

The Edmonton logo consists of the word "Edmonton" in a white, sans-serif font, centered within a dark blue square. The background of the entire page is a close-up photograph of a textured surface, possibly a woven fabric or a metal mesh, with a color palette of light blues, greys, and off-whites.

Edmonton

Metro Line NW LRT What We Heard Report

Winter 2018

What We Heard Report - Metro Line NW LRT

by Metro Line NW LRT Project Team

LRT Projects

City of Edmonton

April 11, 2018

Project / Initiative Background

Name Date Location	Metro Line Northwest Light Rail Transit (LRT) Extension Public Open Houses January 23 & 25, 2018 January 23, 2018 - Castle Downs YMCA January 25, 2015 - Shaw Theatre Lobby, NAIT
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Level of Public Engagement	Advise
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Description

The Metro Line NW LRT Extension is part of the City of Edmonton's Transportation Master Plan, *The Way We Move*, vision. By 2040, the City will have expanded LRT service to all sectors of the city. Part of this vision includes extending the current Metro Line from NAIT to Campbell Road. Benefits of extending this line include improving mobility and access to existing and new neighbourhoods in the north and northwest sections of the city, including the city of St. Albert.

This project was first introduced to the public between February and July of 2009, when the City of Edmonton launched a study to evaluate potential Northwest LRT corridors. Public opinion on potential routes was gathered through online questionnaires, workshops and public hearings. A final proposal for the corridor was developed after consideration of public input, results from a technical analysis and the City's LRT route evaluation criteria.

The Edmonton City Council approved the corridor for the Northwest LRT in July of 2009, and added this corridor to the Transportation Systems Bylaw.

In 2011 and 2012, concept planning was initiated with input gathered from key internal and external stakeholders, including directly impacted residents, businesses and the communities in which they live and operate to assist with the concept planning phase of the project.

In 2016, funding became available to proceed with the Concept Plan Validation and Preliminary Engineering phases of the project. In 2017, the City of Edmonton began the Concept Plan Validation phase of public engagement for the Metro Line NW LRT Extension project. The first stage of engagement on the Concept Plan Validation phase was an opportunity to reintroduce the extension project to the community, to gather input to help finalize the concept and allow the project team to proceed with the preliminary design. The finalized Concept Plan was reviewed and approved by City of Edmonton LRT Delivery.

In keeping with the City's vision of more transit-oriented communities, the Metro Line NW LRT Extension project team recognizes the importance of talking with residents and business owners who reside in the northwest region of the city. We want to hear what people think about the LRT and understand the considerations that may require attention during the planning process.

In order to meet this standard, a number of stakeholder meetings and public events have been planned to gather feedback, with Phase One engagement starting in May 2017, and Phase Two engagement commencing in January 2018.

SUMMARY

The initial outreach to stakeholders and the public in May 2017 proved valuable for understanding the level of community awareness and knowledge about the project. It also helped the project team identify specific concerns and considerations related to the alignment, LRT operations, and the role of LRT in contributing to the sustainability and livability of communities. These determinations helped to focus engagement efforts for the second stage of the engagement process.

In January 2018, Phase 2 of the public open houses were held with stakeholders and residents along the approved Metro Line NW LRT alignment. These public engagement sessions focused on the Phase One concept plan. Participants were asked to advise on the following:

1. Preferences for grade separations at key locations
2. Preference for the level of design for Express Bus Service
3. Any issues or concerns associated with placement of the alignment, such as traffic movements, pedestrian/cycling realm, noise/visual impacts, access to transit service, potential impacts on surrounding land uses, etc.
4. Overall level of interest and support for the project at this stage

Through conversations and written feedback, participants shared their level of support of the Metro Line extension. Residents and stakeholders along the alignment understand the benefit LRT will bring to the communities northwest of the city centre. While overall the response is positive, participants would like to see that the lessons learned from previous LRT projects are taken into account when building future infrastructure, and that LRT is integrated well with existing transportation infrastructure and communities.

The results from this second stage of public engagement will be used by the project team to fine-tune the station design and grade separation elements of the project.

WHAT WAS DONE

The Metro Line NW LRT Extension Phase Two open houses were held between January 23 and January 25, 2018, attracting approximately 350 attendees. Three events were held at two locations, Castle Downs Family YMCA and NAIT, within the LRT corridor. Attendees were asked to circulate through a series of panels that were displayed, each one representing an element of the project. At each panel, a member of the project team was available to engage in conversation and answer questions.

In addition to the panels, one interactive station was set up to obtain participant input on intersection crossing options, station design, and identification of key destinations and access routes to LRT stations in their community. Focus was placed on station design and grade separation. Team members gathered input through conversations with participants and feedback forms were provided and collected as participants left the event.

In the weeks that followed the Metro Line NW LRT Extension Phase Two open houses, the feedback collected was compiled and evaluated. This information was shared in the report that was presented to City Council on March 21, 2018.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The summary below identifies the areas of interest, listed in alphabetical order, that were highlighted by the public at the three public engagement sessions. Participants were provided with a range of engagement channels to share their interests including Post-It notes and feedback forms. In addition, project team members conducted conversations with participants that were summarized in written form post-event.

Themes identified from topics of discussion:

Access to Stations

Many attendees emphasized the importance of integrating LRT with existing transportation infrastructure to promote and facilitate its use; for example, expanding networks of small buses or shuttles that would feed into LRT stations and transit hubs.

Bridge Crossing

When asked whether they preferred the proposed bridge crossing of the CN Rail Walker Yard to be built closer to homes on 113A street, or to take a larger amount of land from Lauderdale Park (particularly the dog park), a significant majority of attendees were in favour of the latter option ('Second Option'). Several comments, however, emphasized the importance of preserving the dog park as much as possible.

Express Bus Service

Two thirds of responses to the feedback form were in favour of the use of express buses as an interim transit service until LRT construction is completed. Only a small number of attendees indicated that while they were in favour of its implementation they would not consider using express buses themselves. Of the three options for express bus operations, Option 3 — express buses operating in dedicated lanes — received a plurality of support.

Grade separation

Overall, attendees were supportive with their feedback form ratings of the concept of grade separation in some form. Many were strongly in favour of the trench concept. Personal safety was identified as a high priority for the vast majority of attendees. Station access and integration of the grade separations with local communities was also emphasized. Cost differences between the options were of little

importance to most attendees, and the general attitude suggested that the expense would be worth the benefits.

Parking

Parking was a significant matter of concern for many attendees, both with regard to potentially insufficient or expensive parking facilities at LRT stations, and the loss of existing spaces (e.g. residential parking space near future LRT infrastructure sites). Some expressed concerns that without abundant and affordable parking, they would be unlikely to make extensive use of LRT.

Range of service

A number of attendees were concerned that LRT development may not be accessible to their community (e.g. St. Albert). One individual suggested that if communities such as St. Albert are to benefit from future LRT projects, they should contribute to the development and maintenance costs.

Safety

Safety was a recurring theme amongst attendees in a variety of categories. For the questions of station design and grade separation, safety received more ratings of 'high importance' than any of the other options. Several comments suggest that the trench concept is viewed as being a considerably safer option than the alternative grading possibilities.

Speed

A small number of attendees suggested that LRT should be focused on speed, abandoning urban-friendly speed limits and stopping less frequently.

Station design

In the feedback form provided, participants were asked to prioritize their interests in level of importance. Safety was rated the highest of importance with regards to LRT station design, followed closely by accessibility, and location within the communities along the alignment. Station design and aesthetics were of little importance to attendees. Other priorities highlighted included avoiding impacts to vehicle traffic, potential noise impacts, and ensuring that sufficient (and free) parking is available.

Timing

Disappointment was expressed by some attendees over the age of 65 that the LRT project was unlikely to be completed within their lifetimes (or in time for them to make considerable use of it).

Traffic

Concerns about the impact of LRT on traffic congestion were raised, with attendees primarily addressing the ramifications of at-grade LRT operations and station development. Feedback suggests that many attendees consider grade separation – of major intersections and stations – to be a viable option to minimize impacts on traffic congestion, despite the associated higher costs.

WHAT'S NEXT

In the coming months, the project team will be continuing their work on the detailed infrastructure design, which will result in the project moving into the procurement phase when funding becomes available.

The next opportunity for stakeholders and the public to get involved will be this summer through a series of pop-up events and at public open houses during the Final Concept phase in fall 2018. The focus of the events will be to provide an opportunity to review the final recommendations for the project and provide input.

Input collected at this final stage will be one contributing component in a series of criteria that will assist the project team in refining details and making their final recommendations to City Council this fall.

Thank you for participating in sharing your voice and shaping our city.
For more information on City of Edmonton public engagement, please visit
www.edmonton.ca/publicengagement.