

Country Hills Boulevard Widening Functional Planning Study

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the Standing Policy Committee on Transportation and Transit recommends that Council: Approve the recommendations and land acquisition requirement of the Country Hills Blvd Widening Functional Planning Study as summarized in the Executive Summary (included in Attachment 1).

HIGHLIGHTS

- Country Hills Boulevard is a significant roadway serving as a key east-west link in north Calgary. Currently most of Country Hills Boulevard between Harvest Hills Gate NE and Barlow Trail NE is a rural standard four-lane road lacking continuous sidewalks and connectivity to the 5A network for pedestrians and cyclists. With the anticipated growth in commercial and industrial activities along this corridor, travel activity in the area will become more congested over time. This study addresses future corridor needs in the study area across the CP Rail tracks, Nose Creek and Deerfoot Trail. The functional study also identifies land that is required to ensure its protection during future development plan approvals. A fly over video of the study area describing the proposed improvements is available at the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a-Q4QaRo2ms>.
- What does this mean to Calgarians?
 - An improved pathway system in the study area will provide continuous connections to the Rotary Mattamy Greenway and the Trans Canada Trail.
 - The improved corridor will have greater capacity to accommodate additional transit routes as needed with new continuous pathways on both north and south sides providing improved access for transit users.
 - An enhanced connection in north Calgary supports the local economy through more efficient movement of workers and goods.
 - Upgrading the corridor helps to achieve a balance of growth between established and greenfield communities within a growing industrial area.
 - Improves safety for people walking, cycling, taking transit, and driving.
- Why does it matter?

Influenced by feedback from Calgarians through our public engagement process, the recommendations help to provide convenient, affordable and efficient transportation choices along the corridor from Harvest Hills Gate NE to Barlow Trail NE to keep Calgarians moving and connected. The recommended plan identifies ways to accommodate transit, active modes of travel, vehicle traffic, goods movement, and safety improvements for the future corridor. A widening of Country Hills Boulevard provides additional capacity to accommodate increased traffic volumes as the surrounding industrial area develops.
- Traffic volumes of 18,000-33,000 vehicles per day (vpd) on parts of the corridor are expected to increase to 42,000-56,000 vpd due to planned growth over the next 20 years. A widening of Country Hills Boulevard provides additional capacity to accommodate increased traffic volumes as the surrounding industrial area develops. Connectivity and access to the 5A Network will be enhanced with new continuous pathways along both sides of Country Hills Boulevard.
- Recommended cost-effective implementation strategies will help meet demands as Calgary grows and mobility patterns evolve.

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- Strategic Alignment to Council's Citizen Priorities: A city that moves

DISCUSSION

Project process

The project commenced in 2019, beginning with reviewing existing conditions, completing In-service safety review, and collecting public input. The project team developed and evaluated options to provide continuous mobility connections along and across the corridor. In addition to the technical analysis, the project team used what we heard from Calgarians to develop the recommended plan. This is also supported through reviews and coordination with internal and external stakeholders (including relevant business owners and landowners. A support letter from a major local developer, Melcor Development Ltd., is provided in Attachment 2).

Bridge Planning Options

Options were developed and evaluated for each of the three existing bridge crossings over CP Rail, Nose Creek and Deerfoot Trail. Considerations included widening the bridges, constructing a new bridge, and building new separated pedestrian bridges on both sides of Country Hills Boulevard to support the proposed roadway lanes and pathways. It was recommended to build a new eastbound bridge over Deerfoot Trail and widen both the Nose Creek bridge and CP rail bridge. A new separated pedestrian bridge was recommended on the north side of Deerfoot Trail and CP rail bridge to provide continuous pathway connection.

Traffic Operational Improvement Options

A future traffic concern was identified for the movement from southbound Deerfoot Trail to southbound 14 Street NE. Three options explored included: a median to block this movement and force it to 11 Street NE, a median to block the movement with a roundabout on 14 Street NE on the north side of Country Hills Boulevard to accommodate this movement, and a dual signalized right turn at the Deerfoot Trail west ramp terminal intersection. Through stakeholder and public engagement, the dual signalized right turn was recommended for the balance of traffic operations and land impacts.

Recommended plans and project implementation

Stage 1 (short-term: within 10 years) widens eastbound Country Hills Boulevard throughout the entire corridor and provides three through lanes between Harvest Hills Gate NE and Barlow Trail NE. This is achieved through the widening and construction of all south bridges over Deerfoot Trail, Nose Creek, and CP Rail and the north bridge over CP Rail. The westbound roadway will be widened to include three lanes west of Deerfoot Trail and a sidewalk on the north side of the existing bridges.

Stage 2 (long-term: 20+ years) includes widening of the north bridge over Nose Creek and construction of two new separated pedestrian bridges over Deerfoot Trail and CP Rail to accommodate a new multi-use pathway on the north of Country Hills Boulevard, and widening the westbound travel lanes to 3 lanes from the west of Deerfoot Trail to the east of Deerfoot Trail.

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STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION (EXTERNAL)

- ☒ Public Engagement was undertaken
- ☐ Public Communication or Engagement was not required
- ☒ Public/Stakeholders were informed
- ☒ Stakeholder dialogue/relations were undertaken

The project followed an iterative public engagement process informed by the Transportation Corridor Study Policy, primarily focusing on digital and online communication and engagement tactics during the 2020/2021 COVID-19 pandemic. In-person engagement was conducted during the “Discover” phase in 2019. Overall, three phases of public engagement were conducted:

1. Discover (Nov. – Dec. 2019): Discover opportunities, challenges, priorities and evaluation criteria for the study area with stakeholders and the public.
2. Explore (Jun. – Jul. 2020): Explore design concepts and evaluation results with stakeholders and the public.
3. Reveal (Apr. – May 2021): Present recommended plan to stakeholders and the public.

The team engaged Northern Hills community residents and Calgarians at large as well as community associations, key landowners, and local business owners along the corridor. The key themes heard during the public engagement throughout the three phases included:

- Widen Country Hills Boulevard, including bridges over Deerfoot Trail, Nose creek and CP Rail, to reduce traffic congestion and improve traffic operations;
- Increase pathway connectivity and improve transit connectivity.

In addition, the team engaged Alberta Transportation, CP Rail, Parks and Alberta Ministry of Culture and Status of Women during the project process for review and approval. They agreed with the final recommendations and approved relevant reports, including Preliminary Natural Site Assessment and Historic Resources Statements of Justification.

The final recommendations were developed by incorporating and considering feedback from Calgarians and various stakeholders.

IMPLICATIONS

Social

Community traffic growth, facilitation of active modes and transit, as well as better connections to adjacent communities and commercial/business areas were key considerations of the study. Widening the corridor will improve safety and traffic operations, encourage use of different transportation modes, and improve community/business access in the area.

Environmental

The project improves the sustainability of multi-modal choices within the study area. This includes enhancing walking and cycling connections to, along, and across Country Hills Boulevard as well as enhancing comfort and access to transit stops or other high occupancy vehicles. Provision of a 3.5m multi-use pathway on both sides of the corridor encourages alternate modes of transportation by providing a high level of safety and comfort for pedestrians

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and cyclists connecting to the communities, business areas and the Rotary Mattamy Greenway and The Trans Canada Trail. The recommended widening increases capacity as well as reducing travel times and improving safety.

In addition, a Nose Creek Hydrotechnical Analysis was conducted and noted virtually no change to creek height due to the widening of the existing bridge structure. The Preliminary Natural Site Assessment discussed several provincial and federal regulatory requirements and identified the need to scope a level 3 Biophysical Impact Assessment in the future phase as the recommended plan requires expansion of the bridge over Nose Creek. A Phase I Environmental Site Assessment was completed to identify actual and potential sources of site contamination caused by current and/or historical land uses, and recommended that future design consultants should reassess them based on their proximity to excavation areas and the depths of the excavations, when finalized.

Economic

The project promotes economic vitality by improving reliability of travel time for goods movement and road users, stimulating investment, and encouraging business diversity through convenient business accesses. The recommended plan was developed to improve accesses to adjacent commercial properties and communities.

Service and Financial Implications

New capital funding request

The project is currently unfunded. The cost estimate for the Stage 1 (short-term) recommendations is \$100M. The Stage 2 (ultimate stage 20+ years) recommended plans are estimated at an additional \$25M (in 2021 dollars). The total cost is \$125M. Additional details are provided in Attachment 1. Project prioritization would be undertaken as part of a future corporate capital investment process.

RISK

The recommendations are informed by citizen feedback through a robust engagement and technical process. If the recommendations are not approved there is a potential risk of losing citizen trust and support. If the needed road right-of-way is not protected, the ultimate intersection design would not be feasible.

ATTACHMENT(S)

1. Country Hills Boulevard Widening Functional Planning Study Executive Summary
2. Melcor Development Ltd. Letter of Support

Department Circulation

General Manager/Director	Department	Approve/Consult/Inform
Doug Morgan	Transportation	Approve
Ryan Vanderputten	Transportation Planning	Approve