

October 16th, 2015

Honourable Brian Mason
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RE: WEST & SOUTHWEST CALGARY RING ROAD – MAJOR OPPORTUNITY

Dear Minister,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Discovery Ridge Community Association (DRCA) as a follow up to our letter of last month. Discovery Ridge residents will be significantly and directly affected by the West Calgary Ring Road (WCRR) which abuts our community; and indirectly affected by the Southwest Calgary Ring Road (SWCRR). There is naturally a very high degree of community scrutiny, discussion and concern.

I want to again re-iterate that the DCRA is not opposed to the Ring Road. We have been having constructive discussions with Alberta Transportation on how to improve the design and reduce the impacts on adjoining neighbours and our community. We appreciate AT's cooperation and hope for design standards (e.g. pedestrian, noise, light pollution, landscaping standards) that respect the unique context of this segment of the WCRR.

The purpose of this letter, however, is to bring to your attention a much larger opportunity to dramatically reduce the costs and adverse environmental effects of the WCRR (and SWCRR), while still achieving the objectives and benefits of the Calgary Ring road initiative.

The key issue – and opportunity – is whether the WCRR (and SWCRR) should be designed as a Calgary Ring Road – or a Calgary Ring Road *plus* a long term Regional Ring Road. In other words a 'single' ring road (like the Edmonton Ring Road and the existing Stoney Trail Calgary ring road segments); or a long term 'double' ring road. Obviously, there is a massive cost difference between the two options. In addition the double ring road option will result in much greater environmental effects.

We want to work with Alberta Transportation (AT) to make this a project we can all be proud of from an environmental, social and economic standpoint. We feel compelled to highlight the benefits gained from eliminating the Regional or Second Ring Road from the design. This would:

- **Save the Province approximately \$1 Billion.** *It is estimated that shortening the bridge structures in itself represents an approximate savings of \$400-500 million. This, coupled with reduced grading, shortened ramps and a smaller overall roadway footprint would result in massive overall cost savings.*
- **Result in a more sustainable design** and create more space for mitigation of noise and environmental effects (e.g. berms and landscaping); alternate transportation modes (e.g. a bikeway similar to the Calgary Greenway) and utilities (e.g. shifting the AltaLink lines from Griffith Woods) that the TUC was always intended to accommodate;
- **Allow the entire West Calgary Ring Road to proceed now** (concurrently with the South West Ring Road) instead of being delayed, re-tendered and completed in stages at greater cost.
- **Allow the Province to invest in other primary services** such as Health Care and Education **and/or** alternative modes of transportation such as bikeways, busways, LRT, commuter and high speed rail.

The current proposal is to fit the equivalent of two ring roads into the WCRR (and SWCRR), that is, design for 16 or more lanes of traffic. Only one of these (4 to 8 lanes) is the Calgary Ring Road and the balance is a proposed, longer-term (50 to 100 year) Regional Ring Road. The result is a design with a massive median to allow for a second, potential long-term future Regional Ring Road.

The result is therefore unlike any other segments of the existing Calgary and Edmonton ring roads. The closest analogy is the cross-section of the QE2 Highway through Leduc, as illustrated in the photo at right, which has a completely different land use context.

The double-ring road concept therefore pushes the Calgary Ring Road travel lanes to the edges of the Transportation and Utility Corridor (TUC) Right of Way close to existing homes. The WCRR Right of Way (cross section) is one of the narrowest TUC Right of Ways (cross-sections) in the entire Ring Road. You can understand why our residents are concerned.



We believe that this is not aligned with future City of Calgary transportation planning nor reflects current thinking in multi-modal transportation planning. We suspect that a second Ring Road concept may also conflict with the new Government's position on sustainable development. Finally we do not believe that there has ever been public consultation on a proposed second Regional Ring Road – only for the Calgary Ring Road. Again, DCRA supports the Calgary ring road concept but has serious concerns about designing this final segment to accommodate a double ring road that may never happen.

The photo also illustrates how the double ring road concept results in much greater costs in terms of bridges, interchanges, earthworks and servicing – everything is 'supersized' at significant cost now - in order to accommodate every potential future option into the distant future. While planning ahead is admirable, we suggest that the cost-benefit for a WCRR double ring road is highly questionable. It creates a major public cost burden now (at a time of economic uncertainty) for additional infrastructure that we may never need.

AT staff has been working collaboratively with us and we greatly appreciate the positive improvements to the design that have been made so far. We respect AT staff's long term transportation planning approach and commitment to the mandate established by the previous Government. We respectfully suggest, however, that an alternative policy approach and direction should now be considered. This need not delay the project.

Therefore, we urgently request that you, as Minister of Transportation, instruct Alberta Transportation to develop a new approach that would eliminate or defer the 'double ring road' concept; and further value-engineer the WCRR and SWCRR design to achieve a more fiscally prudent, sustainable and context-sensitive design solution. We would further request that this new outcome is reflected in the relevant P3 Contract(s) being negotiated by AT over the next several months.

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

We truly believe a renewed focus on the Calgary Ring Road itself and eliminating the double ring road concept is in Alberta's best interests. We look forward to working with your department on these refinements.

Respectfully yours,
On behalf of the DRCA Board



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