

The Ring Road is Coming!

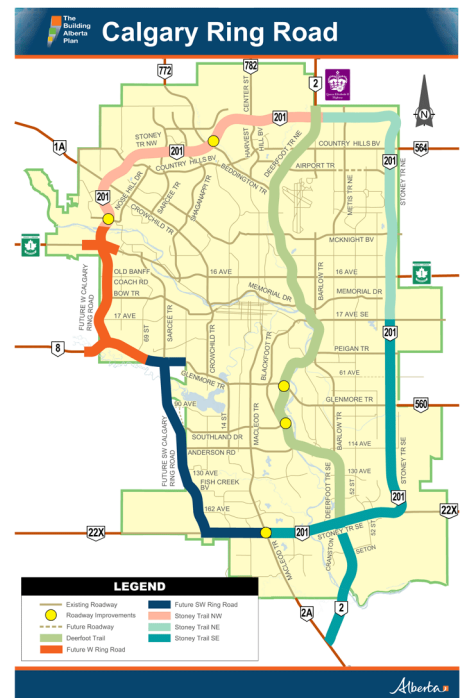
Dear Discovery Ridge Residents:

The Discovery Ridge Community Association's (DRCA) Ring Road Committee has been proactively working with Alberta Transportation (AT), our MLA and the Minister of Transportation, over the past several years, to mitigate the potential impacts of the imminent West Calgary Ring Road (WCRR) on our community. We are now at a critical stage and this article serves to provide our residents with a status update and important information about the segment of the Calgary Ring Road along our northern boundary.

Ring Road Timing & Status Update

As you may be aware, the land deal with the Tsuut'ina was ratified by the Federal Government earlier this year in May. Consequently, AT issued a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for P3 (Private Public Partnership) firms in June. From the RFQ, shortlisted firms will be sent Requests for Proposals (RFP) this September. It is anticipated the P3 partner will be selected mid next year (2016), with construction starting late 2016 and a completion date of 2020/2021. This applies to the Southwest Calgary Ring Road (SWCRR) or the segment of the Ring Road between the Sarcee/Glenmore Trail intersection and Spruce Meadows/Stoney Trail (22X).

The SWCRR (dark blue) is distinct from the WCRR (orange), which runs from the Sarcee/Glenmore Trail west, past the north boundary of our community and then north up to the Trans Canada Highway (TCH). The SWCRR and WCRR, when completed, will together finally complete Calgary's Ring Road.



Prior to February 2015, Construction of the SWCRR was projected to start late 2016, while the WCRR would start approximately one year later in 2017. However, in the first quarter of 2015, the then PC government announced a deferral to the WCRR for approximately 3 to 4 years due the financial impact on the Provincial budget created by the downturn in oil prices. This would push the construction start of the WCRR to 2020/2021. Nonetheless, the construction timing of the SWCRR remained unchanged.

With the completion of the SWCRR without the completion of the WCRR, AT and the City of Calgary felt that this would create a problematic increase in traffic on Highway 8 and Sarcee Trail without relief for 3 to 4 years. As a result, a segment of the WCRR (between Sarcee Trail and Lott Creek Road) has been extracted out from the WCRR project and added to the SWCRR project, slated to begin construction in 2016. **Therefore, the Calgary Ring Road segment adjacent to our community will not be deferred and will be part of the SWCRR project.**

The remaining portion of the WCRR, from Highway 8 to TCH is still in deferred status. However, we will need to keep track of the NDP budget to be presented later this year, as that may alter the timing again.

DRCA's Context Sensitive Design Approach

We need to acknowledge that the Transportation Utility Corridor (TUC) Right of Way for the future Calgary Ring Road was in place well before our community was developed. In addition, it is recognized that the Ring Road will improve the transportation network/access for our community, the City of Calgary and Southern Alberta. Therefore, the DRCA Ring Road committee's mandate is not premised on opposing the road itself. Notwithstanding, the Committee's mandate is focussed on ensuring the roadway is designed and constructed in the most socio-economic and environmentally sensitive manner.

Our Committee has been working with AT staff over the past few years to create the most context sensitive (not a one size fits all) design that includes, and is not limited to, the following considerations:

- Fiscally responsible design, especially in the current economic conditions;
- Accounting for changing lifestyle, demographic and mobility trends;
- Environmentally sensitive design & minimizing overall footprint/cost of roadway;
- Protecting/conserving as much existing vegetation and terrain as possible, especially close to our residents' north property line adjacent the TUC;
- Innovative softscaping and above average sound attenuation;
- Strategic visual screening wherever possible;
- Strict controls on light pollution (ie. Full cut off lighting);
- Intelligent construction staging;
- Consistent communication protocols with AT during all stages of design and construction through to post construction;
- Minimizing impacts on property value;
- Etc.

AT has been very receptive to our Committee's requests and has been working collaboratively with us to address the bulk of these considerations, where practical.

Regional Ring Road

However, our Committee's objectives are somewhat exacerbated by the addition of a Regional (second or outer) Ring Road that was introduced in 2006 and 2009. Due to the long term transportation planning outlook taken by AT, a double ring road is being conceptually planned adjacent to our northern boundary and down through the SWCRR leg to Spruce Meadows/Stoney Trail (22X). This implies that the TUC (Transportation Utility Corridor) adjacent to our community is being planned to potentially house a 14 to 16 lane highway in the future (see Figure 1 for ultimate design shown in 2006 and 2009 public information sessions), versus the 8 to 10 lane highway proposed under the opening day scenario of the current P3 contract being negotiated.

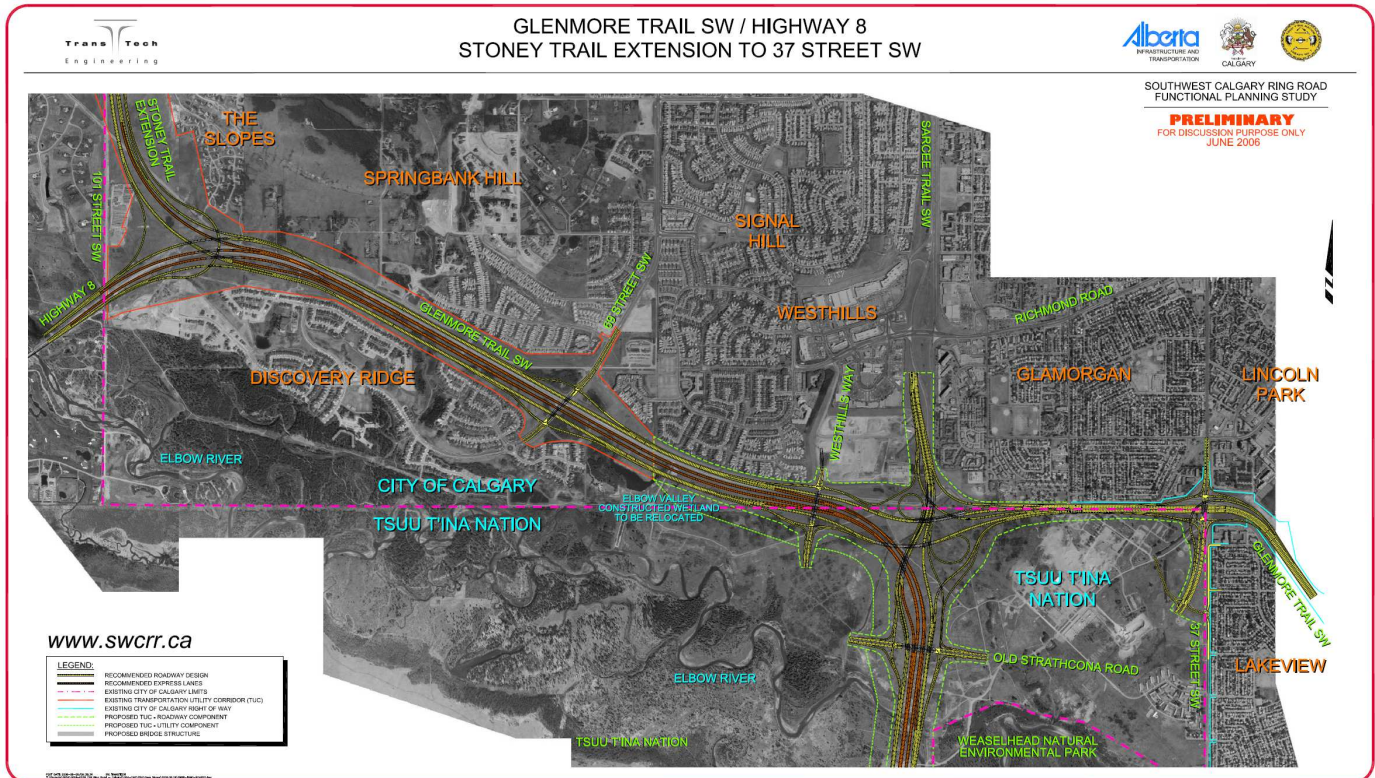


Figure 1: Proposed Ultimate Ring Road Concept (2006) – Source Alberta Transportation

Although, we appreciate AT's vision and respect their effort to accommodate growth in the long term, our Committee is extremely concerned about accommodating a second ring road in this location for a number of reasons as follows:

- We don't believe in the "build our way out of congestion problems" approach and are working to determine the appropriate and right size of road for our City;
- We are not convinced why a 14/16 lane highway is the right ultimate size and believe a 8/10 lane highway can adequately accommodate projected traffic for the next 50 years and beyond, especially given changing lifestyle priorities, demographics, technological and environmental trends;
- Investing shrinking tax dollars today on longer bridge decks/overpasses that we may never need presents a major fiscal challenge. It is estimated that shortening the bridge structures represents an approximate savings of \$452 million. This coupled with shortened ramps and a smaller overall roadway footprint, eliminating the provisions for a second ring road could result in an overall cost savings approaching \$1 billion;
- Does the City/Province that we want to live in contain a 14/16 lane wide highway; a form of highway that is unprecedented in western Canada and only found in a limited number of cities around the globe?;
- The TUC Right of Way is the narrowest adjacent to our community compared to anywhere else around the City, and this suggests that this is the least ideal place to accommodate a double ring road;

- Regardless of what was communicated in 2006/2009 during public information sessions (not true consultation/engagement), the TUC was first acquired over 30 years ago for a single ring road, not two.

These considerations currently underlie our committee's on-going discussions with AT, our MLA, Mike Ellis and the Minister of Transportation, Brian Mason.

Successful Efforts to Date

Notwithstanding, our committee has been able to strike some positive changes to the opening day roadway alignment and configuration.

For example, the previous opening day road alignment would have seen the eastbound lanes constructed very close to the Discovery Ridge's north boundary as shown below in Figure 2. Our committee had significant concerns with this and requested some changes, as well as asked for cross-sections so that we could better understand the conditions.



Figure 2: Previous Roadway Alignment/Configuration (up to November 2014 and what is still reflected on Alberta Government website as of writing of this article) – Source: Alberta Transportation

Since earlier this year, Alberta Transportation (AT) has adapted the opening day roadway alignment and configuration so that the eastbound lanes will now be constructed farther away from the north boundary of Discovery Ridge. AT has agreed to take an inside-out approach as opposed to the outside-

in approach. This is reflected by the blue eastbound roadway configuration shown in Figure 3. Figure 4 provides a sample of the cross section comparisons of the previous and revised alignments. We commend AT staff’s responsiveness on this change. This direction was confirmed in writing by the previous Minister of Transportation, Wayne Drysdale prior to the May 2015 election.

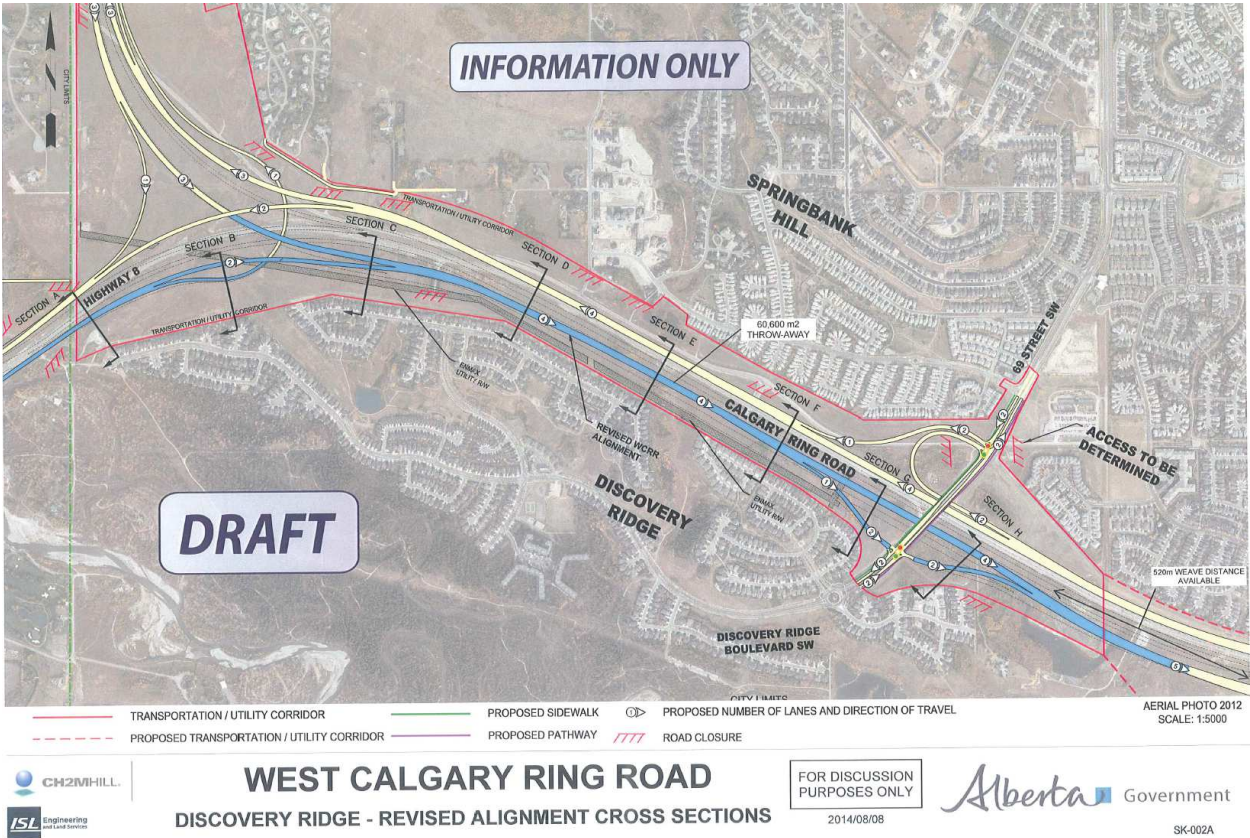


Figure 3: Alternative Alignment of Eastbound Lanes (show in blue) – Source: Alberta Transportation

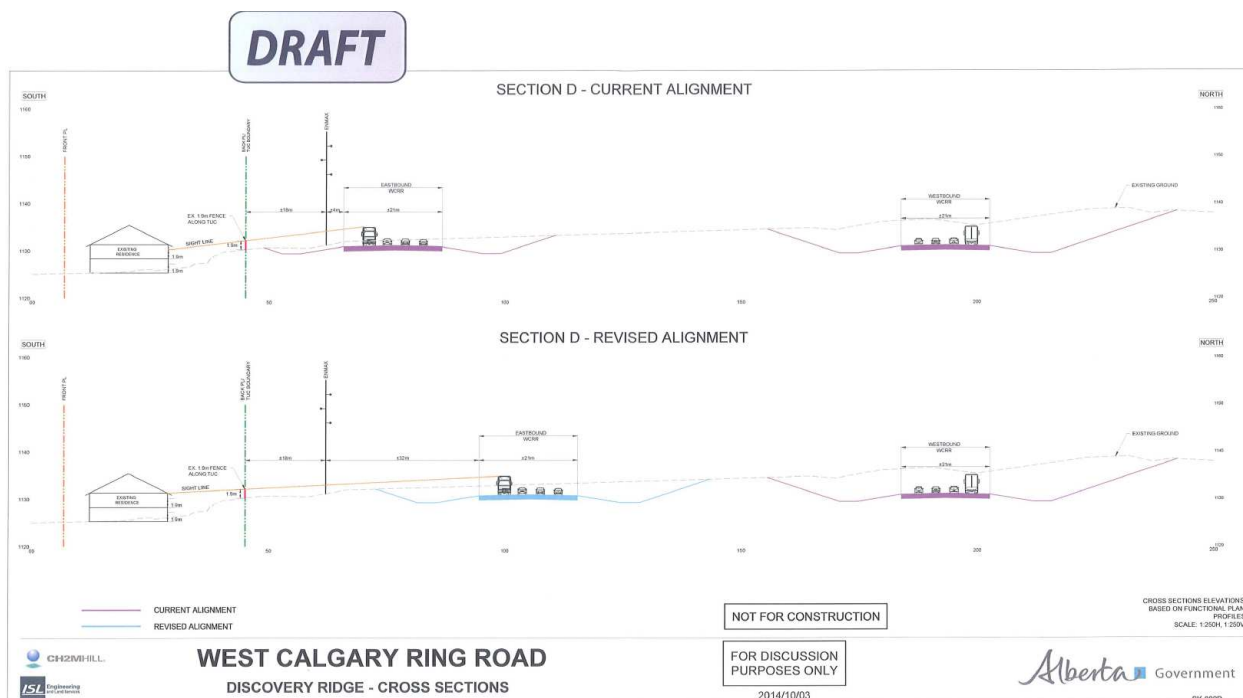


Figure 4: Sample of Cross-section illustrating difference in shifting opening day road alignment – Source: Alberta Transportation

Although, this is a positive step forward, our committee continued to request additional tightening of the overall roadway footprint as well as remove the second ring road from consideration. However, the Minister at the time was not supportive of these additional changes in the approach, and indicated his department still needed to protect the space to accommodate a Regional Ring Road and build the bridge decks today to accommodate that potential.

Since the May 2015 election, our committee has met with AT again to confirm the status and timing of the roadway design and configuration. As of late June 2015, AT provided our committee with an updated set of drawings that illustrates how a portion of the WCRR (for example the 69th Street SW interchange) will now be added to the SWCRR (as previously mentioned), targeted to proceed in late 2016. These plans continue to show the commitment to build the eastbound lanes farther away from our north property line, compared to the original plan or what is currently reflected on AT's website. Figure 5 and 6 is more current than what is reflected on AT's website and illustrates the current layout that will be part of the SWCRR construction project and timing. The remaining interchange at 101 Street SW, connecting the ring road north to the TCH will follow in 3 to 4 years, provided the new NDP government doesn't alter the plans later this year during their budget process.



Figure 5: West end of Roadway Proposed - Current

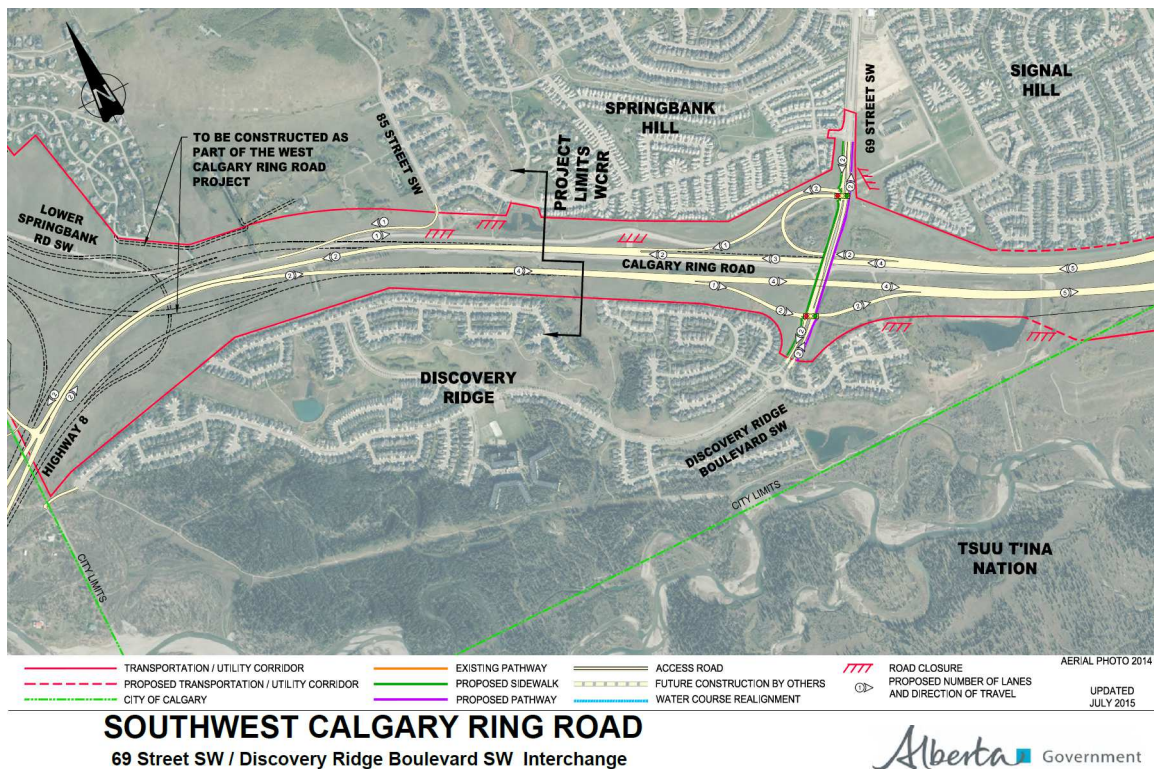


Figure 6: East end of Roadway Proposed - Current

Furthermore, we have also recently received updated cross section details from AT that conceptually illustrate the configuration. This reflects what AT promised us to date and what they are working towards within the P3 proposal process to construct. These drawings are provided as Figure 7.

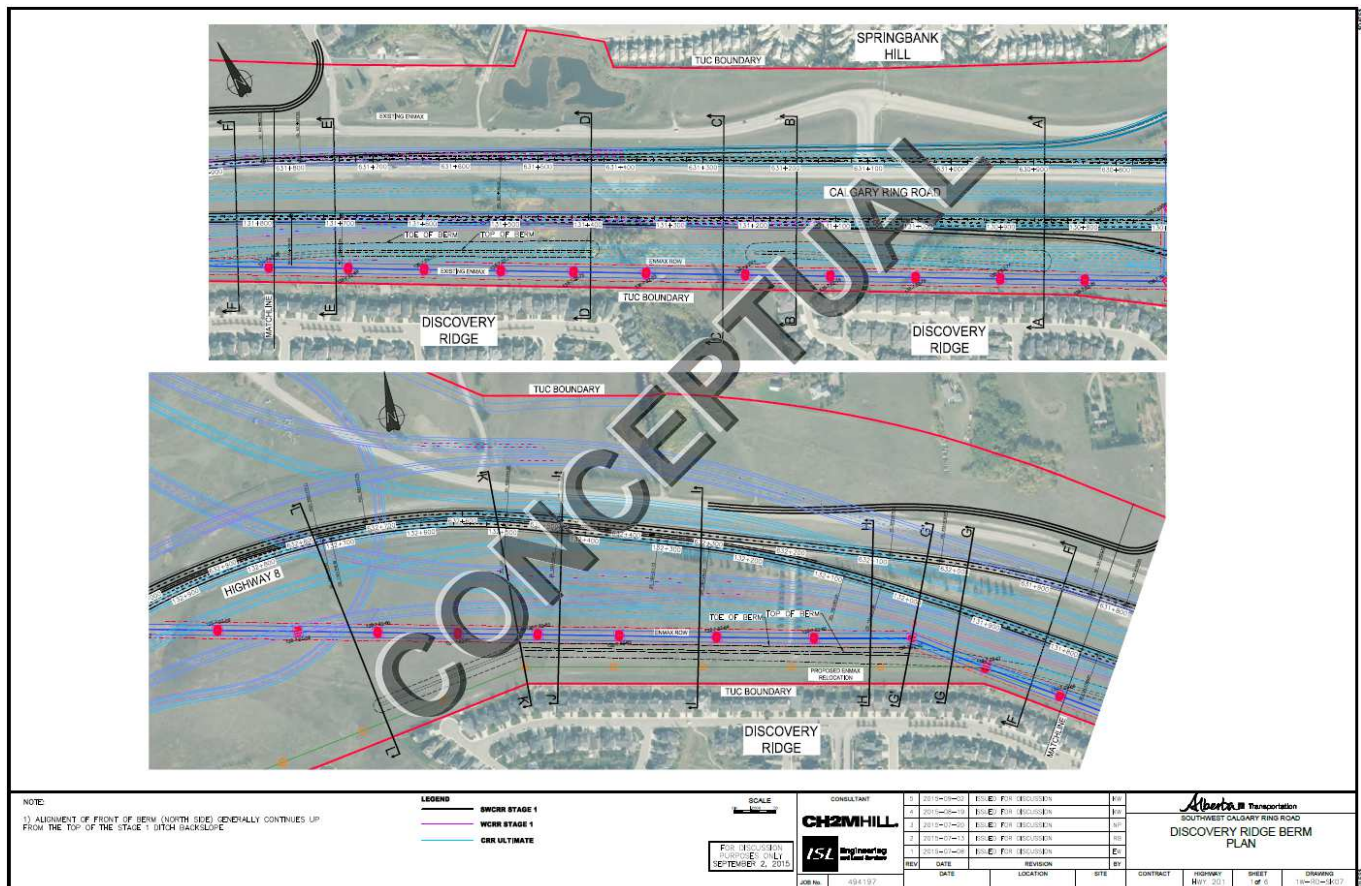


Figure 7: Current Conceptual Cross Section Profiles

Imbedded in this current layout are a number of items that we received verbal confirmation from AT staff, and that these would be included as requirements within the P3 contract. These include:

- Landscape berms (2.0 metres or higher) to be constructed wherever possible within and along the south boundary of the TUC (or north of Discovery Ridge's north boundary), where conflicts with the enmax overhead power line and the coulee do not impede the construction of the berm. At this time, please note that AT does not yet have permission to build a berm within the ENMAX right of way, but are hopeful ENMAX will agree to it;
- A minimum 10m no-disturbance zone adjacent to the north boundary within the TUC, so that existing vegetation can be preserved (especially important at the SE corner of the 69th Street SW interchange);

Move Forward Objectives

At this point in time, we are continuing to work with our MLA and plan to meet with the new Minister of Transportation (Brian Mason) to see if we can convince him to shift AT's direction away from accommodating a second/regional ring road and pursuing further value engineering to the overall roadway design and footprint. Ultimately, our committee is dedicated to continue the dialogue and

work with our elected Provincial officials and senior AT staff to ensure the most context sensitive functional design is executed and all mitigation measures agreed to are implemented by the P3 partner.

Upon reading this article, we kindly request that you take the short survey that we have posted on the DRCA website regarding the Ring Road.

www.discoveryridge.com/survey link here!!!

The DRCA Ring Road Committee and your Board will endeavour to keep our community up to date on the status of the West Calgary Ring Road. More information regarding the West Calgary Ring Road can be found on the Alberta Transportation website (link below). Please note, the information on the AT website has not yet been updated at the time of writing of this article.

<https://www.transportation.alberta.ca/w-crrgp.htm>