

## CONCEPT PLANNING STUDY - WALTERDALE BRIDGE REPLACEMENT AND APPROACH EVALUATION

### Public Information and Community Consultation Process

#### *Summary for Interim Report*

Two of the three phases of the public involvement plan for the project have been completed as of December 15, 2010.

The first phase was comprised of conducting a series of one on one interviews with a list of selected stakeholder groups that the project team determined would be representative of the many stakeholder groups that are an integral part of the project. 15 interviews were conducted. Common issues that arose from the interviews included:

- The project presents an opportunity to address vehicle traffic issues and to improve pedestrian and cyclist circulation throughout the area.
- The challenge for this project is to achieve a balance between providing improved access for private vehicles to downtown Edmonton and protecting/preserving the character, safety and integrity of the communities that the roadways approaching the bridge replacement will be impacting.
- Better signage and wayfinding should be provided to improve circulation into and out of the river valley.
- The bridge design needs to reflect the history of the area.
- This is a relatively small area and the bridge and roadways must fit in.
- East/west flows (River Valley Road through Rosssdale) must be maintained and/or improved.
- Make better use of Gateway Boulevard and Calgary Trail (not 99 Street and 109 Street) to funnel vehicle traffic in and out of downtown.
- Current traffic volumes on Gateway Boulevard, Calgary Trail and 109 Street onto Walterdale Hill and Queen Elizabeth Park Road are tolerable, but these should not increase and no additional property or parkland should be sacrificed to achieve greater roadway capacity.
- Do not continue to have 4 lanes south of the bridge have to merge into two lanes on the bridge and then expect to 4 lanes again on the other side of the bridge.
- Two-way traffic on the bridge is desirable.

The second component of the public involvement plan was a widely promoted and heavily attended (approximately 225 participants) open house, held on November 18, 2010. This open was undertaken jointly with the West Rosssdale Urban Design Planning project through the Planning and Development department of the City of Edmonton.

Two tools were used to collect input and feedback from participants for the Walterdale Bridge Replacement component of the open house.

The first of the two tools was a Comment Form that was handed out at the event and the same comment sheet was made available at the project website where interested Edmontonians could download and complete the form and FAX, scan and e-mail or mail it to the project team. Close to eighty (80) forms were returned using this tool.

The second tool was the use of post-it notes by participants that were supplied at tables displaying “roll maps” of each of the four roadway options. Participants were then asked to fill out the post-it notes and attach them directly to the roll maps close the area on the map pertaining to their comments.

The project team received a great deal of detailed and lengthy feedback from the two input tools but there was a diverse range of comments and themes with much contradictory comment. Generally speaking, and at a high level, Option #1, the status quo regarding roadways on the south side of the crossing was most supported. This theme was justified in that the community quality-of-life impacts, neighbourhood access and loss of heritage character were too great.

However, there were enough comments and suggestions that indicated that although the status quo was preferable, the possibility of reconfiguration and flow improvement on the roadways at some point in the future to better handle additional traffic must be maintained.

There were also a significant number of comments pertaining to maintaining or improving the east/west traffic flows, especially for pedestrians and cyclists on both sides of the river crossing. Also, there was significant support for two-way traffic on the bridge itself and better access from the north bank of the river to the Kinsmen Sports Center.

There was little to no support for elevating the roadway at the north end of the bridge.

Regarding bridge design, four bridge designs / styles were presented to the public in November 2010, and input from the public was requested related to each of the styles. Although there was not definitive support for any one style presented, the arch bridge style received more positive comments than the other three. The cable-stayed bridge style also received more favourable comments than the girder or extradosed styles, both of which were considered to be “boring” or “staid” designs.

The most significant bridge design criterion seems to be how the bridge design will fit into its surroundings. All four options received both favourable and unfavourable comments about fitting in to the context and the surroundings but there were more unfavourable comments about the sheer size of the cable-stayed bridge style. Opinion was split about the concept of a “signature” bridge design versus fitting into the context and surroundings.

The balance of the Public Involvement Plan, to be undertaken in February and March, will be comprised of a series of meetings with key stakeholder groups to further discuss options and recommendations that will have been developed since the November Open House, in addition to another widely publicized public Information Session. The purpose of this Information Session will be to communicate the content of the final report to City Council. This Information Session will be held in late March.