



Commentary | September 2026

Twin Carefully:

Why 2+1 is the Best Fit for Most Northern Ontario Highways

By: William Dunstan

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→ Thunder Bay is located in the Robinson-Superior Treaty territory, and the land is the traditional territory of the Anishnaabeg and Fort William First Nation. This place is where, with the contribution of the Métis people in this area, a small thriving community formed into what has now become Thunder Bay.

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We recognize and appreciate the historic connection that Indigenous peoples have to these territories. We support their efforts to sustain and grow their nations. We also recognize the contributions that they have made in shaping and strengthening local communities, the province, and Canada.

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Executive Summary

Building on previous research, Northern Policy Institute (NPI) has been developing a methodology for prioritizing highway upgrades across Northern Ontario. While this work is ongoing, the evidence available to date already points to one very clear conclusion. In most areas, twinning is not the best option to improve Northern Ontario's highways. At the traffic volumes seen across most sections of Highways 11 and 17 – as well as Highway 71 – 2+1 roads would be cheaper and faster to build and would offer similar safety and traffic flow benefits to twinning. Additionally, although traffic volumes have increased on parts of these highways in recent years, traffic is unlikely to reach the volumes required to justify twinning for the foreseeable future (if ever).

In 2026, we see a consensus among our leaders for investing in improved safety and expanded capacity across Northern Ontario's highway network. The Prime Minister recently committed to speaking with Premier Ford about this issue (Taschner, 2026). This follows a recent call by the province for Ottawa to join them in fast-tracking investments in the highway 11-17 corridor (Pirie, 2026). That provincial call came after months of renewed effort by Northern Ontario municipal leaders who have been lobbying for these investments for decades (Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association, 2026; Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities, 2026). Canada and Ontario's treaty partners are also supportive of these investments. The Chiefs of Ontario's (2026) most recent call for action came after a string of fatal accidents during the fall and winter of 2025-2026.

In expressing their support, all of these officials have cited the need to improve highway safety and to strengthen these transportation corridors to help Canada build "a more competitive, resilient and self-reliant national economy" (Pirie, 2026). While there is now clear support for upgrading Highways 11 and 17, there is not yet a consensus as to how exactly the Government of Ontario (with support from the federal government) should proceed with upgrading these roads.

Making upgrades to the Highway 11-17-71 corridor in Northern Ontario would represent a valuable investment in saving lives, improving connectivity between northern communities, and strengthening cross-Canada supply chains. However, this commentary will explain why delivering all these upgrades in the form of twinning would make residents of Northern Ontario – and people across Canada – pay too much and wait too long for better, safer highways.

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 Shabagua Corners

On all other segments, 2+1 roads would offer similar benefits to highway twinning at a much lower cost and could be built faster.





What Should We Consider When Deciding How to Upgrade Highways?

The money that governments spend on building highways ultimately comes from taxpayers. That alone does not mean spending on highways is unjustified. However, it does mean that if governments are going to use taxpayer dollars to improve highways, they should do so to provide clear benefits, while avoiding unnecessary costs.

Upgrading sections of the Trans-Canada Highway in Northern Ontario would provide substantial benefits. Roughly 95 per cent of the Highway 11-17-71 corridor in Northern Ontario currently consists of simple two-lane roads.¹ These two-lane roads have high rates of severe collisions. As a result, the number of road-related fatalities per capita in Northern Ontario is more than double the rate in Southern Ontario (Wilson, 2022). Frequent severe collisions contribute to frequent highway closures. Due to limited alternative routes, these closures can significantly disrupt travel between Northern Ontario communities and Eastern and Western Canada. Road closures on Northern Ontario highways disrupt national supply chains, as well as local shipments, access to services, and tourism in the region (Dunstan, Rocha, and Lefebvre, 2023; Destination Northern Ontario, 2025). Beyond road closures and collisions, two-lane roads with limited passing opportunities can have issues with traffic flow as motorists become stuck behind slower vehicles.

Therefore, when the Government of Ontario decides how to upgrade Northern Ontario highways, it should pursue options that provide the greatest improvements to highway safety, traffic flow, and reduced road closures relative to the cost of these upgrades. How quickly these upgrades can be made should be another consideration. Fatalities, road closures, and traffic flow constraints on Northern Ontario highways are urgent issues; we should prefer approaches that address these problems sooner rather than later.

¹ As of June 2026, approximately 82 per cent of this corridor is two-laned. Another 12 per cent consists of three-lane sections, which generally represent two-lane roads with a third lane for passing (Author's calculations using data from Ontario GeoHub, 2026).

Twinning and 2+1 Roads

Historically, when it was determined that a standard two-lane road was no longer adequate, the default approach in Ontario and other North American jurisdictions has been to twin the highway – that is, to build a new divided highway with two lanes or more in each direction. Previous research by NPI and the Going the Extra Mile for Safety committee (GEMS)² has concluded, however, that on many highways in Northern Ontario, 2+1 roads are a more cost-effective upgrade than twinning.

Two plus one (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. The 2+1 configuration is used extensively in Sweden, Germany, and other countries (GEMS, 2019; Kirby, Wilmschurst, and Koorey, 2014). At the traffic volumes seen on many rural highways, 2+1 roads perform similarly or better than twinned highways in terms of highway safety and traffic flow (GEMS, 2019; Dunstan, Rocha, and Lefebvre, 2023). Upgrading a two-lane road to a 2+1 configuration can be especially helpful for improving traffic flow on roads with significant truck traffic. By offering more frequent opportunities for motorists to pass slower-moving trucks, 2+1 roads can reduce the number of vehicles that get stuck in “platoons” behind trucks for extended periods.

Another benefit that 2+1 upgrades have over twinning is that 2+1 upgrades can be completed faster and at a lower cost. In most cases, a two-lane road can be upgraded to a 2+1 road by modifying the existing road platform, compared to a twinned highway that requires building a new parallel road (GEMS, 2019; Dunstan, Rocha, and Lefebvre, 2023). As a result, 2+1 roads are often a much more cost-effective option relative to highway twinning. In Sweden, it was found that upgrading a two-lane road to a 2+1 configuration saves one life per \$150,000 spent, compared to one life per \$4.5 million for highway twinning (GEMS, 2019).

How much cheaper are 2+1 roads relative to highway twinning? A previous Northern Policy Institute study used terrain-based cost estimates from Ontario's Ministry of Transportation (MTO) (2021a) to estimate the average cost of upgrading two-lane sections of Highways 11 and 17 to a 2+1 configuration (Dunstan, Rocha, and Lefebvre, 2023). That study estimated that such upgrades would cost roughly \$1,025,000 per kilometre (in 2021 dollars). Those calculations assumed that 2+1 roads revert to a standard two-lane layout when crossing major water bodies, which substantially reduces costs from replacing bridges. Additionally, the MTO (2021a) estimates that the average cost of upgrading sections that already have a passing lane to a 2+1 configuration is \$500,000 per kilometre (in 2021 dollars).

By comparison, this commentary estimates that twinning costs an average of \$6 million per kilometres (in 2023 dollars). There is no standard estimate for the cost per kilometre of highway twinning in Canada or Ontario. However, several publicly available figures from 2022 and 2023 put the cost of highway twinning at roughly \$5 million to \$7 million per kilometre (Anishinabek News, 2023; Nova Scotia, 2023; TBNewsWatch, 2022).³

As of 2026, there is 2,915 kilometres of roads on Highways 11, 17, and 71 in Northern Ontario that are less than four lanes. We can get a rough sense of the relative cost of 2+1 versus twinning by using the above figures – and adjusting for inflation⁴ – to calculate how much it would cost to convert all these roads into a 2+1 configuration and into a twinned highway. Converting all 2,915 kilometres to a 2+1 configuration is estimated to cost approximately \$3.3 billion. Twinning all 2,915 kilometres is estimated to cost approximately \$18.8 billion. These are preliminary estimates. Nevertheless, it is clear that making 2+1 the default option for upgrading Northern Ontario highways instead of twinning could save taxpayers billions of dollars.

² Created in 2015, GEMS is a volunteer-run group based in Temiskaming Shores that advocates for safer highways in Northern Ontario.

³ The government of Nova Scotia reports that highway twinning typically costs between \$5 million and \$7 million per kilometre. Contracts awarded for highway twinning on Ontario highways 17 and 69 put the cost of highway twinning at \$4.8 million and \$7.4 million per kilometre, respectively.

⁴ Using the Bank of Canada's inflation calculator, estimated costs for 2+1 upgrades were converted from 2021 dollars to 2026 dollars, and estimated costs for highway twinning were converted from 2023 dollars to 2026 dollars.



Traffic Volumes for Twinning and 2+1 Roads

When, exactly, does a 2+1 road represent a better option than a twinned highway? As stated earlier, 2+1 roads are cheaper and faster to build than twinned highways. Therefore, 2+1 roads should be preferred over twinned highways unless traffic volumes are too high for a 2+1 road and additional lanes are needed. In Sweden, 2+1 roads perform well on roads with traffic volumes as high as 18,000 to 20,000 annual average daily traffic (AADT).⁵ In Germany, 2+1 roads have been used on roads with traffic volumes as high as 25,000 AADT. German 2+1 roads with traffic volumes between 15,000 and 25,000 AADT range have lower crash rates than similarly busy roads that use a two-lane or undivided four-lane configuration (Kirby, Wilmschurst, and Koorey, 2014). A recent report from Ontario's Ministry of Transportation (2021b) argued that the 2+1 configuration would provide the greatest benefits to highway safety and traffic flow on roads that have traffic volumes between 4,000 and 15,000 AADT, while continuing to function well up to 18,000 AADT. In short, the evidence suggests that 2+1 roads are a suitable, lower-cost alternative to twinned highways on most⁶ roads with traffic volumes up to at least 15,000 AADT, and likely somewhat higher.

⁵ AADT is the most widely used measure of road traffic volumes. It is calculated by dividing the number of vehicles on a road (in both directions) over the course of a year by 365 to produce a daily average.

⁶ The exact "crossover point" where twinned highways begin to substantially outperform 2+1 roads can vary due to additional factors such as terrain and peak hourly traffic. Nevertheless, AADT is the primary factor used to identify roads where the 2+1 configuration is suitable.

Traffic Volumes Don't Justify Twinning

As part of NPI's ongoing work on highway upgrades and prioritization, the author has divided Highway 11, 17, and 71 in Northern Ontario into sixteen segments.⁷ These segments are listed in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Highway Segments Used in Analysis

Segment Number	Segment Name	Start and End Point
1	Manitoba Border to Shabaqua Corners on Highway 17/17A	Begins at Manitoba border and ends at 11/17 junction at Shabaqua Corners
2	Highway 17/71 Intersection near Longbow Lake to Highway 11/71 Intersection near Emo on Highway 71	Begins at intersection 17/71 intersection and ends at 11/71 intersection
3	Highway 11/71 Intersection near Emo to Shabaqua Corners on Highway 11	Begins at 11/71 intersection and ends at 11/17 junction
4	Shabaqua Corners to Thunder Bay on Highway 11/17	Begins at 11/17 junction and ends at 11/17 intersection with Hodder Ave
5	Thunder Bay to Nipigon on Highway 11/17	Begins at 11/17 intersection with Hodder Ave and ends at 11/17 split in Nipigon
6	Nipigon to Beardmore on Highway 11	Begins at 11/17 split in Nipigon and ends at 11/580 intersection north of Beardmore
7	Beardmore to Highway 11 / Highway 663 intersection on Highway 11	Begins at Highway 11 intersection with Highway 580 and ends at intersection of highways 11 and 663 south of Constance Lake
8	Intersection of Highway 11 / Highway 663 to Matheson on Highway 11	Begins at intersection of highways 11 and 663 and ends at intersection of highways 11 and 101 just west of Matheson
9	Matheson to intersection of Highway 11 / Highway 112 on Highway 11	Begins at 11/101 intersection and ends at intersection of highways 11 and 112
10	Intersection of Highway 11 / Highway 112 to Temiskaming Shores on Highway 11	Begins at 11/112 intersection and ends at the south (Bedard Ave) intersection of highways 11 and 65 in Temiskaming Shores
11	Temiskaming Shores to North Bay on Highway 11	Begins at the south (Bedard Ave) 11/65 intersection in Temiskaming Shores and ends at the Highway 11/17/ Algonquin Avenue intersection in North Bay
12	Nipigon to Wawa on Highway 17	Begins at 11/17 split and ends at intersection of highways 17 and 101 near Wawa
13	Wawa to Sault Ste. Marie on Highway 17	Begins at 17/101 intersection and ends at intersection of Highway 17 and Highway 556 north of Sault Ste. Marie
14	Sault Ste. Marie to Greater Sudbury on Highway 17	Begins at 17/556 intersection and ends at intersection of Highway 17 and Sudbury Regional Road 55 near Nickel Centre
15	Greater Sudbury to North Bay on Highway 17	Begins at intersection of Highway 17 and Sudbury Regional Road 55 and ends at intersection of highways 11 and 17 at the east end of North Bay
16	North Bay to Nipissing District Boundary on Highway 17	Begins at 11/17 intersection at east end of North Bay and ends at the border of Nipissing District and Renfrew County

⁷ Segments were divided at major communities and highway intersections. The author used traffic volume data to identify the specific cut-off intersections, specifically by dividing segments at intersections that mark significant changes in traffic volumes.

This analysis uses traffic volume data from the Ontario Ministry of Transportation. As of September 17, 2026, the most recent year for which traffic volume data is publicly available is 2024 (MTO, 2026). To account for the fact that the MTO-defined sections vary in length, the author calculated a “distance-weighted” AADT for the sixteen segments.⁸ These figures are presented in Table 2.

Remember that 15,000 AADT is a conservative estimate for the traffic volume level where highway twinning begins to be a better option than 2+1 roads. As of 2024, none of these sixteen segments have consistent traffic volumes of 15,000 AADT. In fact, none of these segments even have traffic volumes above 10,000 AADT. Readers will notice that on a few segments there are sections reporting traffic volumes of 15,000 AADT or higher (Maximum AADT). However, these are short sections – no more than a few kilometres in length – immediately near larger population centres. Many of these sections already have four lanes or more.

At present, there is no two-lane segment of Highways 11, 17, or 71 in Northern Ontario where traffic volumes are anywhere near the levels where highway twinning would be a more cost-effective investment than a 2+1 road.

⁸ To provide a simple illustration: imagine a highway segment that has one 20-kilometre section with an AADT of 2,000 vehicles and one 10-kilometre section with an AADT of 9,500 vehicles. To calculate the distance-weighted AADT for the entire 30-kilometre segment, the following formula is used: $((\text{Section 1 distance} \times \text{Section 1 AADT}) + (\text{Section 2 distance} \times \text{Section 2 AADT})) / \text{Total distance}$. In this case, the formula produces a distance-weighted AADT of 4,500.

**Table 2: Traffic Volumes on Segments of the Trans-Canada Highway in Northern Ontario,
latest data available (2024)**

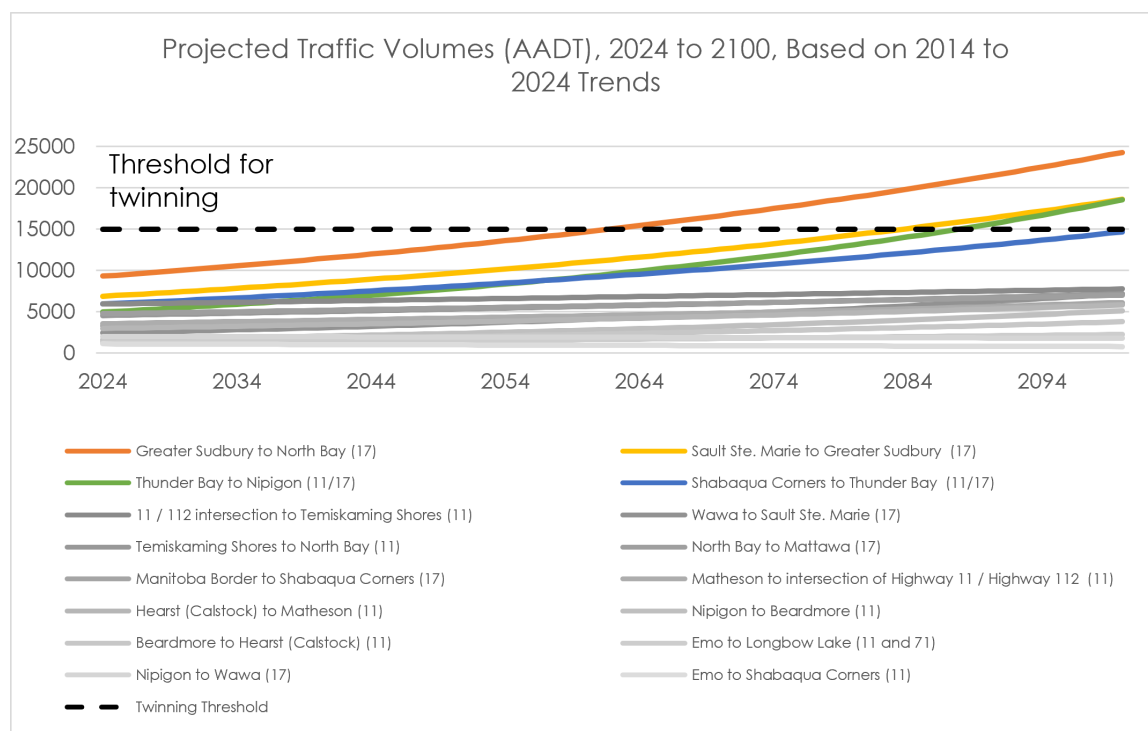
Segment Number	Segment	Minimum AADT	Maximum AADT	Distance-Weighted Average AADT
1	Manitoba Border to Shabaqua Corners	1,650	7,150	3,251
2	Highway 71	890	1,550	1,228
3	Highway 11/71 Intersection to Shabaqua Corners	550	4,900	1,103
4	Shabaqua Corners to Thunder Bay	2,550	22,700	5,914
5	Thunder Bay to Nipigon	3,800	6,800	4,949
6	Nipigon to Beardmore	1,400	1,650	1,573
7	Beardmore to Highway 11 / Highway 663 intersection	1,200	1,900	1,415
8	11 / 663 intersection to Matheson	2,050	5,000	2,958
9	Matheson to intersection of Highway 11 / Highway 112	2,700	4,600	3,544
10	11 / 112 intersection to Temiskaming Shores	4,400	15,000	5,927
11	Temiskaming Shores to North Bay	3,200	28,200	4,539
12	Nipigon to Wawa	1,700	3,100	1,998
13	Wawa to Sault Ste. Marie	1,950	5,400	2,422
14	Sault Ste. Marie to Greater Sudbury	4,000	13,700	6,859
15	Greater Sudbury to North Bay	6,300	28,200	9,291
16	North Bay to Nipissing District Boundary	3,000	8,900	4,749

Source: Author's calculations based on MTO, 2026.

Future Traffic Volumes Also Don't Justify Twinning

Advocates of widespread highway twinning may argue that traffic volumes will reach levels that justify twinning eventually. Figure 1 illustrates that, if recent trends continue, this is not true for most segments. If trends in traffic volume growth from 2014 to 2024 persist indefinitely, the only segment that would come remotely close to reaching traffic volumes where twinning is likely to offer a more favourable benefit-cost ratio to 2+1 by 2050 is the section of Highway 17 between Greater Sudbury and North Bay. AADT on that segment would be 12,905 in 2050. Even when considering up to the year 2100, only three more segments⁹ will reach (or nearly reach) 15,000 AADT based on current trends: Sault Ste. Marie to Greater Sudbury on Highway 17, Thunder Bay to Nipigon on Highway 11/17, and Shabaqua Corners to Thunder Bay on Highway 11/17. Twinning on these four sections could be justified if Ontario and Canada want to prepare for potentially higher traffic volumes decades in advance. On other segments, 2+1 is clearly the better option.¹⁰

Figure 1: Only Four Segments Reach 15,000 AADT Within the Next Century Based on Current Trends



Source: Author's Calculation Based on MTO (2026)

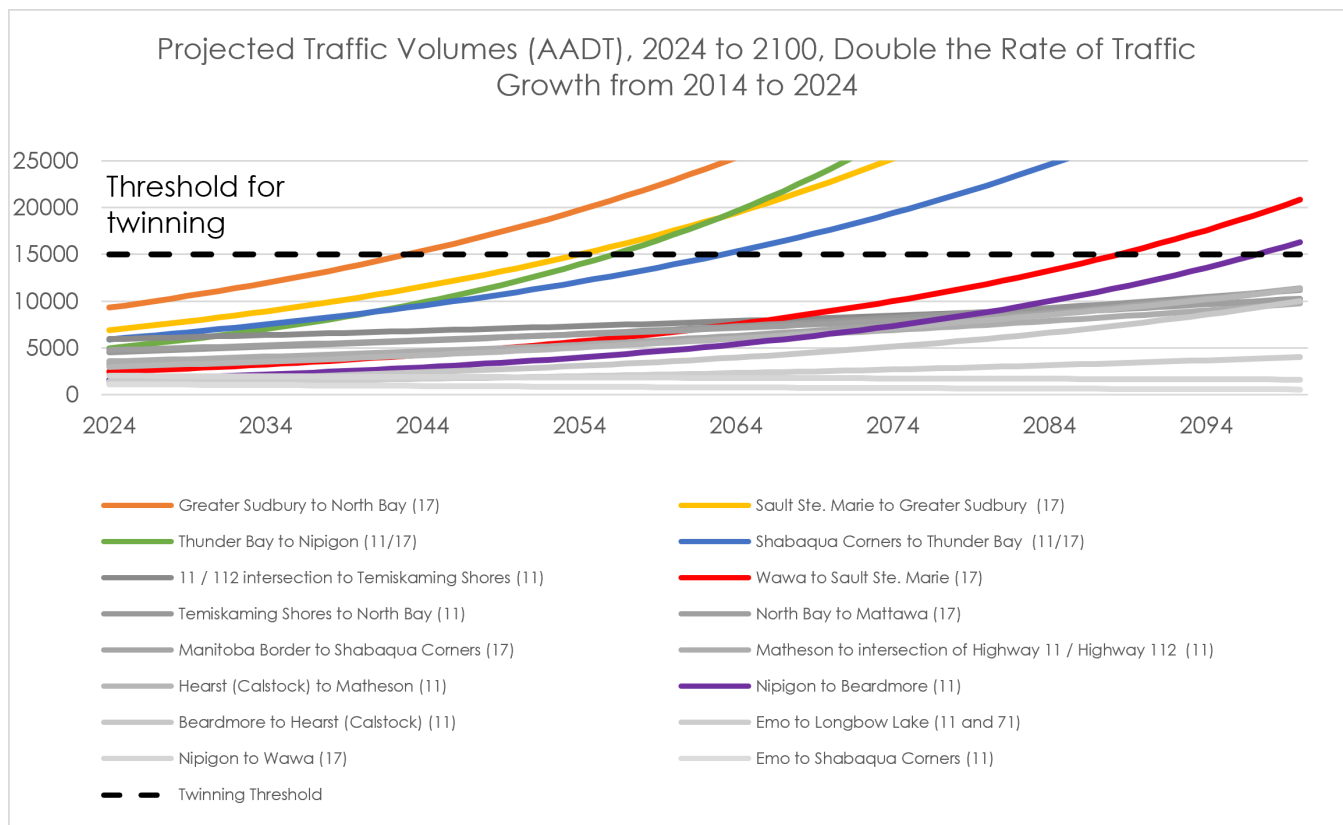
It is possible that increased mining activity in Northern Ontario, increased volumes of interprovincial trade, and other potential factors could lead to increases in traffic volumes on northern highways that exceed what was seen from 2014 to 2024. If this occurs, could twinning be justified in more places? The data suggests it would not.

⁹See Tables 3 and 4 in Appendix 1 for the raw numbers for all segments.

¹⁰While this commentary focuses on sections of Highways 11, 17, and 71 in Northern Ontario, it should be noted that the section of Highway 17 from the Nipissing District/Renfrew Country boundary to Renfrew could also be included in provincial and federal initiatives to upgrade this highway corridor. As of 2024, the section from Deep River to Renfrew has traffic volumes similar to the section between North Bay and Greater Sudbury and could be a reasonable candidate for twinning. Traffic levels on the section between the Nipissing District/Renfrew Country boundary and Deep River are better suited to a 2+1 upgrade.

Figure 2 shows a scenario in which traffic volumes grow at double the rate they did between 2014 and 2024.¹¹ In this scenario, only two additional segments reach 15,000 AADT by 2100: Wawa to Sault Ste. Marie on Highway 17, and Nipigon to Beardmore on Highway 11. Moreover, these segments do not reach the twinning threshold until 2088 and 2097, respectively. In other words, even if the rate of traffic volume growth doubles from what occurred over the past decade, it will take more than sixty years to reach traffic volumes that would justify twinning – apart from the corridors between Sault Ste. Marie and North Bay and from Shabaqua Corners to Nipigon through Thunder Bay. Clearly, absent enormous increases in the rate of traffic volume growth, most segments of Highways 11, 17, and 71 in Northern Ontario will not have traffic volumes that justify twinning any time soon.

Figure 2: Traffic Volume Projections in a High-growth Scenario



Source: Author's Calculation Based on MTO (2026)

¹¹ Some readers may ask about growth in truck traffic volumes, in addition to overall traffic volumes. Table 5 in Appendix 2 shows that there is not a clear pattern of truck traffic volumes growing faster than overall traffic volumes in recent years.

Conclusion – Where to Twin, and Where Not to Twin

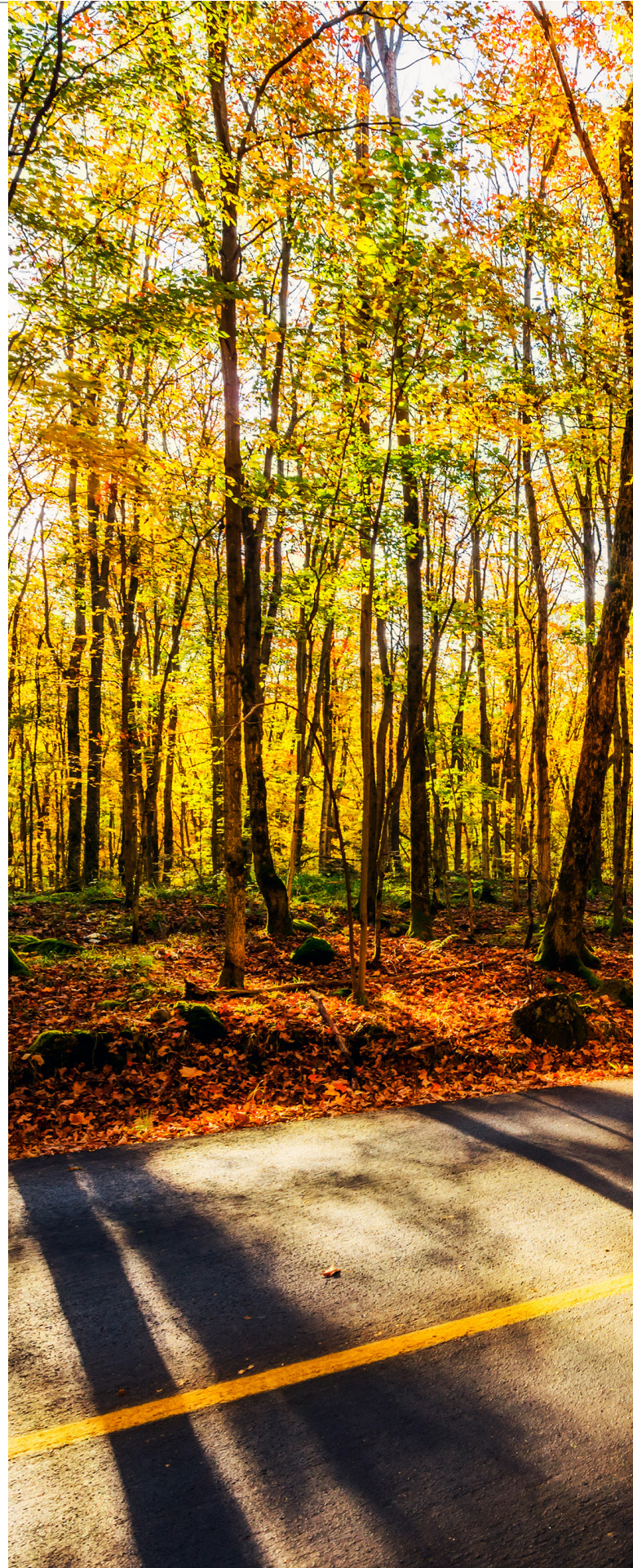
When deciding how to upgrade northern highways, the Government of Ontario should select the suitable configuration that can be completed most quickly and at the lowest cost to taxpayers. Across the Highway 11-17-71 corridor, 2+1 roads would offer similar safety and traffic flow benefits to highway twinning, while being cheaper and faster to build. On most sections, 2+1 roads will remain the better option well into the future under any realistic scenario. Twinning should not be the default option for upgrading highways in Northern Ontario.

This commentary recommends highway **twinning on only four segments** of the Highway 11-17-71 corridor in Northern Ontario:

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 Nipigon¹²
4. Highway 11/17 between Thunder Bay and Shabaqua Corners

On all other segments, upgrades should take the form of 2+1 roads instead of highway twinning. Traffic volumes are too low to justify twinning on these segments, and these volumes will remain too low even if these segments experience multiple decades of considerable growth in traffic volumes. On most of the northern highway network, 2+1 roads will offer similar benefits to highway twinning at a much lower cost and could be built faster.

¹² Much of this section has already been twinned.



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Appendix A: Full Calculations for Traffic Volume Projections

Table 3: Recent Traffic Volumes Trends on Segments of the Trans-Canada Highway in Northern Ontario, and Projections Based on These Trends

Segment number	Segment	2014 AADT	2024 AADT	Percentage change in traffic volumes - 2014 to 2024	Projected AADT in 2050 if past trends continue	Year where 15,000 AADT will be reached based on 2014 to 2024 trends
1	Manitoba Border to Shabaqua Corners	2,993	3,251	8.6%	4,031	2209
2	Highway 71	1,136	1,228	8.2%	1,506	2343
3	Highway 11/71 Intersection to Shabaqua Corners	1,156	1,103	-4.6%	977	N/A
4	Shabaqua Corners to Thunder Bay	5,247	5,914	12.7%	8,069	2102
5	Thunder Bay to Nipigon	4,160	4,949	19.0%	7,774	2088
6	Nipigon to Beardmore	1,347	1,573	16.8%	2,355	2169
7	Beardmore to Highway 11 / Highway 663 intersection	1,243	1,415	13.8%	1,980	2207
8	11 / 663 intersection to Matheson	2,707	2,958	9.3%	3,724	2207
9	Matheson to intersection of Highway 11 / Highway 112	3,315	3,544	6.9%	4,216	2240
10	11 / 112 intersection to Temiskaming Shores	5,722	5,927	3.6%	6,497	2287
11	Temiskaming Shores to North Bay	4,276	4,539	6.1%	5,299	2225
12	Nipigon to Wawa	2,028	1,998	-1.5%	1,923	N/A
13	Wawa to Sault Ste. Marie	2,101	2,422	15.3%	3,510	2152
14	Sault Ste. Marie to Greater Sudbury	6,016	6,859	14.0%	9,647	2084
15	Greater Sudbury to North Bay	8,188	9,291	13.5%	12,905	2062
16	North Bay to Nipissing District Boundary	4,513	4,749	5.2%	5,420	2250

Source: Author's Calculation based on data from MTO (2026)

Table 4: Recent Traffic Volumes Trends on Segments of the Trans-Canada Highway in Northern Ontario, and Projections Assuming Rate of Traffic Growth Doubles

Segment number	Segment	2014 AADT	2024 AADT	Percentage change in traffic volumes - 2014 to 2024	Projected AADT in 2050 if past trends continue	Year where 15,000 AADT will be reached based on 2014 to 2024 trends
1	Manitoba Border to Shabaqua Corners	2,993	3,251	8.6%	4,989	2117
2	Highway 71	1,136	1,228	8.2%	1,843	2184
3	Highway 11/71 Intersection to Shabaqua Corners	1,156	1,103	-4.6%	864	N/A
4	Shabaqua Corners to Thunder Bay	5,247	5,914	12.7%	10,970	2063
5	Thunder Bay to Nipigon	4,160	4,949	19.0%	12,117	2056
6	Nipigon to Beardmore	1,347	1,573	16.8%	3,503	2097
7	Beardmore to Highway 11 / Highway 663 intersection	1,243	1,415	13.8%	2,760	2116
8	11 / 663 intersection to Matheson	2,707	2,958	9.3%	4,678	2116
9	Matheson to intersection of Highway 11 / Highway 112	3,315	3,544	6.9%	5,009	2132
10	11 / 112 intersection to Temiskaming Shores	5,722	5,927	3.6%	7,119	2156
11	Temiskaming Shores to North Bay	4,276	4,539	6.1%	6,182	2125
12	Nipigon to Wawa	2,028	1,998	-1.5%	1,851	N/A
13	Wawa to Sault Ste. Marie	2,101	2,422	15.3%	5,059	2088
14	Sault Ste. Marie to Greater Sudbury	6,016	6,859	14.0%	13,506	2054
15	Greater Sudbury to North Bay	8,188	9,291	13.5%	17,853	2043
16	North Bay to Nipissing District Boundary	4,513	4,749	5.2%	6,182	2137

Source: Author's Calculation based on data from MTO (2026)

Appendix B: Comparison of Overall Traffic Trends with Truck Traffic Trends

Table 5 compares trends in overall traffic volume growth with trends in truck traffic volume growth. As of September 21, 2026, the two most recent years for which Ontario's Ministry of Transportation has released truck traffic volumes are 2019 and 2021. Numbers for 2021 may be unrepresentative due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, in Table 5, we compare overall traffic volume trends with truck traffic trends for the period from 2014 to 2019. The data shows no clear trend of truck traffic growing either faster or slower than overall traffic across the Highway 11-17-71 corridor. On some segments, truck traffic volumes grew at a lower rate than overall traffic volume. On other segments, truck traffic volumes grew at a higher rate.

Table 6 presents the same data in raw numbers, for reference.

Table 5: Comparison of Annual Average Change in Overall Traffic Volumes and Truck Traffic Volumes, 2014 to 2019

Segment Number	Segment	Average Annual Change in AADT, 2014 to 2019	Average Annual Change in Truck AADT, 2014 to 2019
1	Manitoba Border to Shabaqua Corners	1.6%	5.1%
2	Highway 71	2.4%	-0.6%
3	Highway 11/71 Intersection to Shabaqua Corners	-0.3%	-0.9%
4	Shabaqua Corners to Thunder Bay	2.0%	1.6%
5	Thunder Bay to Nipigon	2.2%	0.6%
6	Nipigon to Beardmore	2.3%	2.2%
7	Beardmore to Highway 11 / Highway 663 intersection	1.6%	1.8%
8	11 / 663 intersection to Matheson	1.2%	1.8%
9	Matheson to intersection of Highway 11 / Highway 112	0.7%	2.7%
10	11 / 112 intersection to Temiskaming Shores	0.3%	0.5%
11	Temiskaming Shores to North Bay	0.4%	-0.5%
12	Nipigon to Wawa	2.5%	4.9%
13	Wawa to Sault Ste. Marie	2.2%	3.6%

14	Sault Ste. Marie to Greater Sudbury	1.8%	6.1%
15	Greater Sudbury to North Bay	2.6%	1.4%
16	North Bay to Nipissing District Boundary	1.7%	9.3%

Source: Author's Calculation based on data from MTO (2026)

Table 5: Comparison of Annual Average Change in Overall Traffic Volumes and Truck Traffic Volumes, 2014 to 2019

Segment Number	Segment	AADT 2014	AADT 2019	Truck AADT 2014	Truck AADT 2019
1	Manitoba Border to Shabaqua Corners	2,993	3,226	1,200	1,506
2	Highway 71	1,136	1,275	267	259
3	Highway 11/71 Intersection to Shabaqua Corners	1,156	1,136	325	311
4	Shabaqua Corners to Thunder Bay	5,247	5,770	1,104	1,190
5	Thunder Bay to Nipigon	4,160	4,614	1,207	1,246
6	Nipigon to Beardmore	1,347	1,505	699	774
7	Beardmore to Highway 11 / Highway 663 intersection	1,243	1,343	785	856
8	11 / 663 intersection to Matheson	2,707	2,870	963	1,049
9	Matheson to intersection of Highway 11 / Highway 112	3,315	3,440	1,028	1,169
10	11 / 112 intersection to Temiskaming Shores	5,722	5,805	1,086	1,111
11	Temiskaming Shores to North Bay	4,276	4,355	1,243	1,212
12	Nipigon to Wawa	2,028	2,285	741	925
13	Wawa to Sault Ste. Marie	2,101	2,336	611	720
14	Sault Ste. Marie to Greater Sudbury	6,016	6,562	1,077	1,408
15	Greater Sudbury to North Bay	8,188	9,263	1,094	1,171
16	North Bay to Nipissing District Boundary	4,513	4,893	646	946

Source: Author's Calculation based on data from MTO (2026)

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.

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