What We Heard
Public Opinion Survey
Background

Whitemud Road west of 58 Avenue is scheduled for rehabilitation in spring 2018. Rehabilitation was triggered as a part of the Fort Edmonton Park Enhancement Project. Leading up to enhancements to the park, significant utility work has been done. This work has caused degradation to the road. Key changes planned are:

✦ Repair and paving of the roadway
✦ Construction of a utility metering building to the southeast of Fort Edmonton Park
✦ Building a southern emergency access road to Fort Edmonton Park

Public engagement on the project was undertaken to identify opportunities and challenges with the current roadway. This helped inform the City on how to proceed with the project, as well as to align with the City’s Public Engagement Framework.

Process

In a preliminary review of the roadway, a number of opportunities for collecting public input were identified by the City. These included:

✦ Resident experience with the roadway as users and observers
✦ Pedestrian use of this area and their general experience and concerns, if any
✦ Parking concerns and user and resident feedback on a proposed solution

In advance of developing designs, the City planned to engage with local residents and project area users to better understand local context and the operation of the project area. Engagement was planned to align with the City’s Public Engagement Framework. Local residents and property owners were invited to help adjust and adapt the City’s approach to the project. Roadway, trail, and park users were engaged to advise the City. They provided feedback and perspectives on how they use spaces in project area.

FORT EDMONTON PARK INFORMATION SESSION – MAY 2, 2017

The City hosted a public information session detailing the proposed changes in the Fort Edmonton Park Enhancement Project. The intention of the event was to introduce the project and gather initial impressions from residents and the general public. Materials included an initial design for Whitemud Road to introduce the project area and one possible design option.

Residents adjacent to the project area received hand delivered letters informing them of the event on April 26. Properties that did not have a Whitemud Road address listed for the property owner were sent a letter via courier. This was done to ensure that the most directly affected citizens received notice of the event and the City’s plans to engage further.
WHITEMUD ROAD RESIDENTS / PROPERTY OWNER MEETING – JUNE 9, 2017

When collecting local resident input, the level of engagement was placed at Refine on the City’s Public Engagement Continuum. At Refine, we invite citizens to help us adjust and adapt our approach to the project.

Working with Whitemud Road residents, the City arranged a walk through the project area followed by a facilitated exercise to collect input. The meeting was hosted in a resident’s home and included the majority of local residents. Residents who were unable to attend were asked to provide written input in advance, which was shared with neighbours at the meeting.

Additional written input from residents was also accepted as follow-up and clarification from residents to the City.

CITY OF EDMONTON – OVERLAPPING PROJECTS AND AREAS – JUNE 2017

Project staff gathered information from other areas and branches within the City to understand their work and priorities surrounding the project areas. This included the Ribbon of Green strategy, the Oleskiw Park Master Plan, and Building Great Neighbourhoods.

WHITEMUD ROAD USER SURVEYS – JUNE 23-JULY 7, 2017

When collecting input from Whitemud Road users, the level of engagement was placed at Advise on the City’s Public Engagement Continuum. At Advise we invite citizens to share their feedback and perspectives on the project.

After taking input from local residents and after brief conversations with local trail users, we developed a survey to understand:

✦ How do motorists, pedestrians, and people who ride bikes use the roadway?
✦ What is the mode-split of the roadway?
✦ What are the best features for each user group?
✦ What areas need them most improvement?
✦ What would the impacts and alternatives be to changes in parking, if any?

City staff canvassed the project area for two weekday evenings. This canvassing collected approximately 40 responses from users. Canvassing also allowed the project team to make minor wording changes to the survey to make it easier for users to understand and answer independently.

From June 26 to July 7, 2017, project maps and survey drop boxes were placed in visible parts of the project area for citizens to fill out the same survey and leave comments on their own. This method of engagement was very effective in reaching a broader range of users and gathering their opinions. Placement of the survey drop boxes was delayed slightly, pushing back the intended completion timeline from June 30, 2017.

The survey was also placed on the project website, edmonton.ca/whitemudroad, however uptake of the online survey was low.
What We Heard
Public Opinion Survey

Each engagement method was designed to collect specific information on how citizens use the roadway. As the roadway is in the center of a greater river valley and parks network, many comments were left that related to surrounding parks. While that information is valuable in some parts of the decision-making process, much of it is out of the scope of the roadway project. Information collected about Parks has been forwarded to Open Spaces Planning and Design for consideration in nearby projects.

FORT EDMONTON PARK INFORMATION SESSION
The majority of information session attendees who engaged with staff on Whitemud Road were residents. The information session marked the beginning of public engagement and information collection. Initial impressions on how the area operates were collected. Key themes included:

- Parking and illegal parking on the roadway.
- Roadway safety for pedestrians and people who ride bikes.
- Poor roadway condition due to utility upgrades.
- A need for City staff to visit the area with residents to understand local context.

WHITEMUD ROAD RESIDENTS’ MEETING
Several key themes emerged from the tour and meeting with residents that focused on current behaviour and operations of the roadway, as well as how they believe certain changes to the roadway would operate.

Parking: Often there is not sufficient parking in the cul-de-sac. As a result, visiting vehicles overflow onto the roadway, where there is no parking. Enforcement is non-existent and the overflow parking makes coming and going from residences difficult or impossible.

We heard from residents that there is not sufficient room to build adequate parking for demand. If parking is increased or relocated from the cul-de-sac, more vehicles will come and park illegally. For residents, illegal parking is a concern, as emergency vehicles cannot turn in the current cul-de-sac when vehicles are parked in it.
WHITEMUD ROAD RESIDENTS’ MEETING (CONT.)

According to residents there are alternative places for visitors to park, especially at Fort Edmonton Park. Residents believe the City should design and promote parking elsewhere on account of the local constraints and mentioned concerns.

**Pedestrians and people who ride bikes on the road:** Currently the road is unsafe for pedestrians because vehicles move too fast and drivers cannot see pedestrians around blind corners. Modes of travel should be separated where possible. This should be prioritized over parking where there are space constraints. Where there is no available space, the City should find a way to manage speed as well as direct pedestrians to safer parts of the road so they can be seen.

Most of the same concerns apply for people who ride bikes. The quality of the road and loose gravel are bad for bikes. Residents have on several occasions had to provide or call for medical assistance when cyclists move too quickly over the loose gravel. The steep grade and poor quality of the road are big parts of these concerns. With a paved road there should also be speed controls for bikes.

There were also a number of suggestions to re-route pedestrians through areas off the roadway as much as possible with improvements to different parks lands.

**Drainage:** A number of drainage issues were identified while touring the project area with residents. This included drainage into residents yard from the roadway.

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CITY OF EDMONTON – OVERLAPPING PROJECTS AND AREAS – JUNE 2017

The Oleskiw River Valley Park Master Plan project team is working shape the vision of the park space west of the Fort Edmonton Park Footbridge and north of the Terwillegar Park Footbridge. A master plan will support public use of natural spaces, protect the ecological value, and plan for the future of the park.

Relevant key points from the park planning process informed through public engagement are:

- Maintaining the natural feel of the area.
- Universal access for all modes of travel is neither desired nor feasible.

The Ribbon of Green Concept Plan was completed in 1992 and is currently being updated; however the existing plan designates the space from the Terwillegar Park Footbridge to the south edge of Fort Edmonton Park for:

- A water-based, nature oriented park that creates a natural preserve area and re-establishes a viable ecology by using existing and restored resources. Designed for pond life appreciation, bird watching, wildlife observation, hiking, fishing, boat launching, introduction to flat-water canoeing, snowshoeing, social skating, and picnicking. Potential for relocation of the John Janzen Nature Centre.
- An integrated trail will provide opportunity for bicycling, cross-country skiing, jogging, and walking.
- Link to adjacent neighbourhoods via two pedestrian bridges.

The Concept plan only identifies the Whitemud Road Project area for minor amenities.
Whitemud Road User Surveys

Through intercept surveys conducted by City staff and two drop boxes placed at key destinations in the project area, a total of 82 surveys were completed. Not all questions were mandatory, as they were user specific. Both multiple choice and verbatim comments were collected to provide further insight into how people use the roadway to inform city design decisions.

WHY DO YOU COME TO THE PROJECT AREA?
(multiple answers, percentages are rounded)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access the Fort Edmonton Park Footbridge</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access the surrounding river valley parkland</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use the River Loop Trail</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit the John Janzen Nature Centre</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit Fort Edmonton Park</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commute to/from work walking</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commute to/from work by bike</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climb the Wolf Willow River Valley Staircase</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I live here</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t come to the project area</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>82</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of users of the space come for recreational purposes that relate to accessing the parks network of trails, including the Fort Edmonton Park Footbridge. Notably, 20 per cent of people surveyed also use the space as a connection for commuting to and from work.
HOW DO YOU NORMALLY TRAVEL THROUGH THE PROJECT AREA?
(pick one)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Car</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walk</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bike</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>82</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is a near even split between vehicles and active modes. Those who travel using vehicles generally treat the project area (parkland and amenities) as a destination. Those traveling using active modes spend little time on the roadway, but it is a critical connection between destinations.

WHERE DO YOU PARK YOUR CAR?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parking Location</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fort Edmonton Park parking lot</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whitemud Road roadside</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gravel cul-de-sac at the end of Whitemud Road</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Whitemud Road/Riverbend neighbourhood</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not travel to the project area by car</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>76</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This question was intended to gain a baseline understanding of how people arrive at the space.

Forty-one respondents listed a place that they park even though only 37 said they drive to the project area in the previous question. This is likely because the previous question asked for a single primary mode of travel in the project area. Some respondents may mainly walk or bike in the area after arriving, which can explain the discrepancy.

The largest number of people who responded do not travel to the project area by car and do not have parking needs. Of those who do travel to the project area by car, most park at the gravel cul-de-sac where there is currently legal parking.

Many respondents interviewed verbally were either unaware of other parking options in the area or parked on the opposite side of the river in neighbourhoods adjacent to the west shore of the river valley.
WHY DO YOU TRAVEL THERE BY CAR?
(opt-in answer mostly from those who park on Whitemud Road)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answered</th>
<th>25</th>
<th>33%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Total

Most respondents said they drive the area because it is too far to not drive. This is because most do not live directly next to the project area and driving is the only way they know they can reasonably get to the area. A minority of respondents state they park in the project area because of convenience. One distinct theme in both groupings is that they are unaware of any alternative parking locations near the project area.

Another minority of respondents park in the project area because they are seniors with low mobility or share some sort of disability that prevents arriving through other modes.

As a part of the project, the cul-de-sac will be upgraded to provide emergency vehicle access to Fort Edmonton Park and access to a utility metering building. After construction, parking in the cul-de-sac will not be allowed.

WHEN PARKING AT THE CUL-DE-SAC IS REMOVED, WILL THIS CHANGE HOW YOU TRAVEL TO THE AREA?

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would stop traveling to the area</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not drive to the area</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total 82

When it was proposed that legal parking be removed, roughly the same number of people who said they park in the project area also said they would continue parking in the project area. This indicates that there would be no behavioural change with the changes to local roadway infrastructure, presenting a significant safety and enforcement challenge.

Comments also indicated that when legal parking is full, cars overflow onto the roadway where parking is banned, confirming previous comments from local residents.

Equal minorities of citizens would either stop traveling to the project area, or find alternative locations to park.

It should also be noted that some people surveyed, including seniors with mobility challenges, were unaware of the existing disabled parking stalls. Improved signage and better tree clearing was suggested to improve awareness.
HOW WOULD THIS CHANGE HOW YOU TRAVEL TO THE AREA?
(opt-in answer mostly from those who park on Whitemud Road)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answered</th>
<th>14</th>
<th>18%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>76</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The comments in this question had no one consistent theme to indicate changes of how people would travel to the area. It was largely used to voice displeasure with the idea of eliminating regular parking in the neighbourhood.

Some statements regarding access for persons with disabilities further reinforces the assertion that people are not aware of the existing disabled parking. Concern for disabled parking and accessibility for persons with low mobility is a consistent theme.

Best features and features needing the most improvement.

WHAT ARE THE THREE BEST FEATURES FOR PEDESTRIANS?
Total 94 responses

The majority of responses focused on the quality of the surrounding parkland and its amenities. A negligible number of positive comments were given for the roadway.

This indicates that the roadway does not inspire confidence or optimism for pedestrians.

WHAT ARE THE THREE THINGS THAT NEED THE MOST IMPROVEMENT FOR PEDESTRIANS?
Total 59 Responses

Two clear themes came from this question. The first was to improve the quality and drainage of the roadway, often suggested through paving. The second was to separate modes of travel, as there is no clear designated space for pedestrians. There were several comments on conflicts with people who ride bikes as well as with vehicles. These conflicts and concerns on safety related to speed in most comments. Some comments suggested alternate routes for pedestrians to access the area.

WHAT ARE THE THREE BEST FEATURES IN THE AREA FOR PEOPLE WHO RIDE BIKES?
Total 62 responses

The majority of comments were positive impressions of the surrounding river valley parkland and amenities. Some also said that the low traffic and relative isolation from the rest of the City was positive.
WHAT ARE THE THREE FEATURES IN THE AREA THAT NEED THE MOST IMPROVEMENT FOR PEOPLE WHO RIDE BIKES?
Total 49 responses

These answers also largely related to the quality of the roadway and how it connects to the rest of the paved trail network. The gravel road was specifically mentioned as a problem for bikes. In addition, bends in the road and poor visibility are listed as points for improvement. Paving is suggested as a fix for most problems. Commenters also mentioned a need for speed controls and signs that would make cycling in the roadway slower and safer.

There were also a number of comments relating to improvements to be made to the surrounding parkland and amenities.

WHAT ARE THE THREE BEST FEATURES IN THE AREA FOR DRIVERS?
Total 20 responses

This question had the fewest responses, most of which focused on the relative peace of the surrounding area. Available parking and convenience was consistently mentioned as a positive feature of the area.

WHAT ARE THE THREE FEATURES IN THE AREA THAT NEED THE MOST IMPROVEMENT?
Total 35 responses

Two themes were very clear in this feedback: improve the roadway quality through paving and making corners safer, and maintaining or increasing access to parking. Some comments also expressed concerns over pedestrian safety, suggesting measures to lower speeds and improve blind corners.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS
Total 34 responses

This section largely repeated all of the themes from previous sections of the questionnaire. Some people explicitly said to remove parking in the area, others made suggestions for maintaining or expanding parking.
Summary

Through public engagement it is clear that the project area is used by a diverse group of users who arrive by a near even split between vehicles and active modes. Universally, all people in the area, visitors and residents, identify that the relative peace and isolation of the space is what makes it appealing. The surrounding trees and parkland are very important to why they come to the area.

All users, in some way, support improving the quality of the roadway, with most adding the caveat that safety controls need to be put in place. These controls would either separate pedestrians and bikes from vehicles or slow vehicles and bikes to make the space safer for everyone.

Users diverge on potential solutions for parking. Those who arrive using active modes have little concern for parking or encourage its removal. Local residents have concerns about parking in the area, as the scale required to safely accommodate demand would impact the peace and tranquility of the space that almost all visitors appreciate. Agreement comes back together from both visitors and residents that disabled parking is important and should be clearly marked, maintained, and enforced.

Those who drive to the project area do so either because home is too far away or they have some sort of mobility challenge that prevents active transportation. When asked if or how motorists would change their behaviour if parking were removed, there was an even split between those who would stop coming and those who would not change their behaviour. This last point suggests that those who do continue driving would simply park illegally rather than seek out alternatives.
Learn more by going to:
edmonton.ca/whitemudroad
or call 311