



# NORTHEAST RIVER CROSSING FUNCTIONAL PLANNING STUDY

## What We Heard

### Indigenous Engagement on the Northeast River Crossing (NERC) Functional Planning Study

#### Indigenous Engagement - Stage 1

Respecting our relationships with Indigenous communities, the City of Edmonton, in partnership with the City of Fort Saskatchewan, Strathcona County, and Sturgeon County, has reached out to several Indigenous communities and organizations for early engagement regarding the Northeast River Crossing (NERC) Functional Planning Study.

Indigenous Engagement is being guided, but not limited, by the commitments made through the Memorandum of Cooperation and Dialogue with the Confederacy of Treaty No. 6 First Nations; the Memorandum of Shared Recognition and Cooperation with the Métis Nation of Alberta; previous consultation and engagement; the Declaration on Strengthening Relationships with Urban Indigenous People; and the Urban Aboriginal Accord.

### Northeast River Crossing (NERC)

#### Background

The Northeast River Crossing Functional Planning Study is being undertaken by a partnership between the City of Edmonton, City of Fort Saskatchewan, Strathcona County, Sturgeon County, and Alberta Transportation.

The purpose of the Northeast River Crossing Functional Planning Study is to develop options for the location of a future bridge crossing of the North Saskatchewan River and connecting roads. The final recommendation will identify the approximate bridge and road locations, and the right-of-way requirements so they can be protected while the area continues future developments. The construction and completion of a new bridge is not expected to occur for another 25 to 35 years.





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The NERC Functional Planning Study began in January 2017. The public engagement for the study commenced two months later in March 2017, and will be ongoing until the project's completion in December 2018. The study is divided into three separate phases, which all involve gathering feedback from local stakeholders and the public.

**Stage 1** (March to July 2017) introduced the project and the study area to stakeholders and the public, including Indigenous communities. Specific alignments were not developed at this time. The objective of stage one was to receive feedback to improve the project teams understanding of the study area, and to identify concerns and opportunities in advance of developing potential alignments. As part of stage one, information was shared with Indigenous communities informing them of the project and when requested the study team met face-to-face with representatives of Indigenous communities to present information and receive feedback. Now that stage one is complete, the study team will use public input and feedback from Indigenous communities, along with other criteria such as technical requirements, the environment, and safety, to propose feasible alignments in stage two.

**Stage 2** (July to November 2017) will focus on developing feasible alignment options. The options will be presented for public discussion and comment in November 2017.

**Stage 3** (December 2017 to Spring 2018) will involve further defining the feasible alignments to decide on a final, recommended alignment. The final alignment will be presented to the public for feedback in spring 2018.

The NERC Functional Planning Study will be complete by December 2018, identifying a recommended alignment for approval by the five project partners.

## Stage 1 Indigenous Engagement

Feedback was sought based on communities current understanding of the study area. In addition to identifying issues concerns and opportunities for the study area Indigenous communities were also asked how they could be meaningfully engaged in future project stages.





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## What We Heard From Indigenous Communities - Stage One

In April 2017 the City of Edmonton sent correspondence to 29 of Indigenous communities seeking early engagement with First Nations and Métis communities to address any questions and hear concerns at the beginning of the functional planning study.

Since May 2017, the City of Edmonton has facilitated several one-on-one and small group meetings with Indigenous communities to share project information and gather input. These meetings were done with Indigenous communities administration and elders and provided a high level overview of Indigenous interests in the project area. These interests included:

The North Saskatchewan River and its banks have been identified as an important place for Indigenous people as well as a culturally and historically significant place for Indigenous communities. The following is a brief summary of some of the important topics that have emerged in face to face dialogue and engagement with some of the Indigenous communities.

- o **TRADITIONAL USES**

Indigenous communities have expressed an interest in undertaking site visits and conducting their own traditional land use studies to further explore the study area. Traditional activities that may be ongoing in the study area include fishing, trapping, and the collection of medicinal plants along the river.

- o **CULTURE**

Indigenous communities have identified the North Saskatchewan River as an important historic corridor for the movement of people, trade, and encampments. The study area may contain important historic and culturally significant areas.

- o **ENVIRONMENT**

Respect for the environment, including plants, fish, and other animals around the river and natural areas is a consistent theme raised in face to face meetings.





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- o **ENGAGEMENT**

Indigenous communities are also urban communities. Future planning and development should consider the impacts of development on urban Indigenous people and in particular Indigenous youth living within the City.

## Next Steps

The input that was received in phase one will advise the development of options for phase two of public engagement which will begin at the end of November 2017. The roadway and bridge alignment options will be shared with the public and Indigenous communities during phase two and will include how they may affect the themes that were identified in phase one. Comments on the alignment options will be sought from the public and Indigenous communities in phase two for the NERC project partner team can clearly understand the impacts of each option. This will include working with Indigenous communities to further gather knowledge through site visits and elder mapping tours. The NERC project partner team will then use this and other technical input to determine the preferred alignment. The project partner team will also identify priorities for mitigation and construction for the preferred alignment.

**Stage 2 (July to Winter 2017)** - The NERC project partner team will develop feasible alignment options to be presented to the public. Two public information sessions will take place at the end of November outlining the feasible alignment options for public discussion and input.

### Stage 3 (Spring 2018)

The NERC project partner team will further define the feasible alignment options, considering public input received in phase two. One alignment option will be put forward as the recommended alignment. Final recommendation for the Northeast River Crossing will be brought forth for public discussion and comment in spring 2018. The study will be complete by December 2018.

**More information and documents can be found on the City of Edmonton website at:**

[edmonton.ca/northeastrivercrossing](http://edmonton.ca/northeastrivercrossing)

