

City of Edmonton **Yellowhead Trail Freeway Conversion Program**

What We Heard Report

82 Street to 50 Street:
66 Street Intersection

Phase 1 Engagement: Listen and Learn
January to April 2019

SHARE YOUR VOICE
SHAPE OUR CITY

Edmonton

Thank you for talking with us.

Your views and perspectives helped us understand your reactions to the removal of the traffic signals at Yellowhead Trail and 66 Street. We know that this change will affect you, the way you travel, and the work you do.

You told us how important this north-south connection is to you. We heard you. Your input will be used together with traffic analysis, safety and technical requirements, and City policies to determine design options for this segment of Yellowhead Trail, including the potential to maintain a north-south connection.

This report provides details of Phase 1 engagement: Listen and Learn, including who we talked to, what we asked, what we heard, and how this input is being used to inform the future roadway network.

We invite you to stay involved as we report back on the information collected and how it was used, and share design options for your feedback during Phase 2 engagement.

THANK YOU.

WHAT WE HEARD: AT A GLANCE

During Phase 1 engagement, the most common issues raised and comments received, as well as the City's response, can be found in the table below. More details on the engagement process and what was heard can be found later in this report.

KEY COMMENTS	CITY RESPONSE
Maintaining a north-south connection at 66 Street is important.	Design options will be investigated that maintain a north-south connection.
The existing roadway network in the study area is thought to be at maximum capacity during peak travel times; rerouted traffic from the Yellowhead Trail and 66 Street intersection will worsen the existing congestion issues at these locations: 50 Street, 118 Avenue, 82 Street, 112 Avenue, 82 Street/Yellowhead Trail interchange, and Fort Road.	A traffic analysis of the broader roadway network is being completed as part of this study, including traffic impacts of alternate options being explored. The results of traffic analysis will be considered in the selection of the recommended concept plan.
Shortcutting through residential neighbourhoods will increase.	The potential for shortcutting is being considered during planning and mitigation solutions will be proposed, as necessary, at the draft concept plan stage.
Uncertainty about access from project area to future routes for heavy trucks and dangerous goods vehicles.	Design options will consider the needs of heavy trucks and dangerous goods vehicles, and their impact on the neighbourhoods.
The communities of Montrose, Newton and Santa Rosa (located south of Yellowhead Trail) will become isolated.	Design options will consider neighbourhood access, as well as the travel patterns for residents of and visitors to these communities.
OTHER COMMENTS	CITY RESPONSE
<p>Existing roadway concerns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + 50 Street - congested, improve signal timing, left turns difficult + Fort Road/ Yellowhead Trail interchange - awkward, confusing and congested + 118 Avenue - difficult to enter/exit adjacent neighbourhoods (left turns), pedestrian safety concerns, add merge lanes + 66 Street - congested + 50 Street/Yellowhead Trail interchange - congested + Fort Road - 50 km/h speed is too slow + 125 Avenue congested with new traffic signal 	Overall network impacts are being reviewed as part of this study. Concerns which cannot be addressed by the Yellowhead Trail Freeway Conversion Program will be shared with appropriate teams at the City to consider alternative operational solutions or longer term roadway changes.

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OTHER COMMENTS	CITY RESPONSE
Emergency response times may be increased in the project area.	Service providers are being consulted to discuss the impacts of all potential design options.
Uncertainty about impact on property value and business viability.	<p>Private land impacts are considered in planning and included in the evaluation criteria for this project. The team will work with property owners to reduce and minimize the impacts.</p> <p>Property owners with land impacts will be contacted by the City's Real Estate Branch following the approval of the final concept plan (late 2019).</p> <p>Property assessment is done through the City's Assessment and Taxation Branch.</p> <p>Questions about specific property values or changes in business viability can be addressed by calling 311 or emailing assessment@edmonton.ca.</p>
Bike and pedestrian connections are desired.	Design options will allow for the accommodation of bikes and pedestrians, including a north-south connection where possible, as well as maintaining pedestrian and cyclist connectivity in the project area.
Consider large truck/trailer movements in design of roadway network.	The needs of large truck and trucks with trailers is an important consideration in the development of all design options.
Consider Northlands Redevelopment.	Projects and developments including the Northlands Redevelopment, the Transit Strategy, City Bike Plan, Kathleen Andrews Transit Garage, LRT extensions and Neighbourhood Renewal are all considered in the planning.
Residential impacts: increased noise.	The potential for increased noise is being considered during planning and solutions will be proposed, as necessary, at the draft concept plan stage.
Desire direct access to Yellowhead Trail at 66 Street.	Design options are being developed that provide direct access to Yellowhead Trail. These will be presented for public feedback in Phase 2.
Direct routes will be impacted to reach area businesses as well as businesses/services north of Yellowhead Trail.	All design options will consider access to businesses, both north and south of Yellowhead Trail, as well as adjacent neighbourhoods. The roadway network will be modified to maintain access, if required.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Yellowhead Trail Freeway Conversion Program

In 2009, the City of Edmonton finalized its Transportation Master Plan that calls for Yellowhead Trail to become a freeway. In 2011, the City completed the Yellowhead Trail Strategic Plan, to help move goods and services more efficiently; the result is the conversion of Yellowhead Trail to a freeway.

For Yellowhead Trail, becoming a freeway means no traffic signals, three lanes of free-flowing traffic in each direction, an 80 km/h target speed limit, and two new interchanges at 127 Street and 121 Street.

Yellowhead Trail: 82 Street to 50 Street Project

The City launched a concept planning study in fall 2018 for the segment of Yellowhead Trail between 82 Street and 50 Street, which is scheduled to be complete before the end of 2019. The outcome will be a concept plan that shows how the roadway network will change and what transportation infrastructure will be built in the project area to support the goal of Yellowhead Trail becoming a freeway.

The intent of the study is to investigate the impacts of, and determine solutions for, the removal of traffic signals at Yellowhead Trail and 66 Street, as directed in the Yellowhead Trail Strategic Plan.

The study will:

- + Review the removal of the 66 Street traffic signals and the closure of direct accesses and alleys between 62 Street and 68 Street.

- + Determine how these changes affect area traffic flow to and from Yellowhead Trail and area properties.
- + Provide new roadway network solutions.

Other approved roadway network changes will also influence the future design:

- + A new collector road at 125 Avenue between 61 Street and Fort Road.
- + Widening of Fort Road between Yellowhead Trail and 66 Street.

The starting point of this study was to investigate impacts of the potential closure of 66 Street at Yellowhead Trail. This would remove direct access to and across Yellowhead Trail at this location. If the study determines that a closure of 66 Street is not a feasible solution, due to the impacts on the broader transportation network or other factors, alternative roadway design options will be proposed and further studied.

A previous technical study (2002) determined that a full interchange at this location is not possible due to space limitations (ideally, two kilometres spacing is required between interchanges for safe merging).

The outcome of the study will be a concept plan for the roadway network in the area. No decisions have yet been made, aside from the broader objective of being able to achieve free-flowing traffic (no traffic signals) on Yellowhead Trail.

FIGURE 1: PROJECT AREA MAP

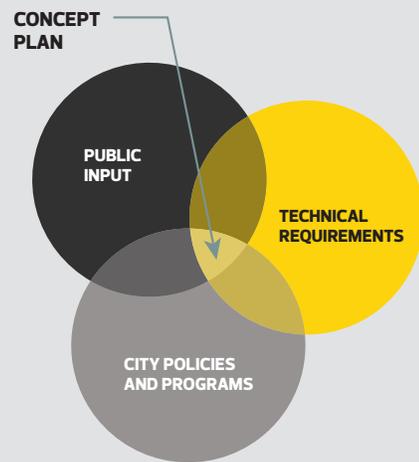


PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Public Engagement Philosophy

The City of Edmonton is committed to involving the people affected by the decisions it makes by seeking diverse opinions, experiences and information so that a wide spectrum of information is available to decision makers.

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



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

FIGURE 2: PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT SPECTRUM

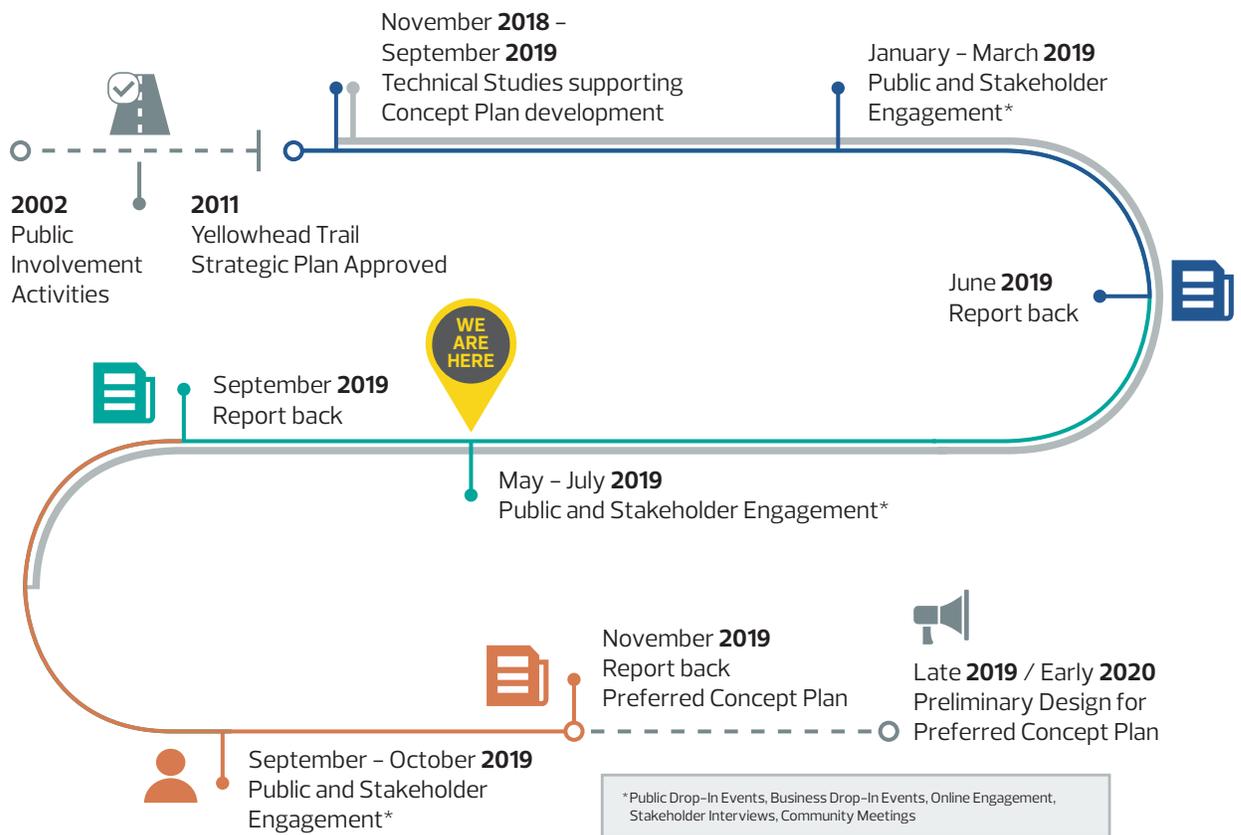


Public Engagement Design

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.



FIGURE 3: UPDATED PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT TIMELINE: JUNE 2019



During Phase 1, all engagement opportunities were at the REFINE level on the City's engagement spectrum.

Phase 1: Listen and Learn

This report provides details of our first phase of engagement: Listen and Learn.

In the Listen and Learn phase of engagement, our objectives were to:

- + Understand values related to the project and project area.
- + Understand current travel routes.
- + Investigate potential future travel routes should the intersection of Yellowhead Trail and 66 Street intersection be closed.
- + Explore and understand local knowledge, opinions and views in response to the removal of the traffic signals at Yellowhead Trail and 66 Street.
- + Inform the development of roadway network design options (to be shared for feedback in Phase 2).
- + Inform the development of criteria used to evaluate roadway network design options (to be shared for confirmation in Phase 2).

No design solutions were proposed during this first phase of engagement. Instead, the intent was to understand the impacts of the closure of 66 Street at Yellowhead Trail as one option to allow for the free-flow of traffic along Yellowhead Trail. This was the starting point of a conversation to inform the development of the concept plan for the area.

We heard what was important and will use that information to develop the roadway network design options and the criteria for the evaluation of these options. This input will help the project team make balanced and well-informed decisions.

Design options will be presented to the public and stakeholders for feedback during the study's second phase of engagement, beginning in June 2019. The recommended concept plan will be shared during the study's last phase of engagement in fall 2019.

Engagement Activities

During Phase 1, we met with area residents, commercial property and business owners, and community organizations, as well as those who travel through the area as drivers, pedestrians and cyclists, to discuss removal of the signalized intersection at Yellowhead Trail and 66 Street. We collected input to better understand the views and perspectives relative to this project. The following activities were used to share information and gather input.



Stakeholder Meetings

(Commercial property owners, community league and parent advisory councils)

January to April 2019
17 meetings



Business and Property Owner Drop-In Event

Jerry Forbes Centre for Community Spirit

February 2019
30 participants



Two Drop-in Public Engagement Sessions

Jerry Forbes Centre for Community Spirit and Balwin School

March 2019
343 participants



Online Engagement

on the City's website

February to March 2019
181 participants

WHAT WE HEARD

While concerns were raised at every engagement activity about the potential closure of 66 Street at Yellowhead Trail, participants generally feel the conversion of Yellowhead Trail to a freeway will improve traffic flow and safety.

What We Heard: Key Comments

The following issues and concerns were voiced most often by engagement participants.

- + Maintaining a north-south connection at 66 Street is important
- + The existing roadway network in the study area is thought to be at maximum capacity during peak travel times; rerouted traffic from the Yellowhead Trail and 66 Street intersection will worsen the existing congestion issues
- + Shortcutting through residential neighbourhoods will increase
- + Uncertainty about access from project area to future routes for heavy trucks and dangerous goods vehicles
- + The communities of Montrose, Newton and Santa Rosa (located south of Yellowhead Trail) will become isolated

Property and Business Owners

While most property and business owners said they understand the need for and support the freeway conversion, many are concerned their business will suffer as a result of the potential loss of both a north-south connection along 66 Street and direct access to Yellowhead Trail. Property and business owners want to understand what processes or supports are

in place to compensate for a loss in business revenue and property value, should that occur.

When talking about the removal of 66 Street traffic signals and the closure of other direct accesses and alleys between 68 Street and 62 Street at Yellowhead Trail, property and business owners say they are concerned that:

- + Traffic pattern changes will discourage customers who will find alternate businesses to support in more convenient locations.
- + Fewer chances to get off Yellowhead Trail will result in fewer drop-in customers.
- + Property values will decline.
- + Rental property will be less appealing and have a smaller pool of potential renters, resulting in a possible decrease in rental revenue.
- + Rerouted truck traffic (including dangerous goods vehicles and long tractor trailer units) will have to travel through the residential communities, which is undesirable.
- + Existing intersections, interchanges and roadways cannot handle the traffic being rerouted from the Yellowhead Trail and 66 Street intersection. Concerns are related to both the amount of traffic, as well as the size and type of vehicles (dangerous goods, heavy, long).

The proposed new 125 Avenue collector road (61 Street to Fort Road) was well-received by most businesses north of Yellowhead Trail as they see how it could replace the potential loss of direct access to Yellowhead Trail.

Businesses and property owners located in Santa Rosa (southwest of the Yellowhead Trail and 66 Street intersection), who do not have competitors located in Industrial Heights (northeast of the Yellowhead Trail and 66 Street intersection), indicate that an option for a north-south flyover (overpass) connecting to the new 125 Avenue collector road would provide an adequate solution for accessing Yellowhead Trail.

Those with concerns about the new 125 Avenue collector road identified the following potential challenges:

- + Additional traffic generated by the new transit garage on the new collector road and Fort Road will make the route unappealing and ineffective.
- + Lack of access from Yellowhead Trail; customers may be unsure how to access businesses fronting the north side of Yellowhead Trail. Respondents suggested a new wayfinding signage strategy along Yellowhead Trail could mitigate concerns.
- + If a north-south flyover is offered, the new 125 Avenue collector road will take Santa Rosa customers past competitor businesses located in Industrial Heights before taking them into Santa Rosa.

Community Organizations

Community leagues and parent advisory councils represent many voices in the project area, including community members, homeowners, students, parents, and teachers. While other audiences speak about the impacts of the removal of the traffic signals at Yellowhead Trail and 66 Street as they relate to vehicle traffic and commuters, these organizations bring forward the voices from the perspective of pedestrians, cyclists, and park users, who will be impacted by any traffic

that is rerouted through the community. These organizations identify the following concerns related to the potential closure of 66 Street at Yellowhead Trail:

- + The potential increase in truck traffic through the community (including 50 Street, 66 Street and 118 Avenue) causes concerns for pedestrian safety.
- + There is the potential for an increase in pedestrian related accidents if traffic is diverted to 118 Avenue. The amalgamation of Montrose, Mount Royal and Highlands schools by fall 2020 will increase the number of students along the roadway, therefore increasing the potential safety risk.
- + The current roadway network is already considered to be congested at peak periods and will not be able to accommodate the potential diverted traffic.
- + There are community amenities in Santa Rosa area, including an ice rink, baseball diamonds, bike route and shared-use path. There is a desire for these to be considered when contemplating roadway network changes in the area, suggesting Santa Rosa not be thought of as an exclusively industrial area.

In addition, the community league shared the following comments:

- + The north-south roadway connection is important. Communities south of Yellowhead Trail use 66 Street to access businesses and services north of Yellowhead Trail on a daily basis. Using alternate routes such as 50 Street, 82 Street or Fort Road is believed to be inconvenient, time consuming, and at peak travel times, ineffective.
- + Intra-community shortcutting is expected to worsen and is already perceived to be an issue in the neighbourhoods of Montrose and Newton.

Public

The public identified 66 Street as an important and frequently used route for:

- + Residents south of Yellowhead Trail accessing services, businesses, retail and restaurants north of Yellowhead Trail. Londonderry Mall was a frequently mentioned destination.
- + Residents located north of Yellowhead Trail accessing downtown, especially when other routes are congested.

When talking about the removal of 66 Street traffic signals at Yellowhead Trail, the public raised the following issues and concerns:

- + Loss of a north-south connection at 66 Street and Yellowhead Trail would not only impact vehicle traffic, but also pedestrians and cyclists.
- + Traffic will be diverted to arterials and interchanges that are already considered to be congested, resulting in increased congestion, lengthy re-routing, and increased noise. Even with other roadway network changes, it is felt that area roadways will not be able to accommodate diverted traffic.
- + Current congestion and roadway operational issues on arterials (high capacity urban roads), intersections and interchanges in the area:
 - + Driving lane inconsistency (50 Street, 118 Avenue).
 - + Arterials of greatest concern are 50 Street, 82 Street, 118 Avenue, Fort Road, and Wayne Gretzky Drive.

- + Main intersections in residential areas do not efficiently accommodate left turn traffic (lane length, left turn signal phase).
- + Interchanges along Yellowhead Trail of greatest concern are at 50 Street, Fort Road/Wayne Gretzky Drive, and 82 Street. In addition to being considered slow and congested for vehicle traffic, they are perceived to be awkward, confusing and unsafe.
- + Shortcutting through residential neighbourhoods (Montrose and Newton) will increase.
- + Response times for emergency vehicles and transport time to medical services will increase.
- + Montrose and Newton neighbourhoods will become isolated and unappealing.

The majority of residents who shared their opinion requested a north-south connection to be maintained at 66 Street and Yellowhead Trail. Many suggested a flyover (overpass) as the best solution as it is expected to have the least impact on traffic volumes, travel patterns and travel times.

Some respondents would like direct access to Yellowhead Trail and suggested a right-in, right-out configuration would meet their needs.

A small number of respondents support no access to or across Yellowhead Trail at 66 Street, explaining these changes would result in less traffic in their neighbourhoods creating a quieter, residential environment.

What Happens Next?

Phase 2 Public Engagement

In Phase 2, guided by the Yellowhead Strategic Plan, the project team will consider all input gathered during Phase 1 of engagement, together with the outcomes of traffic analysis and technical studies, to create potential roadway design options for the project area and develop evaluation criteria. Design options will be shared during Phase 2 in June 2019.

In Phase 3, the options will be further studied and evaluated to determine the preferred concept plan for the area.

Based on public input and early findings, the team will investigate roadway design opportunities that maintain a north-south connection and provide direct access to Yellowhead Trail from the south, in addition to an option for the closure of 66 Street at Yellowhead Trail.

BE INFORMED AND GET INVOLVED

Visit edmonton.ca/Yellowhead82to50Street to add your name to the email list so we can keep you informed of project updates.

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 improve the safety, operational capacity and level of service of this key inter-city, inter-regional and inter-provincial route. Yellowhead Trail has the highest volume of truck traffic within Edmonton and has national significance as part of the Trans-Canada Highway. The Program is fully funded, with a total budget of about \$1 billion committed from all levels of government.

Over the next four years, planning, design and public engagement on the multiple projects that make up the freeway conversion will continue. Construction will start in 2019 on roads parallel to Yellowhead Trail in the 149 Street area, and on the service road (125A Avenue) between 97 Street and 82 Street. Major construction on Yellowhead Trail is anticipated to start in Spring 2020. Sign up online to stay informed and learn about public engagement opportunities: edmonton.ca/YellowheadTrail.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Online: edmonton.ca/Yellowhead82to50Street

Email: yellowhead@edmonton.ca

Call: 311