

## RIVERSIDE TRAIL REALIGNMENT PROJECT

### Questions & Answers Overview

On March 3, 2021, the City of Edmonton held an online information session on the Riverside Trail Realignment project. During the session, we shared a presentation to provide additional details on the project (which is available to view if you visit [engaged.edmonton.ca/RiversideTrail](https://engaged.edmonton.ca/RiversideTrail)) and answered questions from the public.

We received many questions and, for those that were not able to attend, as well as to ensure we answered all questions received, we have compiled all questions and answers for your review. Please note, questions have been themed or summarized if we received the same question multiple times.

If you have a question that is not answered below, please contact Jim Nakonechny ([jim.nakonechny@edmonton.ca](mailto:jim.nakonechny@edmonton.ca)) and we will add your question and post a response.

### General

#### 1. What is the current status of the project?

The project has reached the tender phase and is ready to proceed with procurement of a construction contractor should we choose to move forward with the realignment approach that was described in the presentation.

In February, we received many questions and concerns regarding the project. The project has now been paused for public engagement; once complete, the project team will reassess, based on the feedback received and develop our next steps forward.

We will continue to provide information on the project webpage - [edmonton.ca/RiversideTrail](https://edmonton.ca/RiversideTrail) to keep you informed.

#### 2. Is there a consideration of balancing the golf course users with trail users, if closing the golf course would result in greater options for the trail and ecology?

Balancing the needs of all users in the area was a very important consideration in this project. By realigning the trail, we can ensure safe access for those who walk, bike and hike on the trail while also ensuring a positive experience for those using the golf course.

Closing the golf course would eliminate a safe, affordable form of outdoor recreation that is heavily used and, as a result, is not being considered at this time.

**3. If the trail is rehabilitated according to the original city proposal when will the trail be opened for public use? If the trail is realigned according to the proposed realignment by the ERVCC, when would the trail be opened for public use?**

If the trail is rehabilitated using the approach that was described, the realignment would be complete and the trail open to the public in fall 2021.

If the trail was moved onto the golf course the golf course would require significant infrastructure modifications. We do not have a full project cost estimate to reflect moving the trail onto the golf course and the budget required to pursue this option would require us to go back to City Council for approval. Given the need to assess the full golf course impacts, approval of an updated EIA and SLS and the associated additional budget required, we anticipate this may take several years, pending funding allocation.

### Proposed realignment approach

**1. Based on the current rate of edge shift how long will the new alignment last? Is the standard not 30 meters from the River's edge?**

There is not a standard measure for trail development from the river's edge. Realignment locations were determined by the geotechnical studies of the area. It is unknown how long the overall 1.9 km of trail will exist, and is largely dependent on the natural forces of the North Saskatchewan River.

**2. Will the realigned path be an off-leash dog area?**

The trail was designated off-leash prior to the closure, however, given the current trail closures in the area and engagement process associated with this project, the future use of this trail has not been determined at this time. Please note off-leash areas are available across the river through Dawson Park, and to the east in Capilano and Gold Bar parks.

**3. Will the whole trail be resurfaced with gravel and widened to 1.5 m or just the realigned sections?**

No, only the realigned sections and low spots requiring maintenance are being widened to 1.5 m and resurfaced with gravel.

**4. Why is the trail 3.5 m wide? Is that not excessive?**

The new trail alignments will be 1.5m in width to facilitate as minimal disturbance to the area as possible.

**5. Why not reduce the width of the trail below 1.5 m?**

1.5 m provides a buffer for two-way traffic and multiple uses. Only the realigned sections of trail are being widened to 1.5 m, the remaining sections of trail will not be changed.

**6. Is there a possibility of adjusting the realignment plan to avoid removing the three mature trees?**

Every effort has been made to reduce the number of trees impacted. Once we are on site, should we proceed with the proposed approach, we will review the alignment on site. Where possible tree removals, including mature trees, will be avoided.

**7. Won't removing trees and vegetation increase the rate of erosion? What about the impact of climate change?**

The erosion we are seeing along the Riverside Trail is a type of subsurface erosion, or erosion that is below the roots of the trees. This erosion is caused by the North Saskatchewan River as a result of high water events, ice debris from spring melt as well as the natural flow patterns of the river.

Based on technical findings, it is our understanding that no amount of trees or vegetation will stop or even reduce the rate of this type of erosion. However, we are committed to revegetating to the extent possible as vegetation does reduce the erosion impacts of overland flow.

The Geotechnical investigations completed over the last several years anticipated that the banks will continue to erode southward over time and the best option now is trail realignment, or moving the trail

away from the crest of the riverbank - the approach we've opted for.

Relocating the trail upslope at identified risk areas will increase the horizontal distance from active erosion areas and increase the amount of time before erosion negatively impacts the continuity of the trail.

Climate Change is a global phenomenon due to changes in weather patterns and world temperatures. The relationship between river water levels and the velocity of river flow do cause erosion, but this is common with any river system. The frequency of such occurrences may be due to climate change, but additional studies beyond this project would be required to confirm that.

**8. Can you confirm the number of trees removed and the number of trees that will be replanted?**

- Approximately 35 trees will be removed as part of this project. Of these, 3 are considered to be mature trees.
- The majority of trees slated for removal are Manitoba Maples, which are a non-native species.
- We are replanting approximately 70 new trees and over 400 new shrubs.
- For every tree we remove we will plant two new trees ensuring the canopy is maintained in this area.

**9. Who carried out the EIA and SIS assessments?**

- Spencer Environmental Management Services Ltd: EIA & SLS
- Thurber Engineering: Geotechnical Assessments

**10. Environmental research shows that developed surface runoff such as paving nature and developing crushed gravel pathways contribute to erosion runoff because the rainfall cannot be absorbed. Given that you have stated that erosion from rainfall has contributed to the current trail erosion, how do you find that further surface development will mitigate erosion?**

The Riverside Trail is currently impacted by two different types of erosion - subsurface erosion from the river and surface erosion from rainfall and general wear.

The continued use of an unprotected dirt surface, like Riverside Trail now, leads to exposure of root systems, depressions resulting in drainage issues and erosion of sloped areas.

Gravel provides positive drainage and protects the trail from surface erosion. This erosion is caused by heavy public use taking place on a dirt surface. The gravel used will be a 19 mm crushed material that packs well and maintains a smooth surface for multiple uses.

**11. What are the expected construction costs for the realignment?**

The approved project budget for the realignment is \$685k.

**12. As there is already a 3 m paved trail east of this trail, why not leave this trail as a gravel path. Two multi-use trails are not needed. The gravel path is unique and should be maintained.**

The realigned path will use 19 mm crushed material (gravel) and will not be paved.

**13. I love the benches, will they be kept?**

Yes the benches will remain.

**14. Could you provide some large garbage cans along the asphalt trail. A fair amount of trash is left along these trails, and it would be good to have some place to dispose of it.**

Waste receptacle locations can be reviewed along the asphalt trail.

## Wildlife & vegetation

**1. Did the EIA find any evidence of deer browse? I have seen this farther north east where the fence is not so close to the river's edge. This makes me think the fence should be moved.**

The EIA doesn't make any mention of "deer browse."

- 2. The city's sensitivity mapping project noted that this trail is in the "Extremely High Value" ecological sensitivity zone. How has the proposed realignment taken this into consideration? And while the report says that the realignment would not significantly impact the existing wildlife corridor, the corridor is already extremely narrow, and runs against best practices for wildlife corridors, especially in riparian areas. So might this not be a good opportunity to widen the wildlife corridor in this "Extremely High Value" ecological sensitivity area?**

With the moving of the fence line slightly onto the golf course in three locations we will be widening the wildlife corridor, as well, we will be removing a section of the older fencing from a previous realignment which will allow for unrestricted movement of wildlife along the riverside trail area. The naturalization of the decommissioned trail sections will support the existing corridor use and function.

- 3. How are you addressing access for wildlife through the fence onto the golf course and to the river?**  
The existing fence will remain and the realigned sections of trail will also be fenced. There will be no change to the current corridor on site, in regard to that of wildlife access. Raised sections from ground level up will be assessed to facilitate additional wildlife access at multiple locations along the realigned sections of trail.
- 4. Would you be able to address the potential of increasing the amount of woody vegetation on the golf course's side of the fence? It is currently very sparse, so to increase the vegetation density wouldn't have to involve moving the fence. This would help offset the loss of vegetation on the trail.**  
The 3 sections of trail being realigned on the golf course will be screened with naturalized planting beds, including trees and shrubs. A fence will be installed behind the planting beds to provide safety and separation of recreational uses.

## Golf course

- 1. Who owns Riverside Golf Course?**  
Riverside Golf Course is owned and operated by the City of Edmonton. The facility is a full public access golf course.
- 2. Who would be responsible for the costs if realigning the trail on the golf course was opted for?**  
Costs for renewal or repair projects are funded through the City's capital renewal programs. Growth projects are funded through capital / growth budgets and are subject to processes that require Council approval.
- 3. If the golf course was built today would the fence be so close to the River's edge. Is there not a standard now?**  
The Riverside Golf Course was built in 1951 which followed the practices at that time. Given the City's current policy framework, if constructed today the golf configuration may be modified. If and when the golf course is renewed there may be opportunities to explore improvements to the current design.
- 4. How many people are using the golf course? I assume a lot of those are repeat golfers? What is the actual number of golfers vs. times golfed?**  
In 2020, there were 11,701 9 holes rounds played and 15,534 18 hole rounds played. While we know we have repeat golfers this is not a metric that we analyze.
- 5. Other activities for recreation, specifically in the winter, were referenced (snowshoeing etc). I was unaware that the public could access the course other than for golf for a fee?**  
The public has free access for winter activities during the snow covered months. The City maintains cross-country ski trails at the golf course and information can be found at [https://www.edmonton.ca/activities\\_parks\\_recreation/cross-country-skiing.aspx](https://www.edmonton.ca/activities_parks_recreation/cross-country-skiing.aspx)

**6. Is getting rid of the golf course an option?**

Citizen surveys support public access to the game of golf at all three municipal golf courses. At this time there are no plans to remove this recreational amenity.

**7. What is the comparative width of the fairways alongside the river and in the rest of the golf course?**

The width of the fairways vary throughout the golf course and a recent review of the facility concluded that the existing fairways are much more narrower than what current practice recommends.

**8. What was the nature of engagement with the golf course on this project?**

The users of Riverside Golf Course were invited, via posters in the Clubhouse and an email to four golf leagues, to express their concerns regarding moving of the golf course fence line onto the course. This took place in late spring 2019. In September 2019 at the golf course league meeting, the realignment of the trail was again presented. No comments were received either time.

### Construction impacts

**1. Will this trail be closed for construction at the same time the paved trail above the golf course remains closed?**

This trail will be closed during construction. The paved trail is currently being assessed; a construction schedule is not yet available.

**2. Assuming the project proceeds how long is the construction expected to last? How long would the trail be closed for construction?**

Construction is anticipated to take approximately 8-10 weeks. The trail will be closed for the full duration of construction.

**3. Will the golf course be closed during the realignment**

No, the golf course will remain open.

### Out of scope project elements

**1. Is this plan (or realignment approach) being considered for other 'river's edge' paths like the one in Riverdale?**

Renewal of trails that run along the edge of the river or a creek that have failed due to erosion are unique to their location. The use of geotechnical studies, what is possible within the River Valley Bylaw and an understanding of the landscape help our consultants and internal technical experts to better refine the trail renewal options. The approach for the trail slump by Allen Stein Park within Riverdale and future slump projects is unknown at this time as the concept work has not yet commenced.

**2. Is there any plan to close some of the multiple trails running through the bush above the asphalt trail in order to stem the erosion taking place there?**

There are not any current plans to close additional trails in the area.

**3. I am concerned about the asphalt section of the trail just east of the golf course. The wooden barriers used to support this section are collapsing and this trail has now been closed. Will this realignment continue east and fix this problem also?**

This collapsed asphalt section of trail just east of the golf course occurred in the summer of 2020 as a result of an active landslide and has been exacerbated by significant rain events. This emergent project arose after the budget and scope were confirmed for the current Riverside Trail Realignment project. This is being addressed through a separate project.

**4. There is a "closed" trail between the Riverside Golf course club house and Cloverdale. Is there a plan to rehab and reopen this trail?**

No, the lower Forest Heights trail has been permanently closed.

**5. Are you going to remove the fences at the Capilano Bridge and at the top of the trail that opens up onto 106 Ave?**

There is a collapsed asphalt trail east of the golf course that is presently closed due to the unsafe conditions. A separate project is underway to determine how to address that trail failure. Until such time that the trail can be safely reopened, the closure and associated fencing will remain in place.

**6. Is any consideration given to the mid hill trail on the other side of Rowland Road, which was accessed through the golf course parking lot?**

No, the lower Forest Heights trail has been permanently closed.

### Other

**1. I am aware of a plan brought forward by the ERVCC to move the trail onto the golf course. I notice this wasn't mentioned in the presentation. Can you speak to why we couldn't do this and avoid extra tree removal?**

The golf course realignment diagram, which has been shared on social media, is not feasible at this time. There are multiple factors that need to be considered beyond the construction of a new trail. A full trail realignment would require the procurement of a golf course consultant to assess and redesign the course to meet golf course playability standards. Potential impacts would include golf cart circulation, tee box and sand bunker locations, as well as a reduction in playable space adjacent to the greens.

Additionally, there are numerous mature trees along the north border of the course that could be impacted by construction. A large fence would need to be erected to protect trail users from errant golf balls. The placement of the required fencing would further impact wildlife connectivity across this portion of the river valley.

Both the ecological and the budget impacts are significant and not feasible at this point in time.

**2. How do I / where can I register my support for this plan?**

You can register your feedback on the Riverside Trail Realignment project from March 3 -17 at <https://engaged.edmonton.ca/>.

**3. Can you hold a forum whereby citizens work together to solve this problem?**

Given the technical and physical conditions of this project there are limited opportunities to modify the proposed design, however we welcome feedback from the community and are open to suggestions on how best to work together on projects such as this one moving forward.