

CROWCHILD TRAIL CORRIDOR STUDY – PROJECT UPDATE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides an update on the project activities undertaken up to the date of this report.

Phase 1 of a six phase project plan to complete the Crowchild Trail Corridor Study was launched in February 2015. The outcome of Phase 1 was to develop an Engagement Plan that identified outreach tools and principles to be applied throughout the study, as well as an action plan that tied engagement with communities, stakeholders, and all Calgarians to each phase of the study. An Engagement Design Team (EDT) of 18 volunteers was formed with nine representatives of communities bordering Crowchild Trail (one seat assigned to the Crowchild Citizens Group) and nine citizens from across the city. Together the EDT represented diverse perspectives including neighbouring communities, the broader communities within Calgary, differing socio-demographics, and different types of Crowchild Trail users. The Engagement Plan was unanimously endorsed by the EDT, and received Administration approval May 25, 2015.

Phase 2 of the study was launched May 27, 2015 with the objective of developing and confirming project goals for the study based on three key principles: Preserving the integrity of bordering communities; improving travel along Crowchild Trail; and Improving travel across Crowchild Trail. Engagement throughout Phase 2 provided multiple opportunities for specific stakeholders including Community Associations, residents immediately bordering Crowchild Trail, business owners, large institutions, and Emergency Services, as well as the broader communities and the public at large to participate in the identification of issues and development of goals for the study. Phase 2 of the project is ongoing at the time of writing of this report.

Phase 2 is anticipated to be complete by the end of September, with the Phase 3 launch anticipated in October, 2015. The six phase project plan is scheduled to be complete by the end of 2016, with a final report to be presented to Council in early 2017.

ADMINISTRATION RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the SPC on Transportation and Transit recommends that Council:

1. Receive this report for information; and
2. Direct Administration to report back to the SPC on Transportation and Transit with an update on the Crowchild Trail Corridor Study no later than 2016 January.

RECOMMENDATION OF THE SPC ON TRANSPORTATION AND TRANSIT, DATED 2015 JULY 22:

That the Administration Recommendations contained in Report TT2015-0409 be approved.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL DIRECTION / POLICY

At the July 28, 2014 regular Council meeting, Council adopted the Transportation Corridor Study Policy as presented in report TT2014-0400. Council further directed Administration to restart the Crowchild Trail Corridor Study in Q3, 2014.

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BACKGROUND

The 1978 functional planning study set the vision for infrastructure required to support long term growth along the Crowchild Trail corridor. The 1978 plan recommended free-flow operations along Crowchild Trail between 17 Avenue SW and 24 Avenue NW, with segments of the plan implemented in the 1980's and 1990's. The focus of the 2011-2012 Crowchild Trail Corridor Study was to update the long term vision of the 1978 plan to align with the 2009 Calgary Transportation Plan (CTP) and Municipal Development Plan (MDP). Many of the guiding principles and assumptions of the 1978 plan were carried forward to the 2011-2012 study, including assumptions for corridor access and egress, free-flow operations along Crowchild Trail, design speed of Crowchild Trail, among others.

Several options for the long term plan for Crowchild Trail were developed in 2012, and presented to the public in a series of workshops and open houses. Options were developed to drive the discussion with the public, and be able to identify issues, concerns, and insights into the future of the corridor. Throughout the course of the open houses, Calgarians expressed a desire to be involved earlier in the corridor study process, where discussion about the corridor would drive the development of options. Following the open houses, Council filed a notice of motion stopping the study, as well as directed Administration to develop a new Transportation Corridor Study Policy to guide the corridor study process.

In July 2014, Council approved a new Policy on Transportation Corridor Studies and directed Administration to restart the Crowchild Trail Corridor Study. Administration re-engaged the 2012 project team in August 2014, and restarted the Crowchild Trail Corridor Study. The Study recognizes the importance of Crowchild Trail to the City's transportation system, to accommodate continued growth in the City, as well as to accommodate redevelopment of the inner-city and its need to support planning initiatives such as the Main Streets program. The primary objectives of the new study are to develop a plan that identifies short, medium, and long-term plans for the corridor that align with the 2009 MDP and CTP, that specifically ties engagement to the corridor planning process, and is consistent with the goals and principles of the Transportation Corridor Study Policy.

INVESTIGATION: ALTERNATIVES AND ANALYSIS

The City's project team met with internal stakeholders throughout fall 2014 and developed a six phase project plan, consistent with the Transportation Corridor Study Policy, to deliver the project. The six phase project plan received internal approval in December 2014. A detailed implementation plan for Phase 1 was developed in January with an expected outcome of a process that would tie engagement to the corridor planning process for Phases 2 through 6 of the study, listed below:

- Phase 1 - Engagement Process Design
- Phase 2 - Confirm Project Goals
- Phase 3 - Concept Identification
- Phase 4 - Concept Evaluation
- Phase 5 - Concept Selection & Recommendation
- Phase 6 - Reporting & Completion

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A summary of the goals and objectives of each phase is also included as Attachment 1. Phase 1 was launched in February 2015. An Engagement Design Team (EDT) of 18 volunteers was formed with nine representatives of communities bordering Crowchild Trail (one seat assigned to the Crowchild Citizens Group) and nine citizens from across the city. Participants were either nominated by bordering Community Associations or selected randomly through a city-wide application and recruitment process. Together the EDT represented diverse perspectives including neighbouring communities, the broader community of Calgary, differing socio-demographics and different types of Crowchild Trail users.

A series of three workshops was held in March 2015 with the EDT to develop an engagement plan that tied engagement to the corridor study process. The outcome was a set of tools to be implemented throughout the study to ensure Calgarians are provided with multiple opportunities to participate throughout the course of the study, to develop tools to maximize outreach and awareness of the new study, and to confirm report-back methods. Many of the recommendations, including an increased web presence with an “Online Project Library”; a discussion forum; use of sounding boards; as well as workshops; walking tours; door-to-door kits targeted to both residents and businesses bordering Crowchild Trail, and the broader communities and the city at large were implemented as part of the engagement plan.

As part of Phase 1, The City also launched a web survey in March 2015. Approximately 500 Calgarians completed an online questionnaire that sought input on topics of interest pertaining to Crowchild Trail as well as preferred methods for learning about opportunities to participate, providing input and learning about the results of the engagement.

Phase 2 of the study was launched in May 2015 with an objective to confirm project goals for the study based on three key principles:

- Preserving the integrity of bordering communities
- Improving travel along Crowchild Trail
- Improving travel across Crowchild Trail

Engagement throughout Phase 2 was intended to provide multiple opportunities for specific stakeholders including Community Associations, residents immediately bordering Crowchild Trail, business owners, large institutions, and Emergency Services, as well as the broader communities and the public at large to participate in the identification of issues and development of goals for the study. Targeted and broader community engagement opportunities included:

- Workshops for residents bordering the corridor and the public
- Workshops for business owners along Crowchild Trail
- Walking tours of the study area open to all stakeholders
- Bus tours of the corridor open to all stakeholders
- Online discussion forum and survey open to all stakeholders

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In June 2015, The City hosted three workshops targeting residents bordering Crowchild Trail, three workshops open to the public, three individual workshops for emergency response agencies, business owners and major institutions along Crowchild Trail, and three walking tours and two bus tours open to the public. A schedule of stakeholder meetings and workshops conducted as part of Phase 2 engagement for Crowchild Trail Corridor Study is included in Attachment 2. The City met with seven Community Associations (CA) that border Crowchild Trail and provided information on all engagement opportunities available. A “door-to-door kit” was developed at the recommendation of the EDT that included study information, with a survey questionnaire asking to identify goals and objectives for the study consistent with all other engagement methods. EDT participants and The City saw an opportunity to combine resources to help maximize outreach, where The City would provide the kits, and the CA’s would leverage their community volunteers to door-knock and hand-deliver the kits within their communities.

Alternative tools were also developed to engage citizens through The City of Calgary Mindmixer website, sounding boards and bold message signs. Mindmixer is an online platform for citizens to discuss community issues and provides an opportunity to work together with The City of Calgary in developing solutions. This site enables participation from a broader audience and allows members of the community to contribute from their own homes and on their own schedules. Sounding boards are physical wooden boards placed at locations accessible to pedestrians, cyclists and transit users. The boards contained project information and a questionnaire on project goals. Citizens can post their ideas for project goals on these boards. The City monitors the boards’ everyday and collects feedback. Bold signs were placed along the roadway to direct drivers to the project website for information on engagement opportunities.

Phase 2 is scheduled to be complete by the end of September, 2015. In conjunction with Phase 2, the study will also evaluate a “no-build” option for Crowchild Trail. This scenario will analyse the implications to bordering communities and Calgary’s transportation network if no changes are made to the Crowchild Trail corridor – effectively a “do nothing” option that will be used as a base against which all other options developed will be evaluated.

The City will move on to Phase 3 in October 2015 with an objective to develop ideas for short, medium and long-term concepts that align with the project goals developed in Phase 2. The City will work with all stakeholders to help prioritize project goals in the development of options for Crowchild Trail where goals may not align, while ensuring that the three key principles of the study are met. The concepts will be evaluated and shortlisted in Phase 4, with recommendations confirmed in Phase 5. The project report and lessons learned in implementing The City’s new Transportation Corridor Study Policy will be produced in Phase 6.

Stakeholder Engagement, Research and Communication

Stakeholder engagement is a key aspect of the new process designed for the Crowchild Trail Corridor Study. Active engagement will be accomplished in all six phases of the study.

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Several one-on-one meetings were held with internal stakeholders including Council, members of the Mayor's office and related City business units: Transportation Planning, Roads, Calgary Transit, Transportation Infrastructure and Local Area Planning and Implementation. Briefings with internal stakeholders will be held throughout the course of the study. Tours on Crowchild Trail corridor were arranged to see the corridor in action.

The engagement plan developed in Phase 1 was used to achieve targeted engagement and broad-based engagement in Phase 2. Opportunities for both in-person and online feedback are provided to all Calgarians. In total, 24 events were held to engage residents bordering Crowchild Trail, business owners, major institutions and general public from across Calgary between June 8 and June 28, 2015, with several additional events scheduled at the request of Community Associations. At the time of preparing the report, Administration was in the process of completing the planned Phase 2 engagement activities.

The workshop with major institutions was held June 11, 2015. In general terms, stakeholders acknowledged that operations along Crowchild Trail were of the utmost importance, with specific issues such as traffic congestion, access control and safety as highest concerns. Stakeholders also expressed interest in preserving access to these facilities. Several stakeholders also reaffirmed the importance of Crowchild Trail to the delivery of health care to Calgary and southern Alberta, where the corridor connects several health care facilities and institutions.

The invitation-only workshops with residents bordering Crowchild Trail were held June 13 -17, 2015. Throughout the course of Phase 1, the study team recognized that residents bordering Crowchild Trail had unique perspectives, concerns, and insights as it relates to Crowchild Trail. These residents were targeted by the study team in recognition and respect for their unique issues, and provided a forum to share their thoughts on the study. The residents identified several issues including operations of Crowchild Trail (particularly the Bow River crossing), access control, noise and safety as concerns, and expressed interests in preserving community integrity, access, aesthetics and community safety.

The workshop for business owners was held June 18, 2015. The main objective of this event was to provide project background, introduce the new process and understand the concerns of the business owners along Crowchild Trail. The walking and bus tours were hosted to provide an opportunity to see the study area in action and identify issues along with the participants.

In summary, several engagement tools were identified and implemented to help maximize outreach and opportunities to participate in the study to date, and offer input in identifying project goals. The outcome of the Phase 2 engagement will be a list of goals organized into three broad categories: preserving the integrity of bordering communities, improving travel along the corridor and improving travel across the corridor.

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Strategic Alignment

The Crowchild Trail Corridor Study aligns with the transportation goals identified in the 60-year Calgary Transportation Plan (CTP), MDP and the 2020 Sustainability Direction including:

- CTP Goal # 1: Align transportation planning and infrastructure investment with city and regional land use directions and implementation strategies.
- CTP Goal # 2: Promote safety for all transportation system users.
- CTP Goal # 5: Promote economic development by ensuring the efficient movement of workers and goods.
- CTP Policy 3.1: Maintain automobile, commercial goods and emergency vehicle mobility in Calgary while placing increased emphasis on sustainable modes of transportation (walking, cycling and transit).
- Sustainability Principle for Land Use and Mobility # 4: Provide a variety of transportation options.
- MDP Key Direction for Land Use and Mobility # 5: Increase mobility choices.

Social, Environmental, Economic (External)

This report has been reviewed for alignment with The City of Calgary's Triple Bottom Line (TBL) Policy Framework. The following implications were identified:

Social: The objective of the current phase of the Crowchild Trail Corridor Study is to identify project goals with communities, stakeholders, and the public. The outcome of the study will be recommendations intended to preserve the integrity of the bordering communities, while improving operations and access along and across the corridor for all travel modes.

Environmental: The objective of the current phase of the Crowchild Trail Corridor Study is to identify the goals to improve travel across Crowchild Trail study corridor while working with the communities and Calgarians at large. The outcome of the study will be recommendations to improve travel across Crowchild Trail Study Corridor through alternate modes of travel, and to preserve and protect the Bow River environment.

Economic (External): The City is working with businesses along Crowchild Trail to identify issues and concerns. The study will develop recommendations to preserve economic vitality and goods movement along the corridor while potentially improving the opportunities for land development and renewal.

Financial Capacity

Current and Future Operating Budget:

The funding for the Crowchild Trail Corridor Study is contained within Transportation Planning's Functional Studies budget under program 617-OB1. No changes to current or future operating budgets will occur as a result of this report.

Current and Future Capital Budget:

There are no immediate current capital budget impacts. The study will identify short, medium and long term upgrades to the corridor to meet CTP goals and objectives. These improvements will be prioritized with the next update of Investing In Mobility upon completion of the study.

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Risk Assessment

A key risk identified for this study is the level of trust of citizens with The City. A prevailing sense that The City's engagement efforts are only lip service to the public – that The City has made the decisions and is not truly asking for meaningful input. The legacy of the engagement program from the 2011-2012 study is a key contributing factor to this level of distrust of the process.

The identified risk will be mitigated by:

- Building trust by committing to and implementing an inclusive engagement process; and; regular reporting on engagement results and outcomes as to what was heard, how it was used, or explaining why input could not be incorporated.
- Building shared understanding of differing perspective by using techniques that encourage participant-to-participant interaction and invites shared problem-solving to balance those perspectives.

REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION(S):

The objective of the new six phase Crowchild Trail Corridor Study is to meaningfully engage citizens, provide project information and maintain clear, consistent and transparent communication. A January 2016 update is proposed to effectively inform stakeholders on the outcomes of the study as the study progresses through Phases 2 and 3.

ATTACHMENT(S)

1. Crowchild Trail Corridor Study Phases
2. Schedule of Phase 2 Stakeholder Meetings and Workshops