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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
Valley Line (SE to West LRT)
RIVER VALLEY AREA IMPACTS

In the City of Edmonton's regular meetings with citizens, businesses, community leagues, and other organizations a number of questions and concerns have been raised about impacts to the River Valley area. All Edmontonians recognize the importance of the City's unique ribbon of blue and green—a treasured natural, historical, and cultural space.

The City of Edmonton has created the following document to answer important recurring questions about changes and impacts to the dynamic of the River Valley area brought about by the introduction of the Valley Line LRT. While this document cannot comprehensively answer *all* questions regarding this area, this document attempts to address the most common and critical ones.

LRT CORRIDOR AND STRUCTURES

WHY IS THE VALLEY LINE FOLLOWING THE CONNORS HILL/LOUISE MCKINNEY ROUTE? WHY NOT DAWSON BRIDGE / LOW LEVEL BRIDGE / ANOTHER ROUTE?

When the corridor for the Valley Line LRT was first being decided, the City's LRT Route Planning Evaluation Criteria was applied to all possible routes via a two-phased planning process, as well as a multi-year public engagement process. The Concept Planning reports and details of this process, which explain how the City went from over 20 possible routes to one final choice, can be found on the Valley Line's Project History page here.

Once a final recommendation was made, further consultation was done with the public to inform them of the choice and seek further feedback. When this process was complete, and after statutory public hearings, City Council voted to approve the amended corridors on the following dates:

- The SE alignment was approved by City Council on January 19, 2011.
- The Downtown alignment was approved by City Council on February 15, 2012.
- The West alignment was approved by City Council on January 19, 2011.

To follow the history of the decision-making process for the line, please visit the Concept Planning history page here.

CAN THE CLOVERDALE PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE BE PRESERVED BY BUILDING A NEW ONE PARALLEL, OR AT AN ANGLE TO IT?

The Cloverdale bridge crossing was chosen for the Valley Line route for a number of reasons:

- The existing bridge crossing is already a disturbed corridor along the river valley, and so building a new bridge along this same corridor reduces the river crossing footprint and the overall environmental impacts (in fact, the new combined LRT and pedestrian bridge has one less pier than the existing pedestrian bridge and will impede the flow of the North Saskatchewan less)

- Geotechnical studies have been performed along the Muttart - Cloverdale Bridge - Louise McKinney Park corridor both presently and in the past. Environmental standards were not always rigorous in the River Valley, and in Edmonton's early days there were undocumented coal mines, landfills, and infills along the River Valley. Working along an existing corridor and verifying pre-existing geotechnical data allow an extra layer of safety and security for the project. Further geotechnical studies will also be conducted throughout the design and construction of the Valley Line.
- Moving the project west on the south bank would significantly impact both the environment and force a redesign and reconstruction of the Scona Road traffic interchange, while on the east the project is bounded by existing residential development.
- Moving the project west or east on the north bank would mean the LRT could not be aligned to pass underground at 95th street, which is the only access point wide enough (underground) to avoid demolishing residences and still reach surface in the Quarters redevelopment area. The current route also minimizes overall impact Louise McKinney Park, as the LRT alignment lies on the eastern edge of the Park.

WILL THE NEW BRIDGE HAVE THE SAME DESIGN FEATURES AS THE OLD BRIDGE?

The pedestrian walkway on the underside of the bridge will cross the river at approximately the same height as the current bridge and will incorporate scenic viewpoints. Although final design decisions regarding the bridge will not be known for some time, the City is assessing the viability of reusing materials and design elements from the old bridge in the future bridge.

WHY DOES THERE NEED TO BE A SIDETRACK BY MUTTART? WILL CARS BE STORED THERE LONG-TERM?

A sidetrack is required close to downtown to occasionally and temporarily ready Light Rail Vehicles (LRVs) for major, high-passenger events downtown and in the river valley, such as the Edmonton Folk Fest. The track will be about 90m long and 4m wide.

Originally, during the Concept Planning phase, the City of Edmonton planned for a potential storage track on the future river bridge. During Preliminary Engineering, the City examined alternatives, including moving the storage track into existing communities. It was eventually determined that the sidetrack would serve best at the Muttart Stop, for three reasons:

1) moving the track off the bridge reduces the width of the bridge and therefore helps minimize environmental impacts on the North Saskatchewan River
2) operational efficiency is maximized by keeping the track as close to key events as possible
3) the Muttart stop location offers the best cost savings and the least overall impact for Edmontonians

The track will also be used to temporarily store LRV cars in the event of a mechanical or electrical failure. However, if such an event happens, these cars will be removed from the storage track during appropriate non-peak hours and transported to the Valley Line's maintenance facility, so that they can be serviced at the earliest opportunity and without causing interference to daily LRT operations.

It is worth reiterating that the storage track will only ever temporarily store cars, in the events mentioned above. *It is in no way a permanent storage area*.

HOW IS THE ALIGNMENT ALONG CONNORS ROAD BEING DETERMINED?

In the case of Connors Road, the City of Edmonton will specify a *range design*. This means there will be north and south limits for where the winning contractor can build the track, road, and structures along Connors Road. The range for track placement will fit somewhere within the illustrated corridor viewable here.

The ultimate design will look to balance environmental considerations along the south bank, the interest of property owners above Connors Road along 95 Avenue, and minimizing impacts to organizations who use Gallagher Park.

I'VE HEARD BOTH A SIDEWALK AND A BIKE PATH ARE BEING BUILT ON THE NORTH SIDE OF CONNORS ROAD. IS THIS TRUE?

No. The north side of Connors will feature what the City refers to as a 'Shared-Use Path'. This is a wide, paved, all-inclusive path that can safely accommodate different types of active transportation at the same time, including cyclists, skaters, joggers, pedestrians and many others.

WHAT IS A TRACTION POWER SUBSTATION AND WHY IS ONE NEEDED IN THE RIVER VALLEY?

A traction power substation (TPSS) is a facility that transforms the electricity from the City of Edmonton's power grid into a current that powers the trains, allowing them to move.

To be effective, TPSSs have to be stationed at regular points along an LRT line, as the current diminishes the further away from the train they are. The highest power draw for the Valley Line will occur when the train is coming in and out of the River Valley, due to the slopes. TPSSs have therefore been stationed at the top of Grierson Hill near 95th Street, at the top of Connors Hill near 95th Avenue, and in the River Valley near the Muttart Conservatory. These buildings can be designed to blend in unobtrusively with the surrounding environment.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE LARGE STORAGE FACILITY NEAR THE MUTTART CONSERVATORY?

This discussion is ongoing between the Muttart, area stakeholders and the City of Edmonton. The existing facility will be removed to facilitate LRT construction, but no final decision has yet been reached as to a replacement. As part of City Council's direction to Administration to return with a report detailing options to minimize the Valley Line's effects on communities and the River Valley, the City is examining what will replace the existing facility. The final report will go back to Council in early 2014.

ROAD, TRAIL AND PARK IMPACTS

HOW LONG WILL THE BRIDGE AND TRAIL CLOSURES BE?

It is always difficult to predict exact construction timelines in a capital project of the Valley Line's size. The project team will be pursuing an aggressive construction schedule for the bridge crossing, with a target of reopening the bridge to pedestrian and bicycle transit 2.5 years after the existing Cloverdale Pedestrian Bridge is closed. To reinforce this, the City will be incentivizing the construction contractor to prioritize this construction item over others, looking for completion as early as possible, while still ensuring proper safety and quality standards are met.

HOW CAN CITIZENS CROSS THE RIVER DURING CONSTRUCTION?

Pedestrians and cyclists will be detoured to adjacent facilities such as the Low Level Bridge, as discussed in the EISA. The final detour plan will be developed and communicated prior to construction. City Council has also directed Administration to return with a report on options to shorten the construction period. This report will go back to Council in early 2014.

In the meantime, the City is examining the feasibility of temporary transportation options to assist people in crossing the River.

GIVEN THE LIMITED TRAFFIC CORRIDORS CROSSING THE NORTH SASKATCHEWAN RIVER, WHAT IMPACTS WILL THERE BE TO CAR TRAFFIC? WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT ON MY COMMUTE?

When construction plans are determined, the final detour plan as well as expected impacts/disruptions will be communicated to area residents, businesses and the general public via a variety of media, well in advance of actual construction. Similarly, when actual construction dates approach, directly affected stakeholders are again notified.

Regarding commuters, the City's communications team regularly updates local media outlets on traffic disruptions, lane closures, and bus rerouting. During construction, vehicles will be detoured to adjacent roadways as necessary.

To receive immediate and direct notification of disruptions/closures as they are known, please consider joining the LRT project e-mail distribution list, here.

I'VE HEARD THAT CAMERON AVENUE IS GOING TO BE SHUT DOWN FOR FOUR YEARS DURING CONSTRUCTION. IS THIS TRUE?

No. The City recognizes that road access in this area is very constrained and critical for area residents. Although construction vehicles will need to access the Louise McKinney Park area via Cameron Avenue due to construction, access to residential neighborhoods will be maintained throughout construction. Temporary closures will be communicated to residents in advance of construction.

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO TREES, GREENSPACE, PARKS, GARDENS AND PLANTED AREAS IN THE RIVER VALLEY?

The City of Edmonton's Corporate Tree Management Policy (C456A) directs specific tree protection, preservation, and replacement guidelines for construction, which the contractor will be held to. This means that greenery that is temporarily or permanently lost due to LRT construction will be relocated or replaced.

Some planted gardens will be impacted by construction, particularly the Rose Garden in Louise McKinney Park and the Centennial Garden in Henrietta Muir Edwards Park. While this is an unfortunate consequence of construction, the City is working with stakeholders to find suitable locations in the surrounding areas to relocate these gardens. Given that the LRT corridor passes through the periphery of both of these parks, no further disruption to planted gardens is expected.

Temporary trail connections/rerouting will be setup during the construction phase of the project. Disturbed trails and park spaces will be restored to their original state (with the addition of the LRT) when construction is complete.

WHAT STEPS WILL THE CITY TAKE TO PROTECT WILDLIFE AND WILDLIFE CORRIDORS AFFECTED BY THE PROJECT?

The City of Edmonton is committed to protecting not only River Valley wildlife and wildlife corridors, but also rare plants, fungal species and other vegetation that may be present in the River Valley—and even the soil that this vegetation grows in. Wildlife, vegetation and soil identification and protection measures are detailed in chapters 5 & 6 of the EISA, along with an outline of contractor environmental planning requirements and performance measures that must be successfully addressed for a contractor to be permitted to bid on the Valley Line project.

ARE THE SPECIAL STATUS SPECIES IN THE RIVER VALLEY AT RISK DUE TO THE PROJECT?

Four Special Status Species have been identified in the River Valley area. They are: peregrine falcons, long-tailed weasels, northern bats, and Canadian toads. Research in the project area and surroundings showed that none of these four species were at risk in the project area, due to the species in question either being highly mobile (falcons, weasels) or having better quality habitats already residing outside of the project area (bats, toads).

THE EISA DOES NOT ACCOUNT FOR AMPHIBIANS OR THE URBAN COYOTE PROJECT / THE EISA MISSES AN ANIMAL. WHY?

With the exception of the Special Status Species, the EISA does not examine animals on a species by species basis. It instead looks at impacts to their habitats, movement patterns, breeding seasons and other factors in order to allow comprehensive and holistic rather than piecemeal protection and mitigation measures to be taken.

MY NEIGHBORHOOD

WERE STAKEHOLDERS CONSULTED ABOUT THE VALLEY LINE? WHAT ABOUT BEFORE/DURING/AFTER THE EISA'S DEVELOPMENT?

For consultation pertaining to the Valley Line itself, please see the Project History page or the individual Area Pages on the project website.

For EISA consultation, please see the Methods, Key Environmental And Socio-Economic Issues, and Public Involvement Process sections of the EISA for a full description of the public engagement work undertaken throughout this assessment process.

HOW WILL THE CITY ENSURE THE VALLEY LINE'S DESIGN 'FITS' WITH THE RIVER VALLEY?

Stakeholder and public feedback collected to-date has provided a great vision for the look and feel of LRT infrastructure throughout the alignment, including within the river valley. Feedback about this area has made clear that Edmontonians want a nature-oriented theme that preserves and highlights the existing aesthetic of the river valley. This will be accomplished through design and public art elements in the vicinity of the LRT Stop.

WHAT IS BEING DONE TO PREVENT LRT USERS FROM PARKING IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD?

Residential Parking Permit Programs are dealt with by the City of Edmonton on a neighbourhood basis. This issue will not be examined for communities next to the LRT alignment until after the new line opens to the public (earliest 2020, contingent on funding).

The main reason for this is that parking patterns and resultant impacts will not be fully known until the LRT is in operation. There are a variety of parking programs that the City can implement to help with parasitic parking concerns – the type of program used depends on the specific situation (e.g. Stadium area implements more of a time-of-day parking ban and University area implements a permit program). For more information, visit the Residential Parking Permits webpage.

WILL THE LRT BE NOISY? ARE YOU BUILDING NOISE WALLS ALONG THE LINE?

The City of Edmonton has a comprehensive noise policy, which can be read at *Urban Traffic Noise Policy (C506A)*. Noise modeling studies were done along the entire length of the Valley Line corridor as well as in the River Valley, to determine if and where noise attenuation (noise walls) should be built.

The conclusion of the study was that noise attenuation is required in key locations where residential properties are next to the LRT corridor, and these property owners have already been contacted. Aesthetics of the final noise walls will depend on community feedback.

Noise dampening features on the LRT bridge deck will be in place to capture some of the noise generated by the LRT crossing the bridge.

In general, however, it is worth noting that LRT vehicles generate noise infrequently, and of a significantly weaker level than road traffic.

WHAT IS THE CITY DOING TO PROTECT AGAINST NOISE/VIBRATION DURING CONSTRUCTION?

The City of Edmonton's Transportation Service Department has a policy of offering a building condition assessment to all property owners whose property is directly next to an upcoming LRT corridor. This assessment takes place in the pre-construction phase of the project. With the owner's permission, assessors will examine the property and take digital photos of any areas of the property requested or that currently exhibit some level of distress or damage, with particular reference to foundations and finishes. This assessment establishes comparative baseline documentation. In the unlikely event that distress or damage occurs to your property as a result of work related to LRT construction, this documentation will help protect your interests.

Although the City of Edmonton does not have an official policy on construction/operations vibrations, contractors responsible for construction will be held to industry best practice standards during the construction phase, and will be liable if they do not meet these standards.

Noise and vibration effects will likely be noticeable during the construction phase for those living near the future line. The City does its best to limit these effects during construction, and generally restricts construction hours, but these effects are an unfortunate reality of any major infrastructure project.

WHAT IS THE CITY DOING TO PROTECT AGAINST NOISE/VIBRATION DURING OPERATION?

During operation, the LRT will run at community traffic speeds through residential areas, and operates on continuous welded rail, meaning operational vibration is expected to be exceptionally low. There are a plethora of further mitigation measures for both rail and train that are under consideration by the City, and contractual standards will ensure the Valley Line's eventual contractor maintains a system that operates harmoniously, throughout its lifespan, with the communities it traverses.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO ORGANIZATIONS WHO USE GALLAGHER PARK?

Part of the purpose of building the Valley Line is to provide greater access for all Edmontonians to River Valley facilities and activities. The City continues to work with major stakeholders in the Gallagher Park and River Valley areas to minimize impacts brought about by the construction and operation of the Valley Line. Specific commitments have been made to stakeholders in Gallagher Park that will minimize impacts on their operations, and these specifications will continue to be developed through direct discussion and coordination with these stakeholders.

I'VE HEARD THAT THE VALLEY LINE IS BEING DELIVERED AS A P3. WHAT DOES THIS MEAN AND HOW WILL IT AFFECT THE VALLEY LINE?

Please refer to the Valley Line P3 FAQ, which provides a comprehensive explanation of what P3 delivery means to Edmontonians and the guarantees that the City has made regarding service standards, security, fares, and other factors.

FURTHER INFORMATION

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE VALLEY LINE PROJECT

For further information, citizens are encouraged to visit the River Valley page on the LRT Projects website, which contains:

- the Environmental Impact Screening Assessment (EISA) for the Valley Line project
- the Site Location Study (SLS) for the Valley Line project
- information on relevant Council motions relating to River Valley Bylaw 7188
- this document

Interested citizens can also:

- visit www.edmonton.ca/valleyline
- call the LRT Project Information Centre at 780.496.4874, or e-mail lrtprojects@edmonton.ca