

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS/RECOMMENDATIONS

PROPONENT: City of Winnipeg
PROPOSAL NAME: Southwest Rapid Transit Corridor – Stage 2
CLASS OF DEVELOPMENT: 2
TYPE OF DEVELOPMENT: Two lane road at new location
CLIENT FILE NO.: 5709.00

OVERVIEW:

The Environment Act Proposal for the project was dated April 17, 2014 and was received by the Environmental Approvals Branch on April 25, 2014. The advertisement of the Proposal read as follows:

“A proposal has been filed by The City of Winnipeg for Stage 2 of the Southwest Rapid Transit Corridor. The corridor would extend from Stage 1 at the intersection of Pembina Hwy and Jubilee Ave to the University of Manitoba. The project includes construction and/or modification of a transitway, bridges, underpasses, a tunnel, roadway connections, transit stations, park and ride facilities, and a new Active Transportation Path. Construction is planned for the period of 2016 to 2019.”

The proposal was distributed to the "Transportation" Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) for review and was advertised in the Winnipeg Free Press on Saturday, May 10, 2014. It was placed in the following public registries: Legislative Library, Millennium Public Library, and the Environmental Approvals Branch website. Comments were requested by June 9, 2014. Comments from the public and TAC were placed in the public registries.

A request for additional information was sent to the proponent on July 31, 2014. A response was received the same day. The information request and the proponent's response were placed in the public registries.

ASSESSMENT OF PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Public Comments

Following is a summary of the comments received from the public in response to the advertisement of the Proposal. Copies of the original comments from the public are available in the Public Registries.

- The green space in the Parker Lands is some of the last remaining in the city;
- It has a forest and one of the largest wetlands within the city limits;
- It is a community meeting place; culturally significant land;
- The wetland plays a vital role in maintaining the health of the surrounding areas by providing clean water and fresh air, minimizing flooding;
- Green space, trees, and wetlands are necessary for the health of communities, both physically and mentally;

- The wetlands are home a diverse population of vegetation, deer, fox, owls, hawks, and frogs;
- Various Bluestems grow on these lands;
- The City should build a rapid bus route where bus routes already exist;
- Don't approve a bus route that would destroy yet more green space in the city;
- No one in the neighborhood wants the rapid transit project;
- There is a more environmentally responsible option to relocate the CN Rail lines between Leg 1 of the corridor on Jubilee to Bison Drive;
- Light rapid transit could be done for less money, would be more durable, increase ridership and could be more easily installed on main thoroughfares;
- This route is not beneficial to the greatest number of transit users which should be the goal of building a rapid transit system;
- It would be much better if the line was built closer to Pembina highway so that more transit riders and business owners can benefit;
- With the addition of designated bus lanes on Pembina Hwy, coupled with the new double length buses, the money saved on rapid transit would be immense;
- The bike lanes that have been added down Pembina Hwy could instead go along the railway track and a proper cycling route incorporated into the Parker Lands;
- The strange detour through the Parker Lands makes absolutely no sense and completely contradicts its own title of "rapid" transit;
- Winnipeg is the only city attempting to make a busway system the backbone of its transit system. Significant problems with the Ottawa busway system, which is the only comparable system in Canada, have been completely overlooked.
- A better option is a streetcar or light rail transit line in the centre boulevard of Pembina Highway, right where the streetcar line used to be.
- We should be working toward more environmentally friendly types of transportation such as electric or solar commuter trains;
- The existing rapid transitway is underused so it should not be extended;
- A feasibility or environmental assessment of putting the rapid transit route up Pembina Hwy rather than make it curve into the Parker wetlands and dog park area should be done;
- The City should undertake a functional design study and cost benefit analysis of the project and route options;
- A dog park is located on a significant portion of this site and it is used by hundreds of people;
- The dog park is central rather than having to drive to south part of the city to the Maple Grove dog park;
- There are major shortcomings in the proposal report with respect to the presentation of plant and wildlife data. No standard surveys for plants, birds, frogs and snakes, and insects were undertaken; some of the biological data in the report was outdated and collected at the wrong time of year resulting in a mediocre quality of report. This resulted in a serious absence of plant and animal data that is essential for an environmental review and assessment;
- The report does not address issues of basement flooding potential along the busway route;

- The project will continue to feed the existing combined sewage and stormwater drainage system, which can cause wet weather overflows of untreated sewage directly into the Red River;
- There are no quantitative measures of either increased or decreased Greenhouse Gas Emissions resulting from the project. The director must take into account the amount of greenhouse gases to be generated by the proposed development and the energy efficiency of the proposed development.

Disposition:

- A large forested area and wetland north of the Manitoba Hydro right-of-way within the Parker Lands would remain unaffected by the proposed infrastructure.
- Re-routing of the transitway would not prevent future development of the forested/wetland area;
- The proposal states that development of the proposed Parker Retention Pond as wetland habitat would replace the function of and provide compensation for the wet meadow and cattails stands affected by the project, and provide and habitat for the existing vegetation and wildlife in the project area that require these seasonally wet conditions;
- The licence contains requirements for replacement of wetland features impacted by the project and conservation of Species at Risk;
- The economic feasibility of transportation system options is out of the scope of the Environment Act review process;
- Location of the City of Winnipeg off-leash dog parks is out of the scope of the Environment Act review process;
- The proposal states the development of the Parker Retention Pond will provide water retention to address current inadequacies in the existing sewer systems and prevention of overland flooding in the area; and
- Greenhouse gas emissions are considered to be adequately addressed in the proposal.

ASSESSMENT OF COMMENTS FROM THE TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (TAC):

Following is a summary of the assessment of TAC comments received pertaining to the proposal. Copies of the original comments from TAC are available in the Public Registries.

Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship, Air Quality Section

- It is expected that the impact on air quality will be minimal as the proposal adequately addressed the potential emissions to be generated during construction which are: dust, gaseous, and particulate emissions from heavy equipments and vehicles.
- It is also expected that noise/vibration effect will be minimal provided that the construction and operation and maintenance activities will occur during day times and also the proposed noise attenuation wall will be implemented.
- Air Quality Section suggests that the environment assessment Clause regarding noise nuisance be included.

Disposition:

The licence contains a clause that addresses noise nuisance.

Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship, Groundwater Management

The application indicates that depressurizing wells may be used during the construction of excavations. After use, all wells constructed for this project which are not longer required and any abandoned wells if encountered along the route during construction shall be properly sealed to prevent the vertical movement of water in the well or well bore. Completed well construction and well sealing reports along with water quality information on the groundwater shall be sent to the Groundwater Management Section.

Disposition:

The licence addresses the sealing of wells within the project area and reporting requirements.

Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship, Office of Drinking Water

No concerns respecting drinking water quality or safety with this proposal or the proposed development.

Disposition:

No action required.

Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship, Water Control Works and Drainage Licensing Section

No concerns.

Disposition:

No action required.

Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship, Parks and Protected Spaces Branch

No comments or concerns to offer as the project does not affect any provincial parks, park reserves, ecological reserves, areas of special interest, or proposed protected areas.

Disposition:

No action required.

Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship, Environmental Compliance and Enforcement Branch

No comment or concern.

Disposition:

No action required.

Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship, Lands Branch

The Lands Branch has no concerns as no Crown lands are impacted by the proposal.

Disposition:

No action required.

Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship, Wildlife Branch

It is recommended that regular monitoring for invasive plant species, namely purple loosestrife and common reed grass, be conducted during construction. If found, eradication, containment and management must be immediately undertaken.

The plan to construct the Parker retention pond using natural features and native vegetation is commended. Traditional retention pond construction has helped to encourage the proliferation of urban Canada geese and, as such, should be avoided in favour of naturalized ponds.

Disposition:

The licence contains a clause that addresses management of invasive species.

Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation

No concerns.

Disposition:

No action required.

Manitoba Municipal Government, Energy Division

No concerns. Any work on or around gas pipe lines are subject to the requirements of *The Gas Pipe Line Act* and its regulations. Similarly, any work involving electric transmission and/or distribution lines are subject to the requirements of *The Manitoba Hydro Act* and its regulations.

Disposition:

These comments were forwarded to the proponent for their information.

Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency (CEAA)

It has been determined that this project is not subject to CEAA, 2012 and the Agency will have no further involvement.

Disposition:

No action required.

INFORMATION REQUEST

The following information request was sent to the proponent:

1. Can you please confirm that the project infrastructure will not be constructed in the forested and wetland area north of the Manitoba Hydro right-of-way in the Parker Lands?
2. Who is the owner of these lands?
3. Is future "Transit Oriented Development" planned for these lands?

The proponent provided the following responses to the information request:

1. Yes, I can confirm that the project infrastructure will not be constructed north of the Manitoba Hydro right-of-way in the Parker Lands, as shown in Figures 3 and 4 in the environmental assessment report.
2. The parcels of land north of the transitway alignment in the Parker Lands area are owned by either CN or GEM Equities.
3. Although no formal plans have yet been submitted to the City by GEM Equities, it is our understanding that there will be plans coming forward for a transit-oriented development on the GEM Equities land at some point in the future. However, these plans will be a private development and do not form part of this project.

PUBLIC HEARING:

There was one request for a Clean Environment Commission public hearing in regard to the project. A public hearing is not recommended as the comments received from the public can be addressed by the proposed mitigation measures and in the conditions of the licence.

CROWN-ABORIGINAL CONSULTATION:

Crown-Aboriginal Consultation was not conducted for this project as it is not likely to adversely affect the exercise of an Aboriginal or treaty right. The entire project would be located entirely within the City of Winnipeg. The lands upon which the project would be built are not used for Traditional uses such as hunting, fishing, trapping, or gathering.

RECOMMENDATION:

The TAC and public comments received on the proposal can be addressed in the mitigation proposed by the proponent, as conditions of the licence for the project, or have been forwarded to the proponent for information where applicable. Therefore, it is recommended that the Development be licensed under *The Environment Act* subject to the limits, terms, and conditions as described in the attached Environment Act Licence. It is further recommended that enforcement of the Licence be assigned to the Central Region prior to construction.

PREPARED BY:

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