institute's latest publication, *Twin Carefully; Why 2+1 is the Best Fit For Most Northern Ontario Highways*.

In 2026, we see a consensus among our leaders – municipal, provincial, federal and First Nations – for investing in improved safety and expanded capacity across Northern Ontario's highway network. Highway improvements are needed, but decision-makers must also consider time to build and the cost to taxpayers. At current traffic levels in Northern Ontario, 2+1 roads would deliver similar safety and traffic benefits as highway twinning.

"If Ontario primarily used the 2+1 configuration to upgrade northern highways instead of twinning, these upgrades could be delivered sooner – without compromising on safety – and the government could save billions of dollars. That money could be spent on other priorities in Northern Ontario, such as health care, all season roads, or remote airports, or returned to taxpayers in the form of lower taxes in the future", said author William Dunstan.

Widely used internationally, 2+1 roads are three lane roads that have one lane in each direction along with a middle lane that alternates direction every few kilometers, with the two directions of traffic separated by a median barrier. Compared to twinned highways, the 2+1 configuration is faster and less expensive to build as it typically only requires modifying and expanding the existing road.

On most northern highways, 2+1 roads would offer a better benefit-cost mix than twinned highways and would continue to do so even if traffic volumes increase considerably. Even if traffic volumes were to grow at double the rate they did between 2014 and 2024, most northern highways still would not reach the levels required to justify twinning over 2+1 within the next 60 years.

Based on the evidence available, highway twinning would be a reasonable investment on only four segments of the Highway 11-17-71 corridor:

1. Highway 17 between Greater Sudbury and North Bay
2. Highway 17 between Greater Sudbury and Sault Ste. Marie
3. Highway 11/17 between Thunder Bay and Nipigon
4. Highway 11/17 between Thunder Bay and Shabaqua Corners

Want to learn more? Read the report in English here:

<https://www.northernpolicy.ca/upload/documents/publications/commentaries-new/twin-carefully-en-21-09-26.pdf>

The report in French will be published next week.

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Media Interviews: NPI Vice President, Research William Dunstan is available for comment. To arrange an interview, please contact:

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About the Author:

William Dunstan is Vice President, Research at Northern Policy Institute. He first came to Northern Ontario through NPI's Experience North program in 2021, and he has spent time living in Hearst, Timmins, and Kirkland Lake. William has a Bachelor of Public Affairs and Policy Management from Carleton University and a Master of Public Policy from the University of Calgary.

About Northern Policy Institute:

Northern Policy Institute is Northern Ontario's independent, evidence-driven think tank. We conduct research, analyze data, and disseminate ideas. Our mission is to grow Northern Ontario by supporting evidence-based decision-making through education and direct community engagement.

We believe in partnership, reconciliation, collaboration, communication, and cooperation. Our team seeks to do inclusive research that involves broad engagement and delivers recommendations for specific, measurable action. Our success depends on our partnerships with other entities present in or passionate about Northern Ontario.

Our permanent locations are in Thunder Bay and Timmins. During the summer months, we have satellite offices in other regions of Northern Ontario staffed by teams of Experience North placements. These placements are for university and college students working in your community on issues important to you and your neighbours.