



## **An Open Letter to Ward 11 Councillor Brian Pincott & Ward 13 Councillor Diane Colley-Urquhart**

December 10, 2015

Dear Councillor Pincott and Councillor Colley-Urquhart,

We are in receipt of Councillor Pincott's email of December 9, 2015 regarding the Southwest (SW) Transitway and Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project and we would like to take this opportunity to address these comments with both of you since this project greatly impacts both of your constituencies.

There have been a lot of questions and concerns regarding this project because of the inadequate, misleading and conflicting information that has been provided to us by The City of Calgary in addition to the insufficient public consultation that has taken place to date. Considering that this project was approved five (5) years ago, no meaningful public consultation has occurred since it was passed in February 2011. This is especially concerning considering the over six-year extensive consultation that the Southeast (SE) Transitway and Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project has undergone commencing in 2009.

### **Lack of Public Consultation & Transparency**

We take exception to the fact that this project was passed by City Council in an Omnibus Motion in February 2011 with seven (7) other reports without meaningful debate in Council Chamber. Affected Community Associations, residents and stakeholders were never properly informed or engaged on this project before it was passed.

CONSENT AGENDA, Moved by Alderman D. Colley-Urquhart, Seconded by B. Pincott, that Council adopt the Recommendations contained in the following reports in an omnibus motion:

LPT2011-01, RESIDENTIAL STREET STANDARDS - DEFERRAL REPORT

LPT2011-06, SECONDARY SUITES - DEFERRAL REQUEST

LPT2011-04, SOUTHWEST BUS RAPID TRANSIT FUNCTIONAL PLANNING STUDY

AC2011-02, EXTERNAL AUDITOR 2009 MANAGEMENT LETTER UPDATE

AC2011-04, CORPORATE INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT MODEL ANNUAL UPDATE

AC2011-05, CITY EMPLOYEE CODE OF CONDUCT – ANNUAL REPORT

AC2011-08, CITY AUDITOR'S SUPPLEMENTARY STATUS REPORT – 2010 DECEMBER

AC2011-09, STATUS OF OUTSTANDING MOTIONS AND DIRECTIONS

CARRIED

We are also greatly concerned about this project's approval process. Specifically, an approved functional planning study approval should not provide the green light for full project execution as in this case. On the contrary, the approval of a high level functional planning should only provide the green light for the project team to carry out a full feasibility study/pre-FEED with multiple options, a cost benefit analysis for the options and vetting of the options at open houses where taxpayers are truly engaged. The results from the feasibility/pre-FEED should then be presented to Council for approval to move to FEED and Final Engineering Design. Subsequent to this more detailed engineering design, Council will have far more accurate budgetary numbers and proper community feedback from which they can make a decision to proceed to full project execution. This in our opinion is the proper way to manage large capital projects and this approach secures community buy-in as opposed to resistance to change. Another item to consider, is that all City Departments have to sign-off on the project to ensure that all project aspects are considered and mitigated in an appropriate manner.

We find it interesting that The City presented this report to Council even though no Community Association feedback was included in the report. The City also claims that 50,000 brochures were sent out in 2010 informing the public of this project before it was passed, yet, not one resident among the hundreds that we have spoken to in any community in the affected SW Calgary communities can remember ever receiving a brochure. As you are aware, we have asked you for a copy of the brochure's distribution list on November 13, 2015 but one has still not been provided. Furthermore, the project was based on 181 feedback forms that were collected at 4 information sessions on November 23 and 24, 2010 held within a timeframe of under a day and a half (less than 32 hours). After reviewing the 181 feedback forms, it appears that the majority of the comments contained in the forms were not supportive of the project and/or asked for more opportunity for engagement which was not afforded to them. All of these examples point to

the fact that The City of Calgary's *engage!* Policy has not been followed for this project so far.

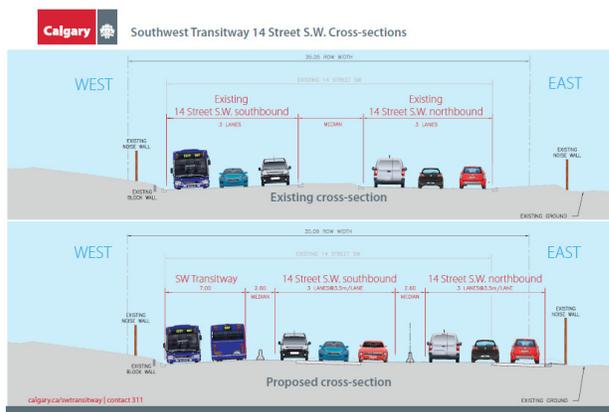
## Project

While we certainly appreciate the benefits of efficient and well-thought out public transit, this project does not achieve either. Although The City has not shared current transit ridership data with us despite repeated attempts to obtain this information, we find it disturbing that this project is being constructed based on data collected in 2010 before the impacts of the Southwest (SW) Ringroad and 4-car Light Rail Transit (LRT) service have been evaluated. It is our understanding that both of these initiatives will reduce vehicular traffic on 14th Street SW.

You anticipate that the SW Transitway and Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) will remove 10,000 vehicles from 14th Street yet we have received no information from you to justify this statement in spite of repeated requests to review source data. Furthermore, we note that this project is inconsistent with the Primary Transit Network in the Council-approved "Calgary Transportation Plan" and in parts 1 and 2 of Calgary Transit's "Route Ahead" plan.

We also note that the 12 million estimated ridership that The City displayed at the October 2015 information sessions for this project is misleading as City representatives confirmed that that number includes transit ridership for all of SW Calgary, and possibly city-wide, not just for the SW Transitway and Bus Rapid Transit (SW). This erroneous information is still posted on The City's project website.

Contrary to your comment, 14th Street SW will be widened from a six-lane roadway to an eight-lane expressway at grade level through the centre of several of the communities within your constituency. This includes the addition of two dedicated bus lanes on 14<sup>th</sup> Street from Rockyview Hospital to Southland Drive, the narrowing of lanes on 14<sup>th</sup> Street and the narrowing of lanes on Glenmore Trail. The City's own cross-section of the future street configuration illustrates this fact very clearly.



It is also interesting to note that within the past month, the language around the widening of 14th Street has been modified from "within the existing sounds walls" to "within the existing City-land owned right of way". Please explain why the change in language.

Also, the new 3.5 meter lane width proposed is less than the mandated width of 3.6 metres. The maximum width permitted for trucks in Canada and the USA is 2.6 metres plus the width of the mirrors (0.3 metres per side) equalling a width of 3.2 meters leaving only 6" clearance per side.

Although your email states that no parks will be impacted, The City of Calgary's project website indicates that a *"Terminal station and facilities will be developed at Woodbine Park."*



[Click for larger image](#)

#### Transitway construction includes:

- Extension of the Crowchild Trail bus-only lanes
- Construction of bus only lanes along 14 Street S.W.
- A new underpass structure at 90 Avenue S.W. to maintain traffic flows from surrounding community
- Modifications to the existing pedestrian overpass at 75 Avenue S.W.
- In-street bus operations between Southland Drive S.W. and Woodbine
- New Transitway stations (36 in total) along the entire Transitway corridor
- Terminal station and facilities developed at Woodbine park

#### Project background

The Southwest Transitway functional study was originally completed in 2010. Public engagement sessions were held in November 2010 at various locations along the route to introduce the project to the public and gather feedback. The study, including the public input, was brought to Council in January 2011, and approved. View the [Council approved functional study](#), [cover report](#), and a [summary of public engagement](#).

Further, the boards at the October 27 and 29, 2015 information sessions, showed that the BRT stations at 75th Avenue, Heritage Park and Glenmore Landing will be located on park areas.

You state that the project is expected to take two years to build, however, The City of Calgary's project website says, *"Construction to begin in 2016 and end in 2020."*

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## Timeline

Construction to begin in 2016 and end in 2020.

## Budget

\$40 million – total budget

## Communication

The City of Calgary will communicate with the public and impacted businesses about the construction before it begins and on an ongoing basis throughout construction. The web page will be the primary source for updated information.



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In your email, you also state that there will be "no parking lots, park n' rides, or bus depots planned along the route," however, the project Functional Planning Study (Delcan Study, 2010/11) passed by City Council referenced below indicates that "The open area to the east could be considered for neighbourhood Park and Ride activity and increase parking for park access."

The terminal station would be located in the centre of the loop. If the station is matched with an on-street stop the terminal could serve the dedicated BRT route and other areas routes, however this requires a larger station and places the on-street station in an awkward location for other routes to access the station.

The open area to the east could be considered for neighbourhood Park and Ride activity and increase parking for park access. A more significant terminal station facility could be provided on this site.



Additionally, if there is expected to be an increase in future ridership as you are forecasting, the only other "source" of riders would be those coming from outside the community. These commuters would indeed be parking somewhere and riding the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system from that starting point on the route.

Also, your statement that the Transitway will decrease noise and air pollution is unfounded since we understand that The City has not undertaken any Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) or Biophysical Impact Assessments (BIA). We were also informed that The City has also not undertaken any noise

attenuation or vibration studies for this project. It is our opinion that adding a fleet of high-occupancy, articulated buses (10 routes and more) travelling through communities at grade level and stopping at 2-minute intervals needs to be studied prior to being implemented to ensure the health and safety of your constituents. This project also appears to have disregarded The City's Triple Bottom Line requirement where a traditional project is judged against a green option.

At the October 2015 information sessions hosted by The City, there was no indication that natural gas buses will be used along this route. We ask that you provide proof that natural gas buses have been ordered by Calgary Transit and we also ask that you confirm how many diesel buses have been ordered by Calgary Transit in the past two years.

Significant problems with the underground pipelines on 14th Street SW have not been addressed specifically the high pressure natural gas line over which The City plans to add two lanes of traffic. The Functional Planning Study (Delcan Report, 2010/2011) states the following, "It is not desirable to construct or operate a roadway or busway over these utilities."

Additionally, the 14th Street SW streetscape, with pavement from sound barrier to sound barrier, is not in alignment with The City of Calgary's Complete Streets policy nor is it in alignment with the inverted transportation priority pyramid, where pedestrians have the highest priority, followed by bicycles, followed by transit, followed by regular vehicles.

## **Phase**

While The City of Calgary hosted two information sessions in late October 2015 when it re-launched this project after five (5) years since Council approval, it notified residents only four (4) days before the first information session took place. The City failed to adequately notify adjacent landowners, stakeholders and Community Associations and only posted some of the information session on its project website. Furthermore, the information sessions on the SW Transitway and BRT were folded into the SW Ringroad information sessions were very misleading especially in light of your insistence that the SW Transitway has nothing to do with the SW Ringroad. To date, all of the information session information still does not appear on the project website.

## **Next Steps**

While we welcome the beginning of community engagement and consultation on this project, we cannot do this without having adequate project information first. 'Inform/Communicate' is the first step of The City of Calgary's public engagement Spectrum as per The City's *engage!* Policy. On November 13, 2015, we forwarded you a request for a list of necessary project documents, reports and

studies so that we can have an informed and productive series of conversations with you and City representatives moving forward. Almost one month later, we have only received five (5) percent of these documents. Considering the unusually rapid timeline for this project, your prompt attention to this matter is required. If you are unable to supply any of the documents requested, we kindly ask that you inform us of which ones you cannot supply and the reason why. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Maurice Tims". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "M" and a long, sweeping underline.

Maurice Tims  
**Chair, *ready to engage!***