



May 15, 2016

The Honourable Amarjeet Sohi
Minister of Infrastructure and Communities
180 Kent Street
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Ottawa, Ontario K1P 0B6

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Dear Minister Sohi,

Re: Building Canada Infrastructure funding – Calgary West and SW Ring Road

I am writing you as President on behalf of the Discovery Ridge Community Association (DRCA) as well as the communities of Elbow Valley (EVRC) and Springbank Hill (SBHCA). Discovery Ridge, Springbank Hill and Elbow Valley represent three communities totalling about 16,100 residents in southwest Calgary, all fronting onto Alberta Highway 8.

We understand that you have before you, a request for Federal funding of a number of Calgary infrastructure projects, including the West and Southwest Calgary Ring Road (WCRR and SWCRR). Our collective communities will have about 8.1 kilometers of WCRR/Hwy 8 frontage. Our residents will be significantly affected by the Ring Road and there is naturally a high level of community concern.

Firstly, we want to be clear that we support the completion of a **single** Ring Road that the construction of the West and Southwest Calgary Ring Road segments would finally achieve. We also recognize the benefits of this major transportation investment. We certainly support and appreciate Federal support and investment in Calgary's infrastructure during these challenging economic times.

We are, however, very concerned about the design standards being set by Alberta Transportation ('AT') for the WCRR and SWCRR design-build consultant teams, as well as the overall scale of the road being accommodated in the form of a second Regional Ring Road that has no official status. This second Ring Road is likely not required for over 50 years, if ever.

The crux of the issue is that the current AT proposal call requires that the WCRR and SWCRR be designed to accommodate a sixteen lane highway compared to the eight lanes of all other segments of both the Calgary and Edmonton the Ring Roads. This expanded highway is to be squeezed into the narrowest road Right of Way of the entire Ring Road (between Springbank Hill and Discovery Ridge) and does not acknowledge the urban setting and the need for a differentiated design approach versus highways in rural settings. We understand that the current proposal call does not require the consultant teams to reflect these contextual factors; nor meet City of Calgary noise attenuation, light pollution and landscaping standards, even though this portion is within the city limits. Albeit, AT has verbally confirmed their commitment

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to ensure full cut-off lighting or its equivalent is implemented, along with constructing landscaped berms to better address sound and visual impacts, we respectfully remain cautiously optimistic that these elements will ultimately be implemented.

Finally there appears to be no requirement to consider sustainable development best practices nor alternative transportation modes, while implying that building more roads as our way out of congestion is the only solution. Today's transportation experts acknowledge there are other modes of travel and mobility solutions, and coupled with more integrated land use approaches within and adjacent to these large land masses consumed by road right of ways is a sustainable alternative. We note that the Federal Government does require such additional considerations: an excellent example being the recent Canmore to Banff bikeway along the Trans-Canada Highway.

This dramatically expanded highway standard for the WCRR and SWCRR was never, to our knowledge, the subject of true public consultation nor, we believe, properly brought to the attention of the Provincial Cabinet or the City of Calgary Council as a major taxpayer expenditure. This would be one of only a few highways of this scale in North America; and comes with an equally inflated price tag – an estimated \$5 Billion. We would like to request you examine how the scale of this highway project aligns with the following:

- The difficult fiscal challenges confronting all levels of government in Canada and the need for a more balanced and diversified infrastructure investment – ie. not just roads;
- The current climate change strategy and commitment to the environment;
- Changing mobility trends;
- Mixed land use trends, Transit Oriented Development, employment based communities and localization of commuters;

In short we suggest that this project has grown over time into an example of what professional engineers call 'scope creep' and lost sight of the greater global perspective and the social and environmental responsibility each and every government department should be accountable for. This project has already received some media attention. Please follow these links:

- <http://everydaytourist.ca/blog/2015/6/15/we-can-have-sw-ring-road-cancer-clinic-se-lrt-for-under-5b>
- <http://calgaryherald.com/news/politics/minister-says-hell-look-into-communities-concerns-over-southwest-ring-road-construction>

We suspect that, unless a new and clear political direction is provided, further media and public attention in the near future will reveal how this project will reflect poorly and tarnish all levels of government for what should otherwise be a positive news story.

We therefore request that you request clarification from the Government of Alberta and City of Calgary before the Government of Canada invests in this project.



To reiterate, we support a single Ring Road and welcome Federal investment in sustainable infrastructure. We continue, however, to champion a more progressive design approach resulting in a fiscally prudent, environmentally and context-sensitive design for an eight (not sixteen) lane WCRR and SWCRR. We would like to see an immediate and clear shift in political direction that better aligns with current environmental and climate change policy, and the need for a more balanced fiscal and/or infrastructure investment strategy. And, ultimately, to ensure these objectives are embodied in the P3 Contract(s) being finalized over the next few months. Time is of the essence at this point before this project becomes a source of disgrace for all three levels of governments.

We thank you in advance for your support and commitment towards building a more cost-effective and context sensitive Ring Road; one that will be more broadly embraced by the surrounding communities, Calgarians and Albertans alike.

Respectfully yours,

On behalf of the DRCA Board

On behalf of SBHCA

On behalf of EVRC

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