

# What We Heard Report

## Smith Crossing Bridge Replacement

### Stakeholder and Online Engagement

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## A. Project Overview

*A new pedestrian bridge will be designed and constructed.*

The Smith Crossing Pedestrian Bridge, located along 23 Avenue, provides access to the MacTaggart and Larch Sanctuaries within the river valley system. The existing bridge was built in the early 1900s and has reached the end of its service life.

A new bridge will be designed and constructed to replace this pedestrian crossing over the Whitemud Creek. The new bridge will be near the existing bridge location to reduce environmental impacts and to retain the trail connections.

Design has commenced. Construction is anticipated to start in late fall 2021 and the bridge is expected to be open in spring 2022.

## B. Public Engagement

*Much of the decision making will be technical in nature.*

The Smith Crossing, located near the MacTaggart and Larch Sanctuaries, will have a new bridge designed and constructed to replace the existing pedestrian crossing over the Whitemud Creek. The existing blue bridge is well known and has a high sentimental value, being the site of many wedding and family photographs. It also provides a connection to Edmonton's river valley – a natural area of importance within the City.

A commemorative plaque on a boulder identifies the namesakes of the bridge and there is family interest about the site.

The historic value, potential environmental impacts, and aesthetic/environmental siting of the bridge will all be important topics of discussion during the engagement process. With a planned construction starting in early 2022, typical concerns such as noise, pedestrian detours and site restoration of the native vegetation will also be important.

It is anticipated that much of the Smith Crossing Pedestrian Bridge project will be technical in nature. The project will be influenced by stakeholders during the initial consultation/stakeholder meetings, including an online survey, and by the public at the public event at the ADVISE level. The bridge experience and 'feel' may also be commented on.

Policies and plans will provide direction for this project. These include, but are not limited to:

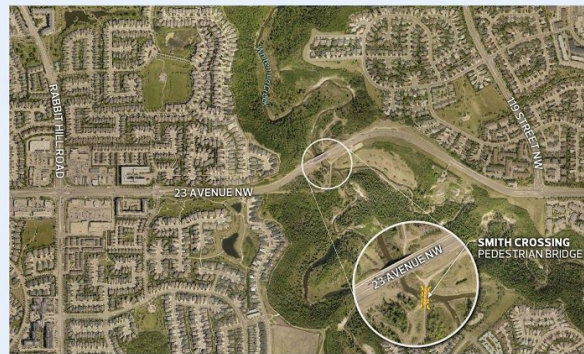
- The City Plan
- The Way We Move (Transportation Master Plan)
- Breathe
- Policy C593 – Public Engagement Policy

# Smith Crossing Pedestrian Bridge Replacement

## Bridge Experience Survey

The Smith Crossing Pedestrian Bridge is being replaced.

*Sidewalk signs near, and at, the bridge site were used to advertise the survey.*



**ADVISE**

Learn more about this project and take the survey at:  
[edmonton.ca/smithcrossing](https://edmonton.ca/smithcrossing)

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## C. How We Engaged

*An online survey was used to capture comments about specific topics at the Advise level.*

Identified external stakeholders were emailed or mailed a letter introducing the project. This letter also invited each stakeholder to a one-on-one virtual meeting with the project team to capture information regarding the bridge experience, local knowledge about the site, preferred bridge experience, and comments about the environment as per the requirements of the River Valley Bylaw 7188.

In addition, an online survey was used to capture additional information on the same topics. The 13 question survey was created through the City of Edmonton's Sparq platform and was open from December 12, 2020 to midnight, January 4, 2021. Two questions gathered demographics. The remainder were related to the bridge and adjacent site.

Sidewalk signs advertising the survey were placed near the site at two bus stops on 23 Avenue (one eastbound and one westbound). One sign was placed in the parking lot south of 23 Avenue, which is used by residents accessing the MacTaggart and Larch Sanctuaries via the existing Smith Crossing Pedestrian Bridge.

External stakeholder groups were emailed on December 12, 2020 about the survey and provided information for posting on their webpages, if desired.

## D. Who Was Engaged

External stakeholders, including environmental groups, community groups, recreation groups and immediately impacted landowners, were identified and contacted via email, or mail, for a one-on-one virtual meeting with the project team.

The survey was open to all residents of Edmonton and was available through the project webpage:  
[edmonton.ca/smithcrossing](http://edmonton.ca/smithcrossing)

There were 85 survey respondents and 81 were Smith Crossing Pedestrian Bridge users.

Survey respondents represented 36 communities out of 388 in Edmonton. Most respondents lived in the neighbourhoods near the project site with the highest representation from Terwillegar Towne (18%), Magrath Heights (11%), Blue Quill (7%) and Terwillegar South (5%). Each of the remaining communities represented under 5%.

There were no respondents under 18 years of age. The largest single age group was 35 to 44 at 36%. 20% were between 25 to 34. 27% were between 44 to 64 years of age. 14% were over the age of 65. 2% preferred not to provide their ages.

## E. What We Asked and What We Heard Summary

The stakeholder meetings and online survey sought information about bridge use, access to the site, important elements of the existing bridge, sightings of wildlife and knowledge about potential sensitive environmental sites within the immediate area. Demographics related to age and neighbourhood were also requested in the survey.

The key themes about the bridge and site were:

- Keep the bridge in the same location
- The bridge must fit into the site (size, location, aesthetics), complement the natural site, and be a similar width
- The historic character of the bridge is important
- Construction impacts to the natural environment must be minimized
- Connections to adjacent neighbourhoods are important
- Year round access to the creek is important (including kayaking, canoeing, cross country skiing, snowshoeing)
- Some additional amenities, such as interpretive signage and seating, were identified as desirable
- Many wildlife sightings occur around the bridge and include a variety of species, including but not limited to: squirrels, beaver, deer, muskrat,, moose, rabbits, and numerous birds.
- Photography, for weddings, family gatherings and graduations, was identified as the most frequently seen activity on the bridge.

## F. Summary of Results and Findings by Question

All comments are a summary of information provided by the survey respondents for 11 questions about the bridge and site. Demographic questions/responses (2) are covered in Section D Who We Engaged.

### **Q1 Do you use the Smith Crossing Pedestrian Bridge?**

81 out of 85 respondents use the Smith Crossing Bridge.

### **Q2 How do you get to the Smith Crossing Pedestrian Site?**

The main method of accessing the site was by driving and parking on the south side of 23 Avenue in the parking lot. Walking from the

adjacent neighbourhoods and the Sanctuaries was the second most popular method to access the site. Cycling (mainly on sidewalks) was the third most popular method of access. Transit was not often used.

**Q3 Why do you use the Smith Crossing Pedestrian Bridge?**

The majority of respondents use the bridge to access the trails in the ravine and to view the creek and natural areas. Taking photographs and gatherings for family and friends were also popular uses. Commuting, fitness activities and canoeing under the bridge were also identified.

**Q4 Have you seen any other activities on the bridge? What activities have you seen on or around the bridge?**

32% of respondents have seen other activities on the bridge. These included photography, using the bridge for access to the creek for boating and fishing, and for weddings and other gatherings.

**Q5 What do you like about the existing bridge?**

The look of the bridge is very important, with width being the most important. This was followed by how it fits into the site and the existing materials (steel and wood). Additional comments indicated that the historic value and look were important along with providing access to the creeks and sanctuaries.

**Q6 What do you think is important about this bridge?**

Bridge connections to the trails and MacTaggart and Larch Sanctuaries was considered most important, and was followed by access to the adjacent neighbourhoods. The history, look and views were also important.

**Q7 Is there something missing on, or near, the existing bridge that could improve your experience using the bridge? Please describe what could improve your experience.**

24% of respondents indicated the bridge experience could be improved.

Improved creek access for recreation activities, improved site access and parking, additional site amenities such as benches, picnic tables and interpretive signage, would provide an improved experience.

**Q8 Are you aware of any special natural sites near the bridge location that we should know about, such as the location of rare plants?**

4% of respondents were aware of special natural sites. They identified beaver dams, garter snakes and a bat house.

**Q9 Have you seen any wildlife near the bridge?**

48% of respondents have seen wildlife near the bridge. They identified a wide variety including, but not limited to: beaver, bats, coyotes, deer, moose, muskrat, rabbits, snakes, squirrel, fox, porcupine, various birds, insects and fish.

**Q10 To comply with the City of Edmonton's North Saskatchewan River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan (Bylaw 7188), an Environmental Impact Assessment of the project is being conducted. Your input is important for the Smith Crossing Pedestrian Bridge Replacement Project in Whitemud Creek**

**Ravine. If desired, read Bylaw 7188. Please provide any information that you wish the project team to consider regarding the environment within, or adjacent to, the project boundaries as noted on the map. Your comments will be compiled and considered during the environmental assessment.**



**Project Boundaries Map**

Several items were raised by 19 respondents:

**The Environment:**

- There is a weed infestation - require access for weed removal by volunteers during construction
- Adequate clearance for animal passages below the bridge, and boating clearance during high water
- Minimize disturbance to creek banks and wildlife during construction

**Other Topics:**

- Retain bridge as is
- Add parking
- Low maintenance design required
- More site furniture

**Q 11 Is there anything you would like us to consider in the design of the new Smith Crossing Pedestrian Bridge? What should we consider?**

49% of respondents provided the following design considerations:

**Bridge Design, Standards and Safety:**

- Design must meet all construction and safety standards, provide proper clearance below the bridge, and consider a child's view
- Keep the historic look, rustic feel, simplistic design and materials
- Ensure a good fit into the site
- Keep the existing width (at a minimum)



**Water Access and Impacts:**

- Consider flooding and the impacts to the use of the bridge and site amenities
- Consider a design that does not impact the paddling experience
- Provide access to the creek for warm and cold weather activities

## G. What Happens Next?

All comments will be considered in the preliminary design of the Smith Crossing Bridge Replacement.

A preliminary design of the bridge and site will be presented in late spring 2021 for review by the public. A 'What We Did' response to 'What We Heard' comments from this survey will be provided.



***Existing Smith Crossing Pedestrian Bridge - looking west in fall 2020***