



July 7, 2014

Ric McIver, MLA, Calgary-Hays (PC)
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Dear Mr. McIver:

RE: WEST CALGARY RING ROAD (WCRR) - EFFECTS ON DISCOVERY RIDGE / REQUEST FOR CONSULTATION

I am writing you on behalf of the Discovery Ridge Community Association (DRCA). Discovery Ridge is a community of about 4300 residents in SW Calgary.

The sole access to Discovery Ridge is from Provincial Highway 8 and the community has approximately 3.5 kilometers of highway frontage. Our residents will be significantly affected by the proposed West Calgary Ring Road (WCRR) and there is naturally a high degree of community interest.

The DRCA is not opposed to the WCRR and we recognize the benefits of this major transportation investment to Calgarians and Albertans. We want to work with Alberta Transportation to make this a project we can all be proud of.

We are, however, concerned about the current design concept and seeming insensitivity to the effects on adjacent properties, residents, and communities including Discovery Ridge. The current design does not sufficiently take into account adjacent context. Minimal consultation by Alberta Transportation has occurred; we are told that there will be no further opportunity for real community input; and that the final design will be left to the successful P3 firm.

This is clearly unacceptable to DRCA - and seems to us to conflict with the Province's commitment to transparency and collaboration with its citizens.

The purpose of this letter is to therefore ask for your assistance in ensuring that proper contextually sensitive mitigation measures be included in the design of WCRR. We ask that Alberta Transportation be requested to consider the impacts of the project on adjacent properties; and to consult with DCRA and other stakeholders to reduce these impacts through the design, specifications, tendering and construction of the project.

The following are the critical points of discussion with Alberta Transportation:

Right of Way Width / Context Sensitive Design

The Transportation and Utility Corridor (TUC) is, we understand, at its narrowest point on average adjacent to Discovery Ridge compared to any other section around Calgary.

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DISCOVERY RIDGE

The current design concept does not take this into account and in fact splays the highway lanes as widely as possible to the edges of the Right of Way - and in the closest possible proximity to homes on either side. This ensures that noise, visual, light pollution and other adverse effects are maximized. This will also ensure controversy.

We have heard that this 'outside in' design is intended to: a) reserve land in the median for a potential, long term second ring road; and b) create the adverse effects on neighbours now so that future stages (internal highway lanes) will receive less opposition. The DCRA rejects both arguments and suggests an 'inside out' design.

Modern international highway standards require context-sensitive design and mitigation of adverse effects on adjoining properties. The current concept appears to be the same cross section as used in various parts of the Province where the TUC Right of Way is wider and less contextual considerations apply.

Frankly, we believe this is a more unique urban condition and the existing design should be updated to reflect current best practices; not simply an outdated, 'one size fits all' approach intended for rural areas.

Noise Effects

We understand that Alberta Transportation's noise mitigation standards are less than the City of Calgary's. Given the width of the Right of Way we would ask that at minimum, the City of Calgary noise attenuation standards apply to this section of WCRR past Discovery Ridge. Ideally this noise reduction would be accomplished by grading and berms, not just high sound walls. A critical look at alternative, quieter road materials should also be undertaken.

Visual and Landscape Effects

We have heard that Alberta Transportation does not consider visual and landscape effects nor provide landscaping 'other than grass'. This may be acceptable in rural areas, however the DCRA finds this inappropriate and outdated thinking for an urban area. We would ask that international and Canadian best practices and the City of Calgary's landscape standards be reflected in the design of the WCRR. The anticipated excess dirt balance should not only be retained along this stretch of the WCRR as a cost saving measure, but should also be strategically used for landscaping & interface design/treatment.

Lighting Effects

The rest of the Ring Road has street lighting. Although, we question the necessity, capital and operating costs of similar street lighting, and prefer minimal lighting, we would ask that for the section adjacent to Discovery Ridge, light pollution be minimized by use of full cut-off light fixtures at the lowest possible IES standard. We also ask that the location and design of highway signs take into account the lighting and visual effects on adjoining homes.

Environmental Effects

We understand that the existing 'constructed wetland' will be removed. This was built at considerable cost and treats the stormwater from a number of neighbourhoods before the purified water is discharged into the Elbow River above the Glenmore Reservoir. We ask that this environmental and recreational feature be relocated and rebuilt. We would also like to understand Alberta Transportation's position on environmental sustainability and how this will be applied to the WCRR.



Connectivity / Alternative Transportation Modes

Discovery Ridge residents currently only have one means of highway access (69th Street SW): which is also the community's sole connection to the City of Calgary road network. At present our residents can also walk and cycle along Highway 8; although increasing traffic has made this unpleasant and dangerous.

We ask that alternative connection (similar to the Calgary Greenway or Banff – Canmore Trail) be included and constructed as part of the WCRR. We also want assurances that cyclists and pedestrians on 69th Street are not forced to travel through an underground pipe (like the recent underpass at Nose Hill Drive).

In conclusion, the DCRA requests the following:

- 1) An in-person, on-site meeting with you to allow key members of our Ring Road Committee the opportunity to explain our unique concerns and proposed solution;
- 2) Your commitment to instruct Alberta Transportation staff, before the P3 RFP is issued in the fall of 2014, to adapt the P3 agreement and design/performance criteria to better address the points outlined in this letter, and to integrate real, meaningful consultation and design input;
- 3) Ensure that the consultation continues and is part of the next stage or the full P3 design process to be undertaken by the eventual P3 firm.

With an estimated budget of \$5 billion, this project should easily accommodate these few human-centered measures that are not only reasonable, but the standard in other provinces and countries. We look forward to your support in requiring that Alberta Transportation (and eventual P3 firm) to work in collaboration with the community to make this a project we can all be proud of.

Respectfully yours,
On behalf of the DRCA Board

Jacquie Hansen-Sydenham, President, DRCA
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cc: Ben Lee, Chair, Ring Road Committee, DRCA (blee@ibigroup.com / 403.471.5424)
DRCA Ring Road Committee Members
Julie Radke, Manager, SWRR Integration Project, City of Calgary (julie.sletmoen-radke@calgary.ca)
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