

September 16th, 2015

Honourable Brian Mason, MLA-Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, Minister of Transportation & Infrastructure

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RE: WEST CALGARY RING ROAD (WCRR) – VALUE ENGINEERING, CONTEXT SENSITIVE DESIGN & SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Dear Mr. Mason:

I am writing you on behalf of the Discovery Ridge Community Association (DRCA). Discovery Ridge is a community of about 4500 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 scrutiny over this project.

The DRCA is not opposed to the WCRR and we recognize the benefits of this major transportation investment to Calgarians and Albertans. However, we want to work with Alberta Transportation to make this a project we can all be proud of from an environmental, social and economic standpoint.

We have been working with Alberta Transportation (AT) staff over the past year to address key context sensitive design considerations that better address the impacts on adjacent properties, residents, and communities including Discovery Ridge; while not compromising the intent of the road. For your reference, I have attached the previous correspondence we have had with AT staff, as well as your predecessor.

We want to thank AT staff to date for working collaboratively with us. Our dialogue leading up to this spring with AT staff has solidified a commitment to construct the inner eastbound lanes first, given the current functional design. This effectively doubles the distance of the opening day roadways away from the northern boundary of our community compared to the initial plans. It is our understanding that this is what is currently reflected in the P3 RFP documents. This represents a significant step forward.

However, DRCA still has a major fundamental concern regarding the WCRR and SWCRR, and with all due respect to AT staff, we respectfully request that you alter the approach to the WCRR and SWCRR. The current functional design for this stretch of the Ring Road contains provisions and infrastructure spending to accommodate a future second (or outer/regional) ring road that may never be needed. This presents many concerns, not only a difference in footprint between an 8/10 lane highway versus 14/16 lanes. The right of way for the portion of the west leg of the ring road abutting Discovery Ridge is the

narrowest right of way segment around the entire City of Calgary, and that alone makes it the least appropriate location to contain a second ring road. Furthermore, please consider the following:

- 1. The public, including the adjoining communities, were never advised in advance that a second ring road was planned until the very latter stages of the process and the public was never really afforded a true engagement mechanism to respond to this change or add-on. In our opinion, this is a significant departure, in principle, compared to the single ring road/transportation utility corridor (TUC) right of way that was communicated/advertised to the public and acquired back in the 80's by taxpayer dollars. Between the late 1990's and 2006, Discovery Ridge residents moved in recognizing that there would be one ring road, but never two. The public was only **informed** of the possibility in 2006 and 2009 and there was never any true consultation on the matter;*
- 2. The present opening day ring road design, with four lanes in each direction, has sufficient capacity to carry the projected traffic for at least the next fifty years. It makes no sense to spend scarce taxpayer dollars in 2015 for a roadway which might not be needed until 2065 or even further into the future;*
- 3. Traffic projections for the future outer ring road do not take into account many of the technological and societal changes which we are witnessing today such as: Driverless cars, rapid transit, shifting demand away from fossil fuels, the City's focus on TOD and more complete communities, lower vehicle ownership/driver's license rates in younger generation, advances in the use of drones for package delivery, etc.;*
- 4. It is environmentally irresponsible to consider a highway with eight lanes in each direction in Alberta; this scale of road is unprecedented with very few equivalents around the globe and it is doubtful if the City of Calgary wants to emulate the few City's where these massive roadways exist. In the current era of climate change awareness and shifting lifestyle priorities, coupled with the current economic challenges facing Alberta, spending hard earned taxpayer dollars on the proliferation of roadways we may never need is out of line with the current thoughtful, progressive trends;*
- 5. The elimination of the second ring road from the TUC within the current design would allow the road to exist on a much smaller roadway footprint, create more clearance between the road and the residential area to be more similar to the average distance around most of the TUC, offer more space for landscaping, utilities (such as the AltaLink lines in Griffith Woods) and sound attenuation; and most importantly a significantly reduced construction cost which could allow Alberta Transportation to proceed with the full extent of the West Calgary Ring Road concurrently with the South West Ring Road, instead of just to the west of the 69th Street SW interchange while delaying the remainder (to Trans Canada Highway) for another 3 to 4 years.*

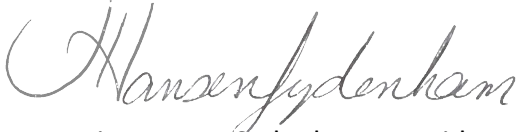
At this stage, we respectfully request that you, the Minister of Transportation, authorize or instruct Alberta Transportation to implement this approach and further value engineer the WCRR design to achieve a more fiscally prudent and context sensitive design solution; and ensure this new outcome is reflected in the relevant P3 Contract(s).

Further to this, we seek continued collaborative dialogue with AT staff during the P3 process, as well as during the construction stage, to ensure we have the opportunity to review and contribute a number of technical items such as containment of light pollution, visual impact, sound attenuation, environmental impacts, construction staging & management, and minimizing the roadway footprint/cross section and

disturbance area. There is more work to do and we therefore seek your continued support for our on-going dialogue with AT staff.

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. We strongly believe that when a community driven solution is properly executed, it will serve to create greater community value and trust in the Provincial government. We look forward to working with your department on these innovative refinements.

Respectfully yours,
On behalf of the DRCA Board



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cc: DRCA Ring Road Committee Members
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