

What We Heard Report: Terwillegar Drive Expansion

Stage Two

March 2022

| **SHARE** YOUR VOICE
SHAPE OUR CITY

Edmonton



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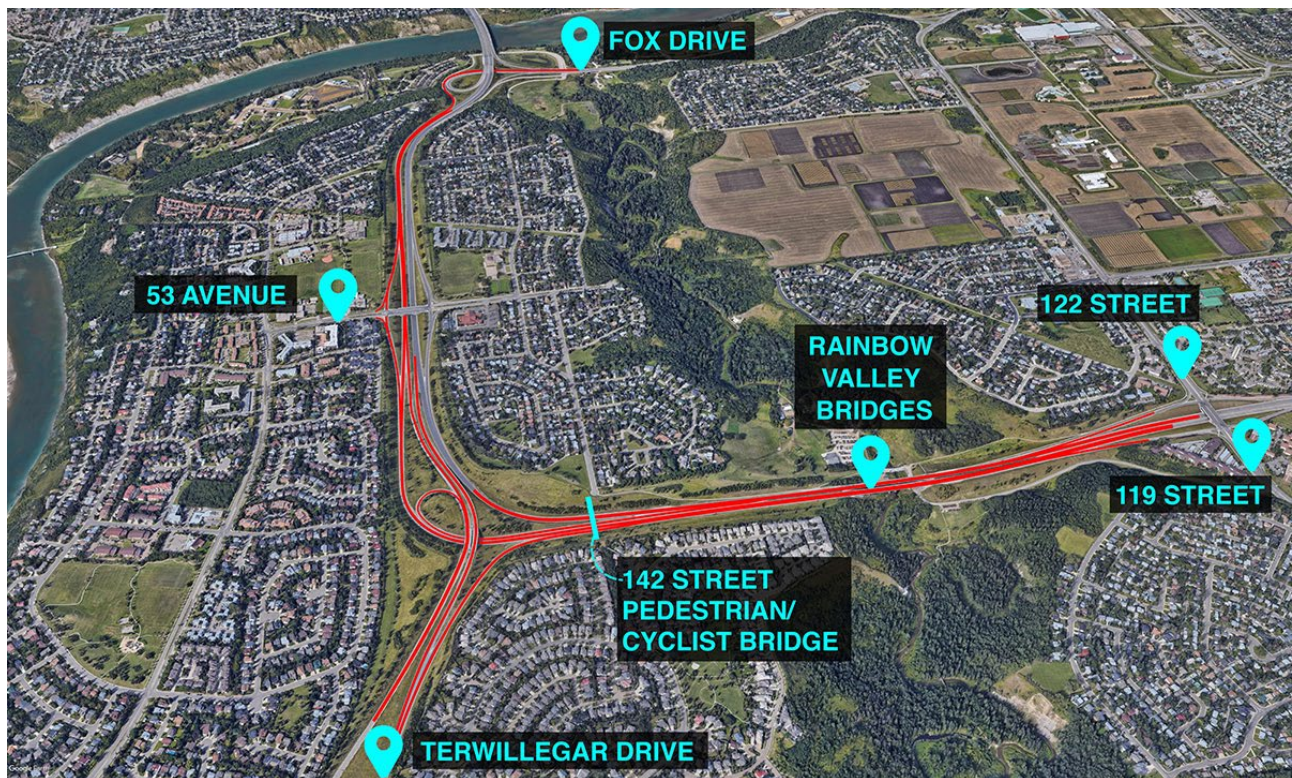
NEXT STEPS

PROJECT BACKGROUND

About the Project

Terwillegar Drive is a key north-south route connecting Edmontonians across the city. The road has exceeded its transportation capacity. To accommodate for the area's growth, a three-stage plan has been approved to alleviate congestion and provide all users with a safe and efficient route. Stage One of the Terwillegar Drive Expansion Program includes all road upgrades to Terwillegar Drive from Anthony Henday Drive to Whitemud Drive. Terwillegar Drive Stage Two builds on Stage One, including additional upgrades to increase the capacity of Terwillegar Drive, improve safety, accommodate current and planned transit services, and enhance existing active transportation connections. Stage Three includes upgrades to the Anthony Henday Drive/Terwillegar Drive interchange.

The Stage Two upgrades will further alleviate congestion, accommodate planned rapid bus transit services and connect southwest Edmonton to the City's broader active transportation and transit networks to surrounding destinations. All users, including pedestrians, cyclists, drivers and transit users will be accommodated safely and efficiently.



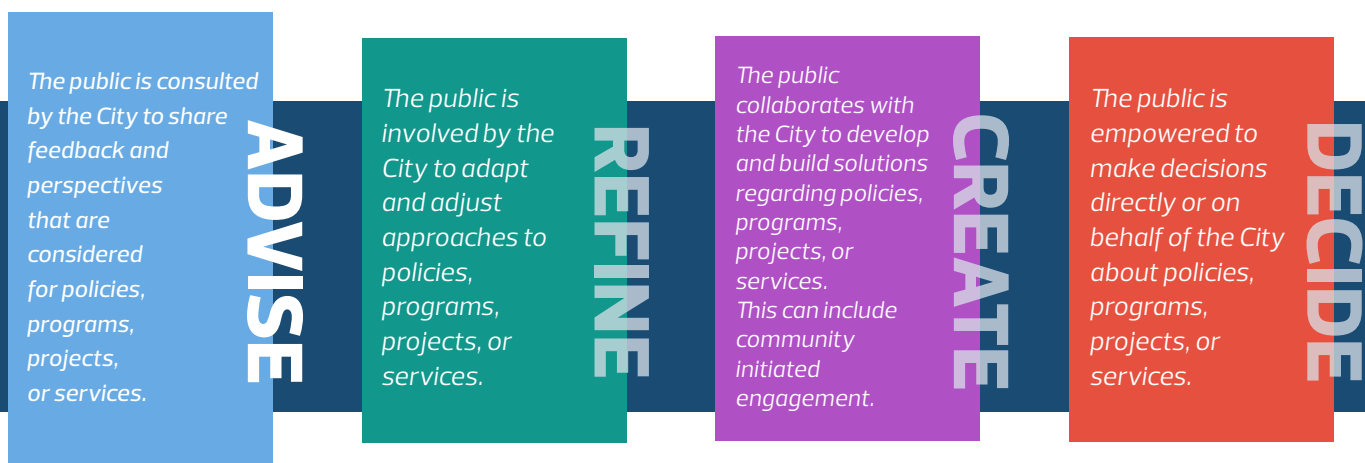
Stage Two includes the following:

- + Widening and rehabilitating the Rainbow Valley Bridges:
Four lanes in each direction
- + Whitemud Drive/Terwillegar Drive interchange upgrades:
 - > Two-lane widening: westbound Whitemud Drive to southbound Terwillegar Drive and northbound Terwillegar Drive to eastbound Whitemud Drive ramps
 - > Partial two-lane widening: northbound Terwillegar Drive to northbound Whitemud Drive and southbound Whitemud Drive to southbound Terwillegar Drive ramps
- + Whitemud Drive widening to four lanes in each direction:
Terwillegar Drive to 122 Street
- + Southbound transit-only lanes between Fox Drive and Terwillegar Drive:
 - > 'Bus-on-shoulder' lane from Fox Drive to 53 Avenue
 - > Segregated bus-only lane from 53 Avenue to Terwillegar Drive
- + Active transportation:
 - > Separated pedestrian/cyclist bridge over Whitemud Creek, parallel to Rainbow Valley Bridge
 - > Shared-use path upgrades from 122 Street to 142 Street
- + Retaining walls
- + Tree impacts and preservation
- + Pedestrian/cyclist bridge over Whitemud Drive near 142 Street

WHAT WE DID

The public and stakeholder engagement process created opportunities for residents to learn about the Stage Two project objectives, scope, construction plans and future opportunities to stay informed as the project advances. At the preliminary design phase, there is an opportunity to tap into local knowledge to inform construction scheduling, as well as to gather final input to consider as the design is finalized.

Public engagement is at the ADVISE level of the City's public engagement spectrum.



Communications

Communications were targeted at the 142 Street Pedestrian/Cyclist Bridge Project and Terwillegar Drive Stage Two. These communications tactics included:

Postcards

- + 11,460 postcards delivered to residences and businesses in south Edmonton

Road signs

- + Twelve road signs in southwest Edmonton
- + Two bridge banners along Whitemud Drive
- + A-Frame signs in Bulyea Heights and Brookside

Online and Print Advertisements

- + Social media posts
- + Community League posts
- + Email notifications



Public and Stakeholder Engagement Activities

Recognizing that COVID-19 represents an unpredictable and unique scenario, the City has cancelled all in-person public engagement events until further notice. The City of Edmonton is committed to offering online engagement opportunities for the public to continue to share their voice.

The first round of public engagement on Terwillegar Drive Stage Two was held between November 16 and December 9, 2021. During this phase, the project team presented the preliminary design and asked the public to provide input through an online forum. They also conducted an online survey. This feedback will be used along with technical, financial and policy factors to further develop the preliminary design as it moves into detailed design.

Online Presentation & Live Q&A Session

- + 76 registrations
- + 45 to 60 attendees
- + 31 questions and comments

Online Survey

- + 428 total responses
- + Paper surveys were available for residents who called 311. No paper surveys were requested or received.

Community Meetings

- + Meetings were held with the Snow Valley Ski Club, Brander Gardens School and Lansdowne Community League. Other community meetings are being scheduled.

WHAT WE HEARD

Presentation and Live Q&A Session

The presentation was recorded and can be found [here](#).

Following the presentation, participants were invited to ask questions regarding the project. Many of the questions were related to Terwillegar Drive Stage One, which is currently under construction. Questions about Terwillegar Drive Stage Two sought clarity on the bus only lane entry and exit patterns on 53 Avenue, the widening of the ramps onto Terwillegar Drive, and the length of time the bridge will be down to two lanes.

The responses to the questions can be found on the website.

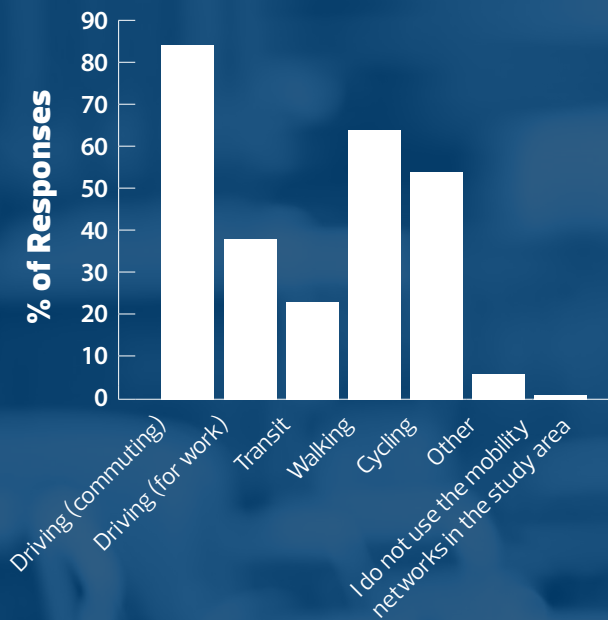


Rendering of New Pedestrian/Cyclist Bridge

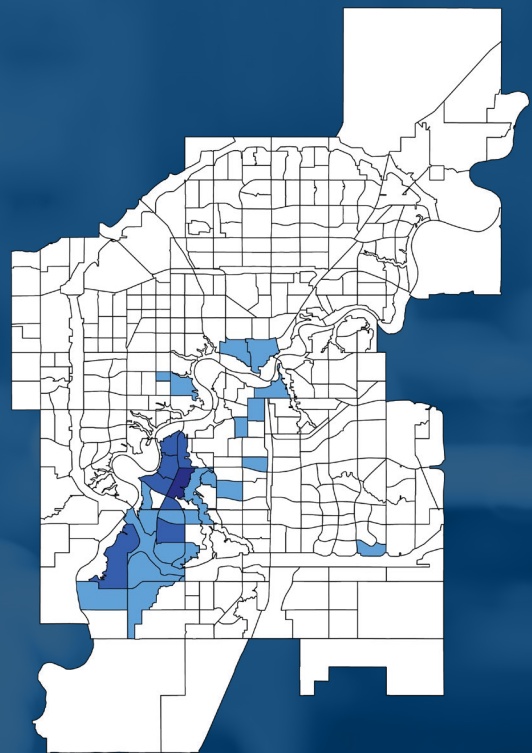
Survey

Between November 18 – December 9 a survey was available on the project web page. 428 people responded to the survey. They represented different areas of the city, various transportation preferences, and had a variety of relationships to the study area.

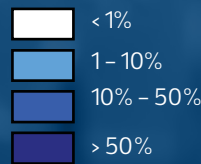
Frequently Used Transportation Modes of Participants



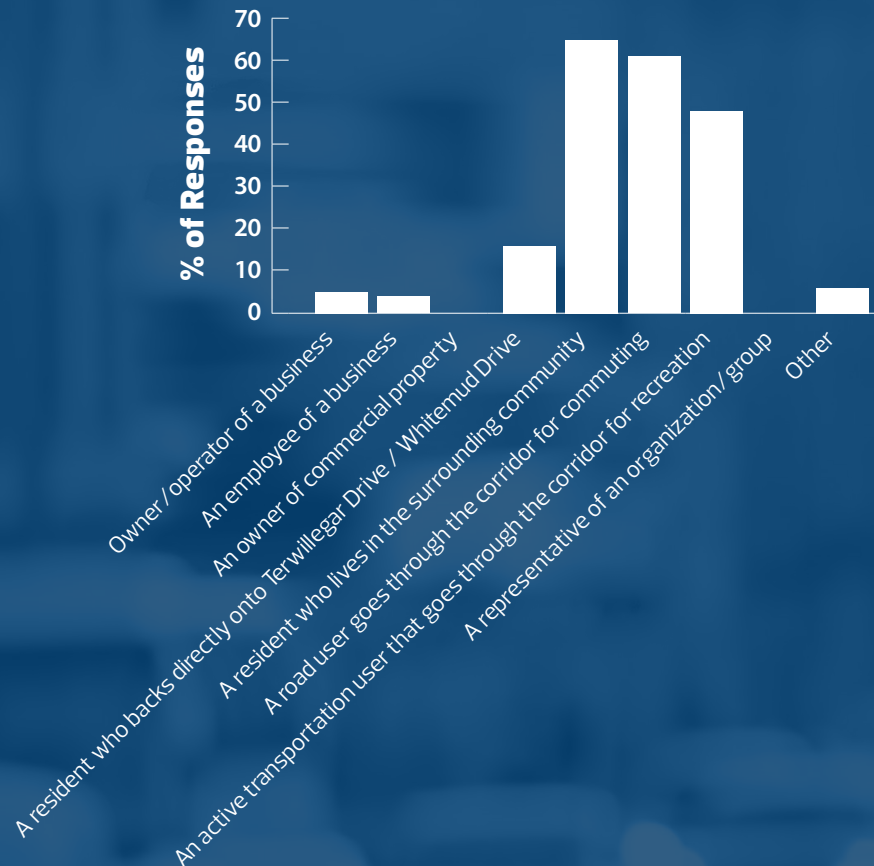
Neighbourhood of Participants



% of Responses



My relationship to the project study area is:



Results

Most respondents drove vehicles. Active transportation users from neighbouring areas were also well represented.

The survey asked participants to provide input on the preliminary design of Stage Two related to:

- + **Active Transportation**
 - > Pedestrian/Cyclist bridge parallel to the Rainbow Valley Bridge
 - > Shared-use path
- + **Transit Upgrades**
- + **General comments on the overall project**

Overall Themes

Safety was a primary concern for active transportation users and vehicle drivers.

Many respondents had safety concerns, either as pedestrians who felt they were too close to the road or as motorists who felt the area was too congested. Those in vehicles also thought that the merge lanes were too short and that it would be safer to have exits between Terwillegar Drive and Whitemud Drive redesigned to be on the right-hand side of the roadway.

Connectivity to bus stops, bus routes, LRT, and creating connections to active transportation corridors were consistent priorities. Drivers wanted more connectivity and less congestion as they entered or exited local neighborhoods.

Active transportation and transit improvements drew mixed views and perspectives. A number of respondents felt the City should go further in providing alternative transportation options with more LRT, Bus Rapid Transit, more buses, and pedestrian paths. Others expressed that the focus should be on vehicles and that the expenses were not justified given the perceived low ridership.

Many respondents felt the proposed plans did not address the core issues with congestion in the area and the project was inadequate. Some stated Terwillegar Drive should return to its original plan of becoming a freeway with underpasses along intersections such as 40 Avenue, Rabbit Hill Road and 23 Avenue. Others thought that the plan was a reasonable alternative to the freeway model.

“The plan seems reasonable. It’s challenging to deal with the legacy interchange, which was likely designed to save a few dollars and now the city is stuck with infrastructure that was adequate for traffic volumes a tenth of what they are today. The lesson should be: spend the extra money and do it right the first time.”



Pedestrian/Cyclist Bridge parallel to Rainbow Valley Bridge

Is there anything you would like us to consider as we finalize the design of the new pedestrian/cyclist bridge?

- + Safety was the top concern for pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers interacting with active transportation modes. There was support for a cage or high walls along the bridge to minimize spray from the road and to prevent dangerous activities on the bridge.
- + Cyclists and pedestrians want enough space to co-exist on the bridge, while also finding ways to mitigate the steep grade. Responses specifically requested a bridge that would be wide enough (four metres) to separate pedestrians and other users from cyclists.
- + Active transportation saw mixed views and perspectives. Some felt it was not worth the expense for the perceived low use; many were not in favor of active transportation in Edmonton.
- + Others shared favorable feedback active transportation infrastructure and want to ensure that the bridge connected to other paths, bike lanes, and active transportation.
- + Expand nearby networks to help increase usage of the new bridge. Examples included building a bus stop nearby and making additional connections to other neighborhoods.
- + Ample lighting for pedestrians and cyclists was important to help prevent accidents, improve personal safety, prevent crime and help people notice hazards on the road surface.



Rendering of Westbound Whitemud Drive Retaining Wall

Is there anything else you would like us to consider as we finalize the design of the shared-use path upgrades?

- + Reiterate the need to ensure adequate space and separation; many participants felt that if the path was not wide enough, there would be conflict between user groups. People also wanted as much separation as possible from the road.
- + Echoed previous statements indicating opposition to the project because the costs were not justified. The money could be better spent improving automobile traffic instead of pedestrian/cyclist traffic.
- + People use active transportation networks to commute to work and school. They want to easily access other paths and destinations. Connectivity to the active transportation network is a high priority. Cycling amenities, such as bike parking, racks and repair stations should be included in the plan.
- + Winter maintenance to keep the path clear of snow and ice year-round is necessary, especially to commuter cyclists. Incorporating proper drainage for spring melts and summer rains is an important consideration.
- + The steep hill grade is problematic due to cyclists' unsafe speeds coming down the hill and for inexperienced cyclists coming up the hill. Those with mobility issues should be able to access the area.
- + Attractive landscaping and amenities such as benches and washrooms will result in more people using the area. *"This will be a useful upgrade. There is lots of space to separate uses and widen this path greatly to create a true commuting path."*



Rendering of Transit Only Lane Retaining Wall

Transit Upgrades

Is there anything else you would like us to consider as we finalize the design of the transit upgrades?

- + There were a number of participants who felt that buses were not a worthwhile investment compared to personal automobiles and additional traffic lanes. There were also concerns that Edmonton's bus network and ridership were too low.
- + In contrast, many respondents felt that the plans for transit did not go far enough and could be improved.
- + A separated transit lane for buses was also questioned. A common sentiment was that Whitemud Drive is mainly used by vehicles, not buses, so a dedicated bus lane is not needed and the extra lane should be open to all vehicles.
- + The dedicated bus lanes would be better served as High Occupancy Vehicle lanes, which would include buses, as well as other vehicles like taxis, carpooling, etc. Bus lanes should be exclusive to buses only in peak hours.
- + A separated transit lane was identified as a threat to the green space that was used by residents in Ramsey Heights and area. The green space is very well used and highly valued by residents and families.
- + Feedback was related to connectivity and improving the overall bus network, including additional bus stops in the area and along Terwillegar Drive. Respondents wanted more connectivity to LRT, transit hubs, and cycling infrastructure. The plan as shown did not address these needs.
- + The segregated bus lanes were seen to be a risk to drivers who will not understand how to interact with the bus lane.
- + Access, congestion and safety for drivers and pedestrians along 53 Avenue is a primary concern.

"I would prefer new retaining walls to be designed with some flair and character, rather than be the bland functional ones presented in the initial presentation on November 18. Instead of a single artwork placed below the bridges, how about adding artwork to the retaining walls, as well as improving their design?"

General Comments

Considering the preliminary design of the project, is there anything else you would like to share with us?

- + Some thought the project was wasting potential and not dealing with the true inadequacies of the current Terwillegar Drive and Whitemud Drive.
 - > The southbound exit to Terwillegar Drive from Whitemud Drive should be moved from the left-hand side of the road to the right-hand side.
 - > Terwillegar Drive should be made a freeway that underpasses 40 Ave, Rabbit Hill Road, and 23 Avenue. Many respondents also felt that the northbound exit from Terwillegar Drive onto Whitemud was dangerous, particularly when exiting onto Fox Drive.
- + There was concern that additional lanes of traffic will only worsen the congestion problems in the area. Incorporating alternative transportation options such as active transportation infrastructure, shared-use paths, buses, and LRT infrastructure are the only truly efficient ways to deal with the congestion issues.

Community Meetings

Virtual meetings were held with Snow Valley Ski Hill, Brander Gardens School and Lansdowne Community League. Conversations with the three groups showed common themes:

- + Access to their community, school or operations
- + Congestion caused by construction
- + Disruptions and noise throughout the construction period.

The project team will continue to meet with these and other groups in the community.

NEXT STEPS

Preliminary design will now shift to detailed design. The project team will take what we heard during public engagement, along with technical and policy considerations into detailed design. We will return to the public at the end of detailed design in 2022 to present the final designs and provide a pre-construction information session.



For more information, visit:
edmonton.ca/terwillegardrive