



Metro Line NW LRT Extension Project Public Engagement Report: What We Heard & What We Did 2017-2018

December 21, 2018

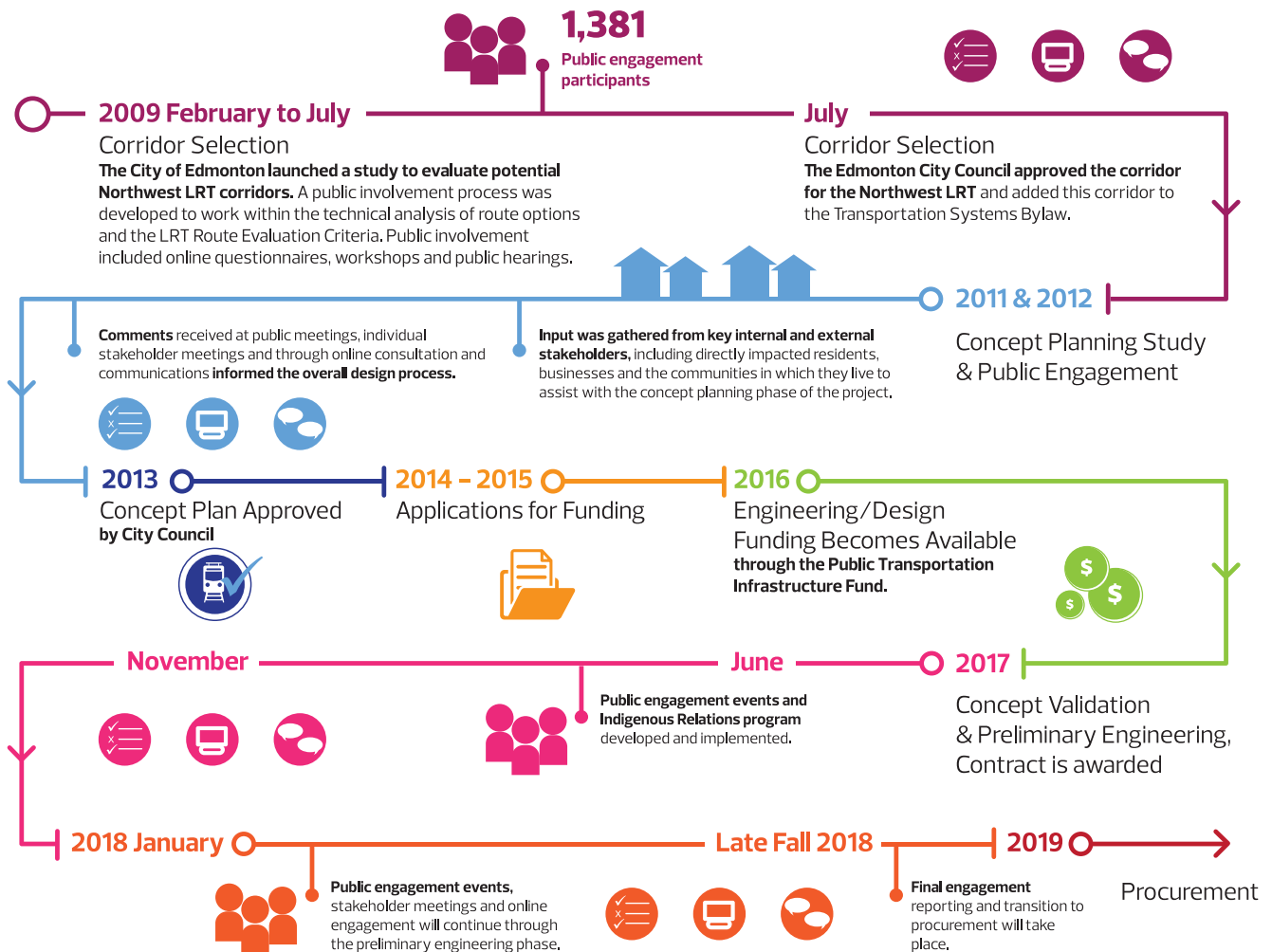
SHARE YOUR VOICE
SHAPE OUR CITY

Edmonton

Project Background

In 2013, City Council approved the proposed Northwest LRT Concept Plan. The Plan, aligning with Edmonton's Transportation Master Plan, would see Metro Line NW extend from a new station at NAIT, north through Blatchford to connect to key activity centres along 113A Street and then west along 153 Avenue to Campbell Road. This extension would occur in two phases.

The following graphic illustrates the timeline of the project, from corridor selection in 2009 looking forward to procurement-ready status in 2019.



Edmonton's current LRT system can best be described as a "suburban" system. The [LRT Network Plan](#) calls for a change in approach to an "urban" LRT system. It is designed to fit into neighbourhoods and promote development all while balancing mobility needs with traffic flow. The urban approach improves connections between the LRT and city life.

An urban LRT system means:

- + Building smaller scale stations that are spaced closer together
- + Providing better links to a greater number of destinations, with more direct transit, pedestrian and cyclist connections
- + Maximizing openness of space to create a safe environment
- + Reducing speeds in congested areas to support safe pedestrian-oriented communities
- + Investing in landscaping, streetscaping, and architectural features to improve visual appeal

The Metro Line NW LRT Extension aligns with these urban LRT design principles.

Engagement background and approach

The Public Engagement spectrum is a tool that explains the four roles the public can play when they participate in City of Edmonton Public Engagement activities. As you move across the spectrum, there is an increasing level of public influence and commitment from the City.

The City of Edmonton and the Metro North Partners (MNP) – design consultants for the project – conducted three stages of public engagement from May 2017 to September 2018 for the Concept Validation phase of the Metro Line NW LRT Extension project. In all stages of engagement, the public was asked to ADVISE the City on various aspects of the project.

Straight from the community:



As a senior, not having to drive means less accidents, injuries, hospital bills etc. not to speak of outrageous annual insurance and auto maintenance bills.



The City of Edmonton's Public Engagement Spectrum

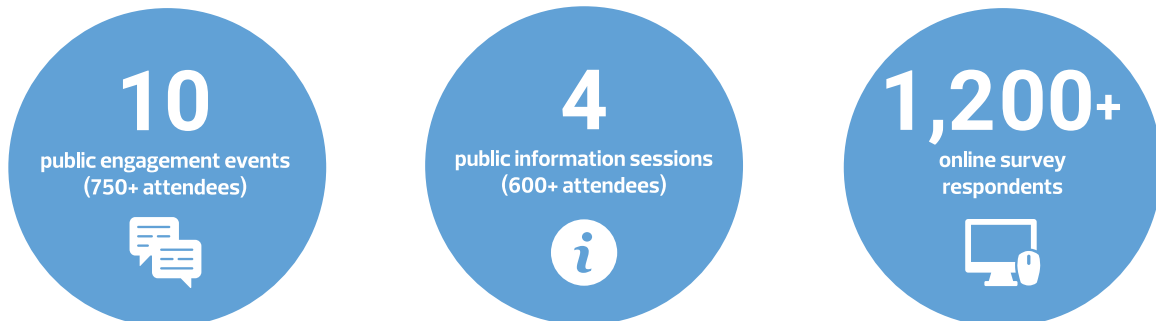
Increasing influence of the public



- + Stage 1: Initial visioning and design
- + Stage 2: Input on design elements
- + Stage 3: Feedback on recommendations

The first stage of engagement – on the Concept Validation phase – was intended to reintroduce the extension project to the community, and to obtain input to help finalize the concept design.

This engagement provided the project team with an understanding of the public's specific concerns and opinions related to the alignment, LRT operations, and the role of LRT in contributing to the sustainability and livability of communities. These determinations helped to focus engagement efforts for the second stage of the engagement process.



In January 2018, public engagement sessions were held with stakeholders and residents along the approved Metro Line NW LRT alignment. Attracting over 350 attendees over three events, these public engagement sessions focused on the Phase 1 concept plan. Phase 1 of the project includes an initial extension of the existing line into Blatchford. Participants were asked to advise on the following:

- + Preferences for grade separation at key locations
- + Level of support for the use of Express Bus Service on an interim basis until LRT completion, and preferred form of implementation
- + Any issues or concerns associated with placement of the alignment, such as traffic movements, pedestrian/cycling realm, noise/visual impacts, access to transit service, potential impacts on surrounding land uses, etc.
- + Overall level of interest and support for the project at this stage

In the weeks that followed the Metro Line NW LRT Extension January 2018 public engagement sessions, the feedback collected was compiled and evaluated. This information was shared in the report that was presented to City Council on March 21, 2018.

For the third stage of engagement, the project team developed a survey that shared information on the design options for intersections that will change as a result of the Metro Line NW LRT Extension. The project team's recommended option was identified for each intersection. The survey invited the public to share their preferred design option for each intersection along with reasons for their preference. The survey was open to the public from July 10 – August 17, with 1,203 respondents in total. Respondents were shown renderings of two options per intersection: the City's recommended option, and an alternative. The advantages and disadvantages of each option – typically, one grade-separated and one at-grade – were listed. They were then asked which option they preferred, and were invited to provide additional comments (such as the rationale for their preference). A report summarizing the outcomes of this engagement was published in November 2018.



Straight from the community:

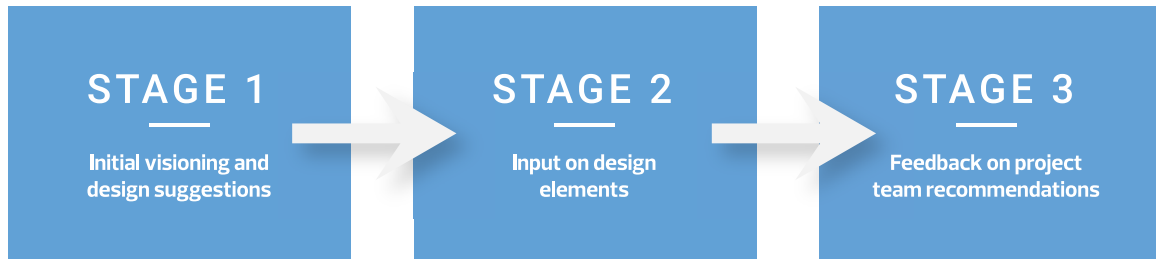


The bridge option is more economical. Although it does have a visual impact it can be something that becomes iconic to the north side of Edmonton. Also it overcomes the huge artificial barrier between north and south created by Yellowhead Trail and CN yard.



Summary of engagement findings (What We Heard)

Engagement for the Metro Line NW LRT Extension project can be divided loosely into three stages:



Although the scope, scale and specific topics of engagement in each stage varied, a number of themes were very consistent across all stages. Traffic, efficient LRT operations, safety, and access to stations were four of the most prominent themes throughout the entire engagement process. All of these themes were closely related to overall support for some form of grade separation. Grade separation, particularly at stations and major intersections, was viewed as a preferred solution to mitigate effects of LRT operations on traffic congestion, to ensure that LRT was able to operate efficiently, and to ensure the safety of pedestrians, LRT users, and motorists. Some concerns were raised regarding the impacts of grade separation of stations on accessibility for people with mobility issues, though many individuals suggested that this could be mitigated through accessible design (e.g. multiple elevators or escalators).

The input and feedback received helped to inform the project team's approach to engagement and the design of the alignment. For the most part, public input aligned with project team priorities and recommendations, and the vision for urban LRT.

The below infographic overviews the engagement process between May 2017 and September 2018, and the key themes that emerged from it. The infographic reflects what was asked by the project team, what was heard from the public, and how that input was considered by the project team and in what ways it shaped the project.

Engagement Track

What We Asked

Please share your thoughts on what is important for the project team to consider about the design of the Metro Line NW LRT Extension

What We Heard

- Traffic congestion
- Parking options
- LRT speed and efficiency
- Access to stations – multi-modal connections and wayfinding
- Safety of users and pedestrians
- Edmonton Transit Service connections



What We Heard:

- Ensure **access to stations**, multi-modal connections and wayfinding
- Yellowhead Trail & CN Rail Walker Yard bridge **crossing** design should avoid proximity to 113A St. homes
- Ensure sufficient station **parking** and maintain residential parking
- Prioritize pedestrian and LRT user **safety**
- Ensure **LRT speed** and efficiency
- Prioritize safety and accessibility in **station design** over look
- Manage **traffic** congestion and signalling challenges
- Provide **express bus** service until LRT completion

What We Did

- Validated design options for grade separation
- Suggestions that did not support the vision for urban, pedestrian-friendly LRT were not applied
- Validated design elements to support safety and access
- Increased speed in one northern area of the line

What We Asked

Please provide your feedback on the design options for the Metro Line NW LRT Extension

What We Did

- Validated design options for grade separation
- Suggestions that did not support the vision for urban, pedestrian-friendly LRT were not applied

What We Asked

Please provide feedback on the project team's design recommendations for City Council

What We Heard

In favour of at-grade:

- **Lower-cost** option
- Better, easier or broader **access**
- **Fewer traffic impacts** at some intersections

What We Heard

In favour of grade separation:

- **Minimal traffic** impacts
- Improved **LRT service**
- **Safety** and security

What We Did

- Validated recommendations to council for grade separation in some areas
- Suggestions that did not support the vision for urban, pedestrian-friendly LRT were not applied

What We Heard

Preference for tunnel option

- Positive **area aesthetics**
- Fewer negative **effects on community**
- Faster and/or easier to **build and maintain**

What We Heard

Supportive of bridge recommendation

- Preferred connection option for **pedestrians and cyclists**
- **Lowest-cost** option
- Positive design **aesthetics**
- Safer and/or easier to **build and maintain**

LEGEND

Stage 1
(May - July 2017)

Stage 2
(January 2018)

Stage 3
(July - September 2018)

Advise

What We Did

Much of the public input heard by the project team aligned with the vision and principles of urban LRT. Input from the first stage of engagement was used by the project team to identify and validate initial design elements and values of the community to be incorporated into the extension. The consistent public support for some form of grade separation aligned with many of the project team's recommendations for station design and alignment.

The inclusion of park and rides in station design does not align with the principles of urban LRT, though in response to public feedback the project team is exploring ways to maintain existing area parking where possible.

In response to public support for the use of interim express bus service until the completion of construction, the project team explored the possibility of implementing a bus rapid transit program for the area. For reasons of high cost and operational difficulties, the project team recommended that it not be implemented – a recommendation that was approved by City Council.

The concern of some members of the public regarding the impact of noise from LRT operations was addressed in the north-south segment of the corridor by the project team recommending that it not have gates or bells installed.

Public support for the bridge option over the tunnel option at the Yellowhead Trail and CN Rail Walker Yard crossing validated the project team's recommendation. Following up on the outcomes of the Stage 2 engagement that supported the bridge design avoiding close proximity to homes on 113A Street, the project team adjusted the design to take more land from Lauderdale Park.

Next Steps

The project team's recommendations will be provided to City Council at a non-statutory public hearing on January 22, 2019. City Council will make the final decision whether or not to approve these recommendations at the hearing.

Funding from the Government of Alberta for Phase 1 of the extension (NAIT to Blatchford) has been secured, solidifying the City's long-term vision to extend LRT to the northwest of Edmonton. These funds will be used towards the procurement and construction of Phase 1 of the Metro Line NW LRT. Once additional funding is secured, it is anticipated that it would take about nine months to select a contractor and another two and a half years to complete construction.

A blue-tinted photograph of a modern transit station. In the foreground, a person is sitting on a bench. In the background, a train is stopped at the platform, and several other people are standing or walking. The scene is captured in a high-angle, slightly blurred perspective.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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