



April 24, 2019

Transportation & Transit Committee



7.1: Green Line LRT Public Gardens Scoping Report, TT2019-0429

At the beginning of the project, the Green Line was envisioned by the City and Calgarians alike as more than “just a commuter train”; a grand, city building project that brings together north and south, and creates a sense of place in communities along the whole line. It was envisioned as something that would help to bring vitality to aging main streets in the older neighbourhoods and help to build community in the newer ones, by creating new, community gathering spaces and improving streetscaping around and between the station areas.

In the past year or so, the city shaping part of the vision has been somewhat sidelined, and the placemaking concept of the project has appeared uncertain, with the lack of concrete funding for MainStreets. Therefore, we feel this vision of Green Line Gardens along the line helps to return some of the hope Calgarians had for the opportunities that could be created by this project.

With regard to the risk of integration versus separation of the Green Line Gardens sub-project and the main Green Line construction project, we agree with Administration that supplementary contract integration is indeed the way to go. We feel that a trusted, experienced, and Calgary-focused City partner, such as the Parks Foundation Calgary, is the ideal choice for this supplementary project. Their expertise and experience of project managing such a large project, touching many communities, as they did with the Rotary-Mattamy Greenway, and in leveraging funds to create the best parks Calgarians could ask for, would serve the project well.



We also agree that using the Public Art funding to achieve the Green Line Public Gardens project makes sense. Yet, mere gardens with some public art is not enough; we need to match the original vision of the Green Line and think bigger. Gardens can undeniably be art in themselves, and using the public art allocation as seed funding to create green, outdoor, public spaces that are not only beautiful community spaces, but also can help to turn the curve and create population-wide shifts in community building, intercultural and intergenerational socialization, mental health and wellbeing, decrease crime, and integrate sustainable, local enterprise employment opportunities, through harder-working public infrastructure, would be an even more inspiring model to aim for.

We do however urge caution in also using the Green Line landscaping budget in the construction of these gardens. By finding a mechanism whereby this funding can instead be used, at least in part, for the maintenance of the new, public gardens, this could reduce the overall project risk and avoid related property tax increases, or an effective decrease in the Calgary Parks maintenance budget (which is already stretched) for parks elsewhere in Calgary. We are also very aware of the risk that committing extra operational funding to a supplementary project creates at this time, before the next phase of the Green Line reaches adequate ridership numbers to be more operationally sustainable.

I understand that this scoping document was limited to the first phase of the line, yet the long-term vision of the full Green Line must be considered for this to be a successful and equitable project. The 2015 Southeast Calgary Green Line Public Art engagement was sorely lacking and as public art engagement, indeed full station area engagement, has yet to reach all the communities along the Green Line, we applaud the Informal Steering Committee's recommendation that engagement along the line be revisited, focusing the conversation on the garden theme. *(As a side note, any opportunity for a joint station area and public art engagement series along the more northerly part of the line, to include previously missed station areas, would be most welcome!)*



We would hope that this engagement is done in close partnership with the grassroots community organizations along the line, to ensure that the engagement is thorough, and at least as open and transparent as the initial Green Line engagements were, if not more. Hopefully, along with the Green Line Public Gardens project itself, this will further help to restore Calgarians' faith in the Public Art Program.

In conclusion, the Foundation loves the idea of this placemaking project for the Green Line and encourages Council to direct Administration to further investigate this plan, but also urges that Calgarians along the whole line are fully engaged in this process, to ensure an equitable and transparent process.

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