

# Green Line – North Central Work Plan

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

A study is underway to determine the alignment for the Green Line - North Central LRT to achieve improved mobility for Calgarians. A final report including Administration's recommended alignment will be presented to the SPC on Transportation & Transit in 2014 December.

The North Central LRT is the north leg of the Green Line, the next new LRT line in Calgary's rapid transit network. As outlined in RouteAhead, a 30-year strategic plan for transit in Calgary, the Green Line will eventually include an LRT line from North Pointe in north central Calgary to Seton in the southeast, with future extensions to the north possible in the longer term.

Centre Street is Calgary Transit's busiest bus corridor with frequent and high capacity buses transporting 35,000 Calgarians per weekday. There are more people being moved along Centre Street in buses than in cars. Transit capacity has been added to Centre Street, Edmonton Trail and 4 Street NW in recent years. In particular, bus rapid transit, transit priority at traffic signals, high capacity articulated buses, and bus-only lanes have been introduced on Centre Street in response to the growing demand for transit services and the growing population in the North Central corridor. Associated land redevelopments are becoming more frequent as well.

Despite improvements to transit capacity the North Central corridor continues to experience a high volume of overloads. Overloads occur when a bus driver can no longer fit any more passengers on her bus and must leave passengers at the bus stop. The North Central corridor currently has the transit ridership to support implementing LRT. However, in the absence of sufficient funding for LRT, a bus-based transitway is required for reliability, capacity, travel time, and customer experience improvements in the short term.

## 2.0 CENTRE STREET TRANSITWAY PLANNED WORK

The work plan on the corridor includes the following steps:

- Complete the North Central LRT alignment study (2014), functional planning study (2015-2016), and pre-design study (future work).
- Complete the Centre Street Transitway functional planning study (2015), pre-design and detailed design studies (2016-2017), and construction (2018-2021).

City Council has dedicated money for the planning, design, and construction of the Centre Street transitway over the next few years. The planning and design phase of the transitway project will move forward after Council has approved the alignment for the North Central LRT.

The long-term goal is to build LRT in the North Central corridor. However, in the interim, the goal is to build a transitway to provide faster travel times and more on-time operations, with a customer experience that is similar to riding LRT. A transitway is a separate roadway or sometimes combined with transit-only lanes on existing roadways. The transitway will mean better transit service for existing customers, and can attract new transit customers that would otherwise choose to travel by a different mode of transportation.

### **3.0 NORTH CENTRAL LRT ROUTE PLANNING STUDY**

The North Central LRT has been identified in planning documents since the report on *Transit for Calgary's Future*, published in 1967. An alignment in the Nose Creek Valley was conceptually approved by Council in 2006, with further planning work performed through 2008. The Municipal Development Plan (MDP) and Calgary Transportation Plan (CTP), approved in 2009, set a new direction for public transit in Calgary, highlighting the importance of providing high quality transit services to Calgarians. New policies, public preference, and technical difficulties with the Nose Creek Valley alignment led to the current study being undertaken to determine a route for the North Central LRT based on the current mobility and land use goals of the MDP and CTP.

The current study was initiated in 2012 following public engagement events showing support for reviewing the alignment in the Nose Creek Valley. The project has included considerable public input to help shape the project vision, community principles, and the criteria being used to compare the alignments. The project vision, developed with stakeholders, is the overall purpose of the project. The vision calls for the project to achieve: "A transit service that improves mobility in existing and new communities in North Central Calgary, connecting people and places, and enhancing the quality of life in the city."

This study will also recommend an LRT alignment from the north side of the Bow River into downtown, connecting with the SE LRT. Current options being investigated include using the Centre Street bridge, a new separate bridge and a tunnel.

Public engagement events have been ongoing throughout the duration of the project. Major events were held in 2013 June and 2014 April to gauge community support for possible alignments and LRT operations. In 2013 and 2014 intensive hands-on workshops allowed participants to immerse in the details of the project. Small groups were led by project team members and each group focused on certain details of the possible alignments. The interactive open houses that followed the workshops gave community members an opportunity to speak with the project team about their goals and concerns related to the North Central LRT.

Three public engagement events were held in 2014 April, to identify the public's preferences relating to the two alignments (Centre Street North and Edmonton Trail Northeast).

During the three events, over 575 people actively participated in group discussions about alignment preferences, pedestrian access, traffic impacts, community/land acquisitions impacts and relative costs of the various options.

### **4.0 NEXT STEPS**

The project team will continue to analyse the Centre Street alignment, including refinement of cost estimates. The team will also be meeting with surrounding communities and interested parties to discuss the Centre Street alignment and get their final thoughts before presenting recommendations to the SPC on Transportation and Transit in 2014 December.