



February 1, 2016

The Honourable Kathleen Ganley  
Minister of Justice and Solicitor-General  
Executive Branch  
424 Legislature Building  
10800 - 97 Avenue  
Edmonton, AB

Dear Minister Ganley,

**RE: The City of Calgary - Southwest (SW) Transitway and Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Project**

Dear Minister Ganley,

I am writing to you on behalf of ***ready to engage!***, a group of Southwest Calgary residents who have joined together over serious concerns regarding The City of Calgary's SW Transitway and Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project ("the SW BRT Project"). Our group includes residents and stakeholders spanning over 14 SW Calgary communities who will be significantly impacted by this project.

A brief history is required to give context to the issues I intend to raise in the remainder of this letter. In the 2000s, The City of Calgary embarked on a project that led to the expansion of the Glenmore Causeway ("GE5") and a significant portion of that project was immediately adjacent to 14 Street SW. In fact, part of the plans for GE5 included an expansion of the 14 Street corridor south of Glenmore Trail. The GE5 project was enormous. Unfortunately, many aspects of the planning were carried out by The City without significant consultation with local residents. When the plans were finally announced, local residents were aghast at the proposed plan.

What followed was a multi-year odyssey that saw these local residents fight for changes to the proposed plan. This process yielded results which allowed the project to proceed with significant changes that alleviated many of the concerns that local residents had raised. One such change was the creation of significant buffers between residents and traffic on Glenmore, while another was that 14 Street was not expanded. It is important to note that many residents were deeply dissatisfied with what occurred during the GE5 project.

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[www.readytoengage.ca](http://www.readytoengage.ca)

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To its credit, The City responded to those feelings in a meaningful way. The lessons that were learned from the process led the City to create a policy for public consultation called *engage!* The policy is attached for your consideration. The guiding principles of this policy are accountability, inclusiveness, transparency, commitment and responsiveness.

The historical discussions around GE5, and the creation of the *engage!* policy by The City, are crucial to understanding why the process that has been used by The City for the SW BRT Project is fundamentally flawed. It is clear that the process is so flawed that The City has failed to comply with its *engage!* Policy (purposeful dialogue between The City, citizens/stakeholders to gather information to influence decision-making), its Complete Streets Policy (the approach that improves safety and accessibility for all road users) and its Triple Bottom Line Policy (the approach to decision-making that considers economic, social and environmental issues in a comprehensive way), just to name just a few. This is important because under the Municipal Government Act, cities are required to adhere to their policies in order for their conduct to be considered in compliance with the Act.

Calgary City Council passed the conceptual design for the SW BRT Project in February 2011. This included, among others, two dedicated bus lanes on the West side of 14 Street making that road an 8 lane super highway at grade level adjacent to residential properties.

That City Council, elected in October 2010, was comprised of several new councillors and a new mayor. It should be noted, this motion was included in an omnibus resolution without any public debate in Council Chamber at that time. Calgary City Council effectively hid this decision from the public in plain sight. Given the level of public sentiment against the expansion of 14 Street in the past, it is hard not to view the passage of the SW BRT plan as fundamentally lacking in transparency.

Equally important, the project was passed before the approval of several major Provincially funded capital expenditure programs to improve mobility in and around the city of Calgary (e.g. the Southwest (SW) Ringroad, 4-car Light Rail Transit (LRT) trains and the Green Line). The decision to proceed was not only based on 2010 dollars and a conceptual design cost estimate +/- 40%, but was also based on an incomplete and inaccurate functional planning study, flawed communications and a non-compliant public engagement process.

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As a result of the Provincial Government's September 4, 2015 announcement of public transit funding for The City of Calgary and surrounding communities, the SW BRT project was re-launched publicly in October 2015. However none of the aforementioned deficiencies have been corrected and the capital requirements for this project are still based on an out-of-date, flawed functional study. Further, the approval process does not comply with The City's 2013 approved requirement to complete pre-design studies that refine information provided in the functional plan and create a +/- 30% design plan (see page 229 of The City of Calgary's RouteAhead Strategic Plan).

On July 22, 2013, City Council passed a number of amending bylaws to the Calgary Transportation Plan (CTP) and the Municipal Development Plan (MDP), among other things. As noted in the cover report, the matters involved a **public hearing** for:

*Administrative amendments to the Municipal Development Plan, the Calgary Transportation Plan (CTP), and Area Structure Plans and Policy Plans in the Northeast quadrant, to incorporate Council-approved changes to the transportation network related to the reclassification of Métis Trail and Airport Trail N.E. Administrative amendments to the Municipal Development Plan, and the Calgary Transportation Plan, to clarify conceptual alignments of the Primary Transit Network and transit centre locations.*

If a public hearing was held for these amendments, why would a similar consideration not apply to the proposed BRTs? Such significant changes warrant an amended Calgary Transportation Plan and this public hearing process is the correct way to both make the amendment and respond appropriately to the community at large.

Interestingly, the "Primary Transit Network" as set out by The City of Calgary does not identify BRT's as part of that Network. However, in the conceptual Calgary Regional Transit Plan, BRT's are referenced and this reflects the current "CTP" concept that BRT's are primarily a regional transit solution (SEE page 3-13 of the CTP) attached. If the introduction of "urban" BRTs is a new concept, particularly where the design contemplates dedicated transitways, it is our opinion that this would be a significant and substantial change to the CTP requiring a public hearing and amendment.

Regrettably, The City provided what purported to be new information on the SW BRT on January 27, 2016 in an updated engineering report from Stantec Consulting. A cursory review of that document shows that almost none of the questions or issues raised by *ready to engage!* have been answered or addressed. Disturbingly The City continues to

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assert that it is their intention to begin construction in May 2016.

There are many outstanding issues which *ready to engage!* have raised with The City but no significant information or response has been forthcoming. Some of these issues reveal potentially serious health and safety issues related to building the new roadway over existing utility corridors that include a high-pressure gas pipeline. Failure of these lines due to increased weight and vibration could lead to a catastrophic failure with resultant property damage and loss of life.

Finally, the evidence that The City has failed to consult properly with residents of South West Calgary on the SW BRT project was demonstrated amply by *ready to engage!* public information forum hosted at the Jewish Community Centre on January 21, 2016. That event attracted more than 2,000 local residents destined to be impacted by the SW BRT to the site. Many more were turned away because of the overcrowding at the site. All but a handful of those constituents signed a petition against the proposal due to outright opposition to the plan or at the very least a gross lack of consultation with local constituents. The vast majority of those people indicated that they had never even heard of the project prior to being informed about it by the efforts of *ready to engage!* The City has responded to this outpouring of concern by stating that project will go ahead regardless of citizens' complaints or concerns.

The City's lack of compliance with many of its own policies shows a complete disregard for the guiding principles and legal requirements of the Province's own laws. Surely, this is something on which the Minister of Justice should act. Due to the unusually fast time line with construction expected to begin in Spring 2016, and the significant impacts that it will have on all Calgarians, we feel it is important to meet with you, as a matter of urgency, to discuss these and other issues face to face.

I can be reached by email at [info@readytoengage.ca](mailto:info@readytoengage.ca).

Sincerely,

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

**Attachments:            The City of Calgary *engage!* Policy  
   Calgary Transportation Plan (CTP)**

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- C: The Right Honourable Stephen Harper, MP Calgary Heritage  
The Honourable Rachel Notley, Premier of Alberta  
The Honourable Joe Ceci, President of Treasury Board & Minister of Finance  
The Honourable Shannon Phillips, Minister of Environment and Parks  
The Honourable Danielle Larivee, Minister of Municipal Affairs & Service Alberta  
The Honourable Brian Mason, Minister of Transportation & Infrastructure  
Ms. Anam Kazim, MLA Calgary Glenmore  
Mr. Dave Rodney, MLA Calgary Lougheed  
Mr. Brian Jean, Leader of the Official Opposition  
Mr. Rick McIver, MLA Calgary Hays  
Calgary City Council  
Mr. Jeff Fielding, City Manager & CAO, The City of Calgary

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