

What We Heard Report

St. Albert Trail to 97 Street Concept Planning Study

**Phase 3 Engagement:
Develop and Present Concept Plan
November 2020 to March 2021**

**SHARE YOUR VOICE
SHAPE OUR CITY**

Edmonton

Thank you for talking with us.

Yellowhead Trail is becoming a freeway. We know that these changes may affect you, the way you travel, and the way your business operates.

The Yellowhead Trail: St. Albert Trail to 97 Street Concept Planning Study covers 4.3 km of Yellowhead Trail and is the single largest and most technically complex project of the City of Edmonton's Yellowhead Trail Freeway Conversion Program.

You invested your time over the past 18 months to learn about the project and share your local knowledge. Your valuable input during Phase 1 and Phase 2 helped shape and inform the concept plan presented in Phase 3, the final phase of this engagement process. You shared with us your support for the concept plan as well as your concerns regarding the use of service roads and the design of the 115 Street interchange.

This report provides a review of Phase 3 engagement and what we heard from you, and how your feedback led to the design of the final concept.

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted nearly every aspect of daily life, including how we were able to connect with you regarding this project, while in-person events are paused. Thank you to everyone who engaged with us virtually. All comments were considered by the project team.

The City of Edmonton remains committed to delivering project information and meaningful public engagement opportunities as efficiently and safely as possible.

THANK YOU.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Yellowhead Trail: St. Albert Trail to 97 Street

As part of the Yellowhead Trail Freeway Conversion Program, the City conducted a concept planning study for Yellowhead Trail between St. Albert Trail and 97 Street.

The study considered:

- + Removal of traffic signals at 127 Street, 124 Street, 121 Street and 107 Street
- + Removal of direct accesses to Yellowhead Trail at 130 Street, 126 Street, 124 Street, 107 Street and CN Rail Walker Yard
- + Addition of interchanges and parallel service roads within the study area

The City is finalizing the concept plan for this section of Yellowhead Trail.

Visit edmonton.ca/YellowheadSATto97Street for more information.

HOW WE ENGAGED

A three-phase public engagement process was designed to create multiple opportunities for the public and stakeholders to provide input to be considered during this concept planning study.

The project began with the exploration of the broadest range of possible solutions for the study area. Input gathered in Phase 1 helped ensure no ideas were overlooked. In Phase 2, three potential design options were presented for feedback.

The concept plan was presented in this third and final phase of the study. Input from Phase 3 was used to make minor adjustments to the concept plan and will be considered in the next stages of design.

FIGURE 2: CONCEPT PLANNING: TECHNICAL AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROCESS



HOW THE CONCEPT PLAN WAS SELECTED

During Phase 2, three design options were shared for feedback. Based on what we learned during this phase, the strongest elements of Option 1 and Option 2 were brought together to create a fourth option, a hybrid. This blended the west section of Option 1 with the east section of Option 2.

All four options were evaluated using project specific criteria:

- + Option 1: Service Road – Provided less connectivity to Yellowhead Trail due to the long stretches of service roads
- + Option 2: Conventional Interchange – Created concerns with the safety and efficiency of the back to back merges between St. Albert Trail and 127 Street
- + Option 3: 127 Street Overpass/121 Street Interchange – Connections to Yellowhead Trail were the most indirect and was the most expensive option
- + Hybrid Option: Selected as the concept plan

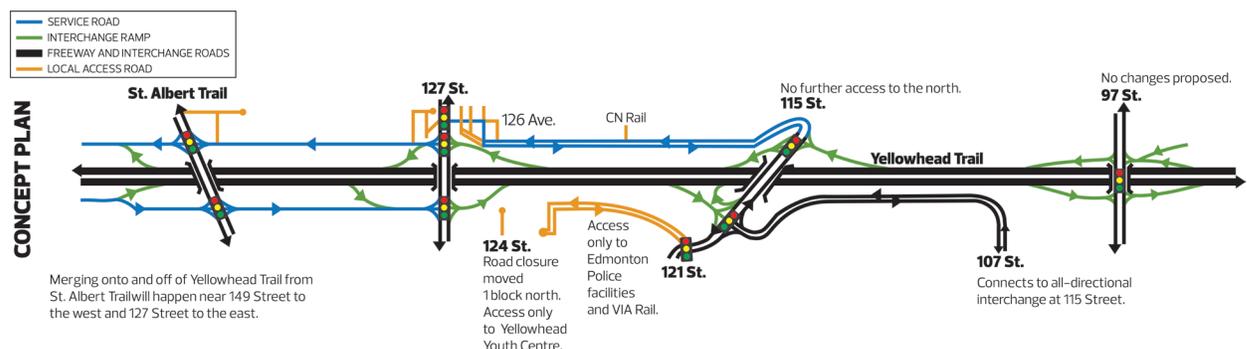
THE HYBRID OPTION CONCEPT PLAN

When evaluated against the three original options, the Hybrid Option was chosen as the final concept.

It provides safe and efficient merging on Yellowhead Trail, along with good connectivity. It also offers a good balance of all the other evaluation criteria, including cost, economic impacts, technical feasibility, user benefits, sustainability and environment.

The Hybrid Option concept plan shared in Phase 3 for public feedback includes:

- + Two new interchanges at 127 Street and 115 Street to accommodate north-south traffic movements at Yellowhead Trail, as well as traffic movements on and off Yellowhead Trail
- + Connections from 121 Street and 107 Street to the 115 Street interchange to provide all-directional access to Yellowhead Trail
- + New service roads to manage traffic flow between the interchanges, and to provide access to the industrial area north of Yellowhead Trail
- + A depressed Yellowhead Trail passing under the new interchanges at 127 Street and 115 Street, with the north-south roads being built at the elevation of the existing roads
- + A realigned and straightened Yellowhead Trail to remove the curve between 121 Street and 107 Street and accommodate plans for a future LRT bridge
- + No changes to the interchange or roadway access at 97 Street and Yellowhead Trail



WHAT WE HEARD IN PHASE 2 AND HOW INPUT WAS USED

Input received in Phase 2 helped us evaluate the options and select the concept plan. The table below outlines what you told us during this phase and summarizes how your input was used.

WHAT WE HEARD IN PHASE 2	HOW YOUR INPUT WAS USED
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Provide free-flowing traffic along Yellowhead Trail while offering convenient access to adjacent communities and arterial roadways 	<p>Yellowhead Trail will be free-flowing, with three lanes in each direction. Where possible, access points have been included to provide direct access to and from the north-south roads to provide convenient access to the adjacent communities.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Provide direct and simple access on and off Yellowhead Trail 	<p>Access to/from Yellowhead Trail is provided at the St. Albert Trail, 127 Street and 115 Street interchanges via ramps or service road connections. On the north side of Yellowhead Trail business access between the interchanges is provided using service roads between 115 Street to 127 Street and 127 Street to St. Albert Trail. Access to 121 Street and 107 Street is provided at the 115 Street interchange.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Facilitate effective movement of traffic, people and goods for all modes of transportation, transit, walking and cycling 	<p>The concept plan facilitates the movement of traffic, people and goods for all modes of travel by balancing travel along and across Yellowhead Trail, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Free-flowing traffic along Yellowhead Trail + East-west travel for active modes south of Yellowhead Trail, between St. Albert Trail and 107 Street, along the shared-use path + North-south travel for active modes along sidewalks at the St. Albert Trail and 127 Street interchanges. Accommodation for sidewalks at the 115 Street interchange will be further explored during the next stage of the project. Improvements to sidewalks and active mode connections at 97 Street, crossing Yellowhead Trail, will be developed during the next stage of design. + Active mode access to bus stops and the future Metro Line LRT will be accommodated by the concept plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Use traditional interchange designs that users are familiar with 	<p>The concept plan uses interchange configurations currently used on Yellowhead Trail and that drivers are already familiar with using. For example, the interchange configuration proposed at 115 Street is similar to the interchanges at Victoria Trail and 156 Street on Yellowhead Trail. The interchange configuration proposed at 127 Street is similar to the interchanges at 50 Street and 170 Street on Yellowhead Trail.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Maintain convenient access to businesses and properties 	<p>The concept plan provides direct access to businesses located in Hagmann Estate (west of 127 Street) via a westbound service road. East of 127 Street, access to Hagmann Estate will continue to be provided at the 127 Street/126 Avenue intersection, and with a two-way service road that connects to the 115 Street interchange.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Minimize intrusions and impacts to adjacent communities 	<p>The concept plan minimizes impacts to adjacent communities through the use of retaining walls to reduce the project footprint. The concept plan does not permit any direct access from Yellowhead Trail or the new service roads to adjacent residential communities.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Distribute traffic throughout the network, without overwhelming adjacent arterial roadways 	<p>The concept plan distributes traffic throughout the network by providing all-directional access at the St. Albert Trail, 127 Street and 115 Street interchanges and by connecting 107 Street to the 115 Street interchange.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Separate vehicle traffic from people who walk and cycle 	<p>Boulevards have been included between the road and the sidewalks / shared-use path to improve user safety and comfort levels.</p>

WHAT WE HEARD IN PHASE 3 AND HOW INPUT WILL BE USED

What We Heard Overall

Over three-quarters of the survey respondents who indicated their level of support for the concept plan say they support the selection of the Hybrid Option. One-quarter indicate they do not support the selection of this plan.

Respondents share their support for the following elements of the concept plan:

- + Free-flowing traffic along Yellowhead Trail
- + All-directional access at the 127 Street interchange
- + All-directional access to Yellowhead Trail from 107 Street
- + Shared-use path along the south side of Yellowhead Trail

Respondents share the following concerns and suggestions for the concept plan:

- + Change in access at St. Albert Trail and the use of service roads is expected to increase travel distance and time
- + 115 Street interchange is expected to be confusing for drivers
- + Service roads and the use of signal lights are expected to lead to roadway congestion and cause travel delays
- + Depressed Yellowhead Trail (under 127 Street and at 115 Street) could increase occurrences of flooding
- + Interchange crossings for those who walk and bike are perceived to be difficult and intimidating. Safe, protected lanes to cross Yellowhead Trail are requested
- + Shared-use paths which cross turning lanes accessing Yellowhead Trail are perceived to be unsafe
- + Negative impacts to quality of life and property values in adjacent communities due to the service roads and the corresponding shift of the noise walls closer to the community

- + Arterial roadways may not be able to handle new, increased traffic volumes

A minority of respondents question if the freeway conversion should proceed. These respondents raise questions about the appropriateness of funding the project during the current economic situation.

Input received in Phase 3 was used to make adjustments to the concept plan including further development of the active mode connections, and will be carried forward to inform the next stages of design, occurring in 2021 and 2022.

“ I think that this is an excellent plan and will vastly improve traffic flow and reduce collisions. ”

“ The service road system for access is a bit unique, but makes good sense and shouldn't be too hard to get used to. Definitely worth it for the increase in traffic flow. ”

“ I really like the options for 127 Street. I use this intersection on my commute to work every day, and I am looking forward to being able to access 127 Street via a ramp instead of waiting at that very long light! ”

“ I don't agree with the 115 Street design. It is unnecessarily complex. ”

“ Why remove the on and off ramps at St. Albert Trail? This is a major road and you want to remove it to force people to drive blocks upon blocks? ”

“ Depending on the size of the service roads, they may become bottlenecks. ”

Landscaping Plans

Yellowhead Trail is currently perceived by many to be lacking in greenspace and landscaping. Consequently, the landscaping plans presented in the concept plan tend to be appreciated and supported. Plans to beautify and green the area, and to include a shared-use path, are seen as welcome improvements.

Recommendations for the landscaping plan include:

- + Keep as many mature trees as possible
- + Include landscaping along the shared-use path
- + Use low maintenance and local plants
- + Increase the scope of plan to provide more plantings and greenspace

Concerns with the landscaping plan include:

- + Loss of greenspace along berm/noise wall in adjacent communities due to accommodation of service roads
- + Lack of ongoing maintenance and upkeep resulting in areas looking neglected

Some respondents tie their support for landscaping to expectations that enhanced landscaping will help to reduce traffic noise.

A small portion of respondents do not support spending funds on landscaping. They believe it is outside the scope of the Yellowhead Trail Freeway Conversion and is an unnecessary expenditure in the current economy.

“ The landscaping will greatly enhance this section of the project to elevate the present stark industrial vista; while creating an opportunity to extend a new shared-use trail bicycle network connection to Blatchford to the south. ”

“ I really like the idea of landscaping, especially the shared pathway behind the sound barrier walls – let’s keep making Edmonton more walkable/bikeable! ”

“ Trails should run through linear parks with trees, noise attenuation barriers, benches, play structures, and public art. ”

“ The renderings show trees replaced on the boulevard south of the wall, but that means the large mature trees will be ripped out and replaced with small young ones, which we will not see the benefits of in this generation at our home. ”

“ Honestly, I don’t really care about the landscaping areas. Function of the road should come as the paramount priority. Just fill the rest with grass/shrubs and call it a day. ”

Connections for People who Walk, Cycle and Use Transit

Respondents are generally supportive of the connections and accessibility provided in the concept plan for those who walk, cycle, and take transit in the project area. Specifically, the inclusion of a shared-use path on the south side of Yellowhead Trail is well received.

The new shared-use path is perceived to provide the following benefits:

- + Improves connection between adjacent communities
- + Increases connectivity for bicycle commuters
- + Separates active modes traffic from vehicle traffic, improving safety and overall traffic flow

Suggestions for connections and accessibility for those who walk and cycle in the project area include:

- + Shared-use paths along both sides of Yellowhead Trail
- + Additional north-south connections, especially between 127 Street and 97 Street across CN Walker Yard
- + Safe, separated lanes for active modes to cross Yellowhead Trail at St. Albert Trail, 127 Street, 115 Street and 97 Street interchanges
- + Connections to existing shared-use paths and bike lanes bordering the project area

Suggestions related to transit include:

- + Shared-use path should include connections to transit stops
- + Bus stops should be included at all interchanges

Concerns with connection and accessibility for those who walk and cycle in the project area include:

- + Turning lanes accessing Yellowhead Trail cross active mode paths creating the potential for interactions between active modes and vehicle traffic
- + Shared-use path may attract crime into the community
- + Shared-use path may attract people experiencing homelessness into the community

Some do not believe additional connections and accessibility for those who walk and cycle to be necessary:

- + The volume of walking and biking in the project area does not support the need for additional connections
- + Walking and cycling connections are perceived to be outside the scope of the Yellowhead Trail Freeway Conversion Program

“ It’s evident the project team has really emphasized connections for those in residential areas. Well done on that. ”

“ Extremely important to have safe ways for cyclists to cross the Yellowhead: I used to bicycle commute across the Yellowhead and it did not feel safe. Separated bicycle lanes are a must. ”

“ There needs to be shared pathways and transit access at all the interchanges. ”

“ Slip lanes throughout the design encourage high turning speeds. Slip lanes are recognized dangers to pedestrians and people on bikes. ”

“ Very little foot or street traffic uses this area. Make this a low priority. ”

PHASE 3 ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS OPPORTUNITIES

HOW WE ENGAGED



Commercial Property Owner Meetings

February and March 2021
5 meetings



Commercial Property and Business Owners' Online Learning Session

March 2, 2021
17 participants



Adjacent Residents' Online Learning Session

Property owners adjacent to the Yellowhead Trail and 127 Street intersection
March 3, 2021
9 participants



Stakeholder Meetings

EPCOR, CN Rail & VIA Rail, Alberta Transportation & Yellowhead Youth Centre, NAIT, Edmonton Catholic School Division, Oxford Properties (Kingsway Mall)
December to March 2021
6 meetings



Public Online Learning Sessions

March 4 and 6, 2021 (2 sessions)
61 participants



Survey

Online, and paper copies at neighbourhood drop boxes (Sherwood, Prince Charles and Westwood)
February 23 to March 8, 2021
294 online responses, 4 paper responses



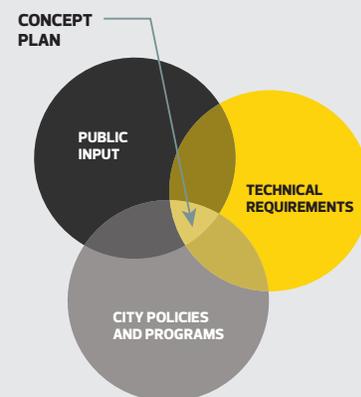
Other

Comments and opinions were also shared with the Project Team through emails, phone calls and social media posts.

HOW DECISIONS ARE MADE

Public input, technical analysis and City policies were all considered in determining the concept plan.

FIGURE 3: HOW DECISIONS ARE MADE



The City's public engagement spectrum defines the public's level of influence in engagement processes.

Visit edmonton.ca/publicengagement for more information.

During Phase 3, all engagement opportunities were at the Advise level on the City of Edmonton's Public Engagement Spectrum. This means the City consults with the public to gather feedback and perspectives that are considered for policies, programs, projects or services.

ADVISE

What Happens Next?

As the St. Albert Trail to 97 Street Concept Planning Study comes to a close, we want to thank you for your participation. You visited the project website, read project updates, attended in-person and online events, asked questions, completed surveys and shared your perspective. Your participation was valuable in helping influence the concept plan.

Input received during Phase 3 has been recorded and will be considered during the next phases of design.

We invite you to stay engaged as the concept plan moves into the preliminary and detailed design phases, beginning later this year. Construction is scheduled to take place from 2023 to 2027.

Sign up to receive project email updates:
edmonton.ca/YellowheadSATto97Street.

QUESTIONS?

Website: edmonton.ca/YellowheadSATto97Street

Email: yellowhead@edmonton.ca

Yellowhead Trail Freeway Conversion Program

The Yellowhead Trail Freeway Conversion Program, identified in the City's 2019–2022 Capital Budget as a transformational project, will upgrade Yellowhead Trail to a freeway by the end of 2027.