

Engage Online Portal Executive Summary

Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)
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July 2016

Executive Summary

From March 23 to May 20, 2016, The City of Calgary conducted engagement on the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Program. To meet engagement goals and objectives, information was primarily shared and feedback received online through the Engage portal (<http://engage.calgary.ca/BRT>). People were able to participate online by providing comments and asking questions, completing feedback forms and taking quick polls. As alternate participation options, people were also invited to share their thoughts or ask questions by submitting a video via email or direct upload or by calling 311 to provide feedback or ask questions over the phone.

The City of Calgary hired Ipsos Public Affairs in early March to conduct a random phone survey. The survey sought information on what Calgarians wanted to talk about related to the BRT Program, and how they wanted to receive their information. The engagement process outlined in this Final Summary Report was based on the results from this survey as well as topics, questions, and feedback the project team received from earlier engagement sessions.

During the four weeks the BRT Engage portal pages were active, they received 16,219 views from 7,258 unique visitors and 975 unique comments and questions were submitted.

The engagement process was promoted through social media, direct postcard mail drops, subscribed stakeholder email, in-community promotion, councillor updates and traditional media.

Comments received indicated that roughly the same number of participants were either strongly for or against the program. Of the 975 comments, 165 were generally against the program and 153 were generally for the program. The remaining 657 comments were neutral in tone and shared comments, suggestions and questions about the program.

Across the BRT Program engagement pages, we heard comments and concerns from participants about the process, including the program budget and about engagement and communications. There was a desire for more transparency and communication with the public and business owners.

We heard concerns about ridership, specifically that there is not enough ridership to justify BRT. Some participants expressed the desire for The City of Calgary to focus on the Southwest Calgary Ring Road first, or instead of, the BRT. Participants shared concerns and questions about the effect the BRT Program would have on the community. Specifically we heard comments about noise, light, environmental and visual impacts.

Participants who were supportive of the project expressed a desire to speed up the process. Many expressed excitement for all projects under the program and shared a desire for it to be built right

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away. Those who expressed support for the program saw the engagement and communication efforts as sufficient.

We heard a number of specific suggestions, including the desire for High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes, wider lanes, recommendations on where to place new pedestrian overpasses and new park and rides, as well as the desire for additional stop locations.

A number of participants voiced the desire for the improvement of current and regular bus routes instead of the BRT Program. They asked for new regular bus routes, and increasing the current routes frequency and reliability. Participants shared frustration with the current system in getting them to the far south communities and expressed the desire for fewer transfers. Many shared the desire for maintaining current routes.

Some participants asked for improved pedestrian access to and from stations. They expressed a desire for good connections, quality sidewalks, safe crossings, pedestrian overpasses, better timed lights, and snow removal. A number liked the connection of different neighbourhoods and sectors, not just to downtown or the LRT. In the comments, a strong theme emerged for bike racks/storage at stations, racks on buses, as well as the importance of bike access to and from communities.

We heard a variety of comments and suggestions about what would make getting to and from BRT stations better. The most stated comment was the desire for future and current parking challenges to be addressed. No consensus emerged as to how, but better policing and monitoring of neighbouring communities as well as the creation of dedicated park and ride areas were among common suggestions.

Three design concepts that would inspire the look and feel of the BRT stations were presented, though each station will be adapted to suit the needs and limitations of a particular location. No clear preference emerged from these three options. Option two and three were tied in the quick poll and the second station design option received slightly more favourable comments in the written feedback.

In the feedback form, the majority of participants indicated shelter from the weather as a 'must have.' Closely tied for second were real-time travel information, well-lit stations and security features. Similarly, adequate protection from the weather, including wind, the cold and sun, was the most common response under the station features comments. This was followed by making the stations safe from crime and vandalism. A large number of participants also asked for bike storage at stations, with some asking for safe bike storage from both the elements and from thieves. Safety and security was shared by a number of participants as a concern, specifically crime at stations.

For a detailed breakdown of everything The City heard, a description of the project, the engagement approach, all of the verbatim comments and discussions please see the full report available on www.calgary.ca/swbrt.