

Valley Line Stage 1 (Mill Woods to Downtown)

Procurement to Operation: 2014-2020

Communications and Public Engagement Plan

Background

This approach has been developed in response to the following motion of City Council's Transportation Committee on March 19, 2014:

- a) *develop a public engagement plan that describes how the public, including the LRT Citizen Working Group, will be involved in the procurement and construction phases of the LRT Valley Line;*
- b) *implement that public engagement plan;*
- c) *Provide a report through the LRT Governance Board to City Council.*

The City has engaged thousands of Edmontonians since 2009 on the planning and design of the Valley Line LRT – Stage 1, in accordance with City policy. Based on that engagement and a range of other criteria, City Council has approved the route alignment and station locations. The Plan described below will not re-open any discussions on route selection or overall design decisions.

Today, the project is at the RFQ stage. This is the first stage of the procurement process that will last until the Preferred Proponent is chosen and begins work on the project. The RFP is expected to be released to Proponents in early Fall 2014, with those proponents completing their responses over the next year and the Preferred Proponent being chosen in the Fall / Winter of 2015. Early construction works are currently underway including utility relocations, access modifications, and building removals. Major construction work under the P3 contract is expected to begin in 2016.

The Obligations and Principles Underlying Communications and Public Engagement

The City believes communications and public engagement are key aspects of representative democracy as outlined in Policies C420 and C513, with their commitments to timeliness, accuracy, comprehensibility, respect, honesty, integrity, accessibility, and involvement in decisions. Furthermore, the current City Council has reinforced the City's commitment to communications and public engagement by making them top priorities and directing Administration to continuously identify and implement improvements.

As the Valley Line is a P3 project, it is also critical to align this Communications and Public Engagement Plan with overall P3 requirements for accountability, transparency, disclosure, and confidentiality.

Therefore, this plan is built on the following set of obligations and principles, which are all important and need to be balanced. They are intended to create an open, transparent, and fair environment during the procurement process, while ensuring a competitive P3 procurement that provides value for taxpayer money and follows industry standards and best practices.

Three main **obligations** need to be considered:

- *To the public* – ensuring accountability for the public interest by being as transparent as possible, in a P3 environment, with the disclosure of information;

- *To private partners* – recognizing the private interests involved in a P3 project by respecting commercial interests and their confidential, proprietary information; and,
- *To public partners* – following a process that shares public information in a timely, accessible manner, while leveraging the P3 model to deliver a project that makes the most efficient and effective use of taxpayer dollars.

Five key **principles** need to be applied:

- *Disclosure* – pertinent, public information is disclosed to allow for public transparency;
- *Openness and Timeliness* – reasonable efforts are made to disclose public information in an accessible and timely manner, and to publicize important decisions;
- *Confidentiality* – commercially sensitive information is protected to ensure the integrity of the procurement process and protect negotiating positions;
- *Risk Management* – risks that disclosure or non-disclosure may cause to proponents or the City’s best interests regarding value-for-money are understood and managed; and,
- *Dialogue* – where possible, opportunities to engage with the public to provide information, answer questions, and receive feedback are provided.

Communications and Public Engagement during Procurement (present to Fall / Winter 2015)

During this phase of the project, communications and public engagement will be carried out by the City and will consist of information sharing to:

- Describe how commitments already made in previous consultations are being addressed in the RFP and draft Project Agreement.

An extensive consultation process was undertaken in the pre-design and design phase of the Valley Line. As a result, several commitments were made to stakeholders arising from this consultation. These commitments have been written into various parts of the draft Project Agreement and its accompanying Technical Performance Requirements (TPR’s).

See the attachment “Summary of Stakeholder Commitments” for these commitments, organized as general commitments applying to the entire line and those that are specific to the four geographic consultation areas along the line.

- Facilitate the public release of parts of the RFP and related documents that can be released publicly, while balancing the above obligations and principles.
- Provide information on the Valley Line and answer inquiries.

- Provide information on the P3 procurement process and timelines.
- Communicate City Council, Transportation Committee, and LRT Governance Board decisions.

This information will be provided via:

- Meetings with Citizen Working Groups, which will be established for geographic zones along the Line.
- Meetings and phone calls with stakeholder groups.
- The Valley Line website.
- News releases and public service announcements.
- Media relations.
- Email newsletters.
- Email responses to specific inquiries.
- 311.

Feedback received from the public during the above activities will be documented, summarized, and passed on to the Project Team for review and consideration and subsequently provided to Project Co for their information when they begin work on the project.

An opportunity for the public to provide input during the procurement phase will be provided in the summer of 2014 via:

- Meetings with stakeholders and distribution of an intercept survey to support the development of a River Valley Trails and Footbridge Detours Strategy. This strategy will be included as part of the RFP.

Communications and Public Engagement during Detailed Design and Construction (Fall 2015 to 2020)

During this phase of the project, communications and public engagement will largely be carried out by Project Co. In the Project Agreement, the City will outline the respective roles and responsibilities of the City and Project Co and describe the communications and public engagement requirements that Proponents must address in their submissions. The requirements included in the Project Agreement along with the details provided in the proposals will form part of the final Project Agreement.

One of the initial tasks of the successful Proponent will be to finalize, within 60 days of contract award, the Communications and Public Engagement Plan based on these requirements.

In summary, the Project Agreement requirements for Communications and Public Engagement are:

- Communications and engagement will involve timely sharing of information about the Project;

- Communications and engagement will involve exchange of information between stakeholders and project representatives;
- Communications and engagement will involve learning from stakeholders about conditions or issues that may affect the Project and require appropriate action;
- Communications and engagement will involve responding to comments and queries, and incorporating input into the delivery of the project;
- Project Co will engage with stakeholders to provide information regarding their plans so as to ensure effective implementation of design and construction plans;
- Project Co will communicate with stakeholders about all matters relating to the final design of the alignment, maintenance facilities, stations and stops; construction activities; multi-modal traffic flow and detours/closures; crisis communication and publicly-distributable incident resolution announcements; and other matters;
- Project Co will proactively engage all stakeholders regarding design and construction to provide opportunities for information exchange to increase understanding of Project impacts for citizens as well as Project Co.;
- Project Co will engage the public and community stakeholder groups by organizing, advertising and attending public, community and stakeholder meetings, other small or large group meetings, City Council and local government presentations, and such other regular meetings as are necessary or desirable;
- Project Co will engage stakeholders on individual parts of the Project or distinct geographical areas; and,
- Project Co will prepare protocols for responding to queries/inquiries.

Communications and Public Engagement during Operations and Maintenance (2020 onwards)

The Project Agreement requires Project Co to provide a Communications and Public Engagement Plan that addresses the requirements during the Operations and Maintenance phase and specifically requires Project Co to prepare for and support the transition of activities between the construction and operations phases.

Following the transition period, and to integrate the operation of the Valley Line with the rest of the City's LRT system, Project Co will continue to provide routine, line specific communications functions, while the City will undertake broader communications and public engagement activities.