

What We Heard Report

St. Albert Trail to 97 Street Concept Planning Study

**Phase 2 Engagement:
Explore and Refine Options
January to November 2020**

**SHARE YOUR VOICE
SHAPE OUR CITY**

Edmonton

Thank you for sharing with us.

Yellowhead Trail is becoming a freeway. The Yellowhead Trail: St. Albert Trail to 97 Street Concept Planning Study will identify the new alignment for this section of Yellowhead Trail as it changes to a freeway. We know that these changes may affect you, the way you travel, and the way your business operates.

During Phase 2 of our three-phase engagement process, you shared with us your feedback on three potential design options identified for this section of the corridor. You told us you preferred roadway designs that provide efficient movement of traffic, goods and people using familiar travel patterns. You shared with us the importance of maintaining access between 107 Street and Yellowhead Trail, and your concerns about one-way service roads and their impact on access into and out of the adjacent communities.

Together with traffic analysis, safety and technical requirements, and City policies, your input will support the development of the concept plan for what will be built.

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted nearly every aspect of daily life, including how we were able to connect with you during Phase 2. Thank you to everyone who engaged with us virtually as we adjusted our engagement activities. Although in-person public events are paused, the project team remains committed to delivering project information and meaningful public engagement opportunities as efficiently and safely as possible.

Following a review of public input and further traffic analysis, Option 3: 127 Street Overpass / 121 Street Interchange has already been eliminated from further study. Option 1: Service Road and Option 2: Conventional Interchange are being further studied and refined by your input. We invite you to stay involved as we share the concept plan for your feedback during Phase 3 engagement in early 2021.

THANK YOU.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Yellowhead Trail: St. Albert Trail to 97 Street

As part of the Yellowhead Trail Freeway Conversion Program, the City is conducting a concept planning study for Yellowhead Trail between St. Albert Trail and 97 Street.

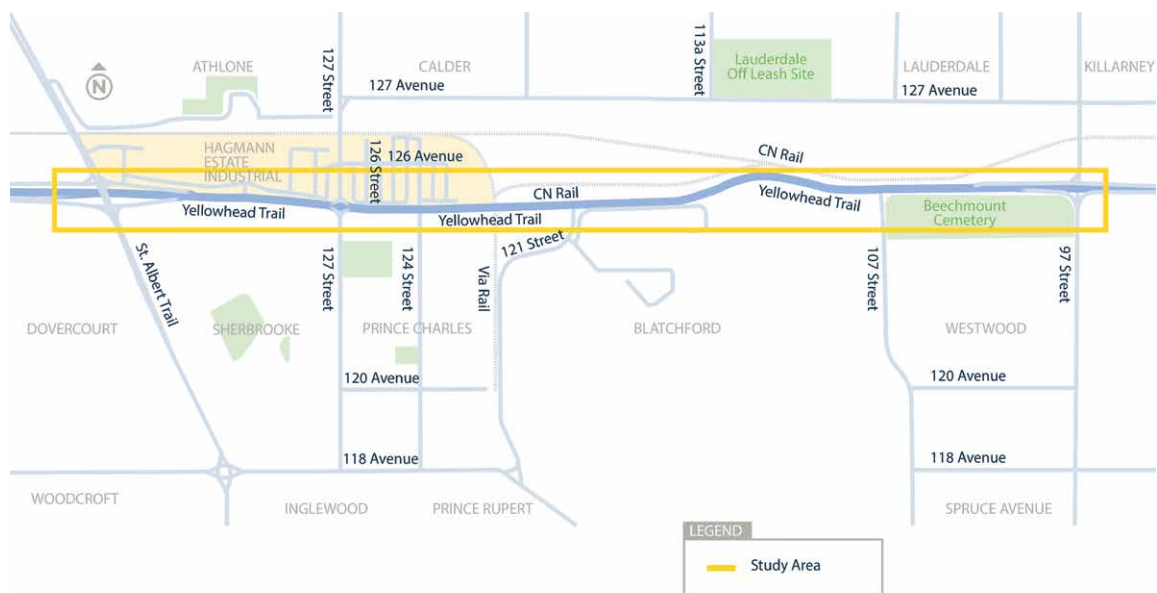
The concept planning study is considering:

- + Removal of traffic signals at 127 Street, 124 Street, 121 Street and 107 Street
- + Removal of direct accesses to Yellowhead Trail at 130 Street, 126 Street, 124 Street, 107 Street and CN Rail Walker Yard
- + Addition of interchanges and parallel service roads within the study area.

At the end of this study, the City will have a concept plan showing the changes to the roadway network between St. Albert Trail and 97 Street including interchanges, roadways and land requirements.

Visit edmonton.ca/YellowheadSATto97Street for more information.

FIGURE 1: PROJECT AREA MAP



HOW WE ENGAGED

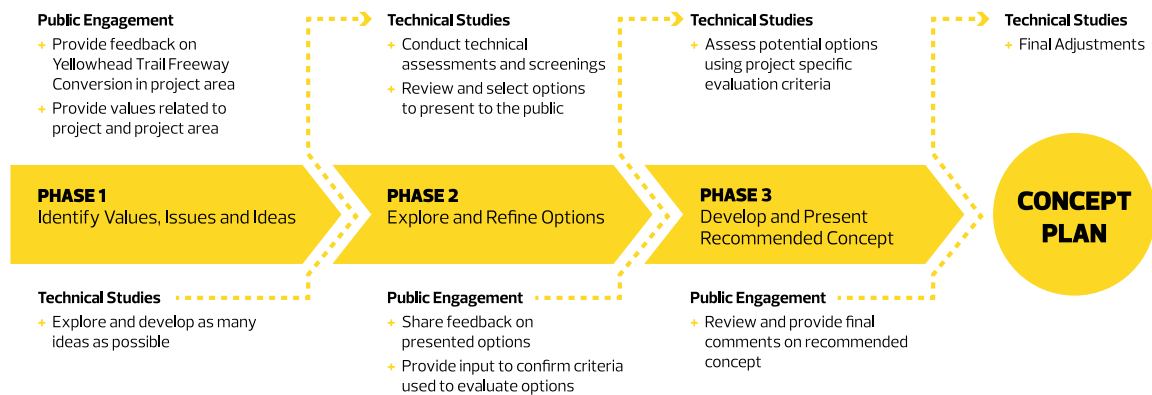
A three-phase public engagement process was designed to create multiple opportunities for the public and stakeholders to provide input to be considered during this concept planning study.

This year began with the exploration of the broadest range of possible solutions for the study area. Public input from Phase 1: Identify Values, Issues and Ideas (October to December 2019) helped ensure no ideas were overlooked.

These ideas underwent multiple rounds of screenings and assessments. Options were reviewed against technical requirements, City policies and programs, and public input to determine which are feasible. Short listed options were then further refined and three potential design options were presented for feedback in Phase 2.

The project team also used public input to develop project specific evaluation criteria. The draft criteria were shared for confirmation in Phase 2.

FIGURE 2: CONCEPT PLANNING: TECHNICAL AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROCESS



ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

HOW WE ENGAGED



Commercial Property Owner Meetings

September to November 2020
12 meetings



Commercial Property and Business Owners' Online Learning Session

October 6, 2020
33 participants



Adjacent Residents' Online Learning Session

Property owners adjacent to the Yellowhead Trail and 127 Street intersection
October 6, 2020
8 participants



Stakeholder Meetings

EPCOR, CN Rail, Yellowhead Youth Centre, NAIT, VIA Rail
September to December 2020
5 meetings



Public Online Learning Sessions

October 7 and 8, 2020 (3 sessions)
72 participants



Survey

Online, and paper copies at neighbourhood drop boxes (Sherwood, Prince Charles and Westwood)
September 28 to October 16, 2020
498 respondents

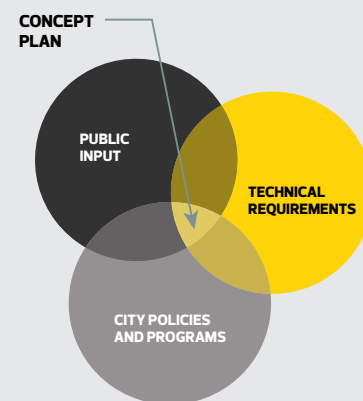
Other

Comments and opinions were also shared with the project team through emails, phone calls and social media posts.

HOW DECISIONS ARE MADE

Public input, technical analysis and City policies will all be considered in determining the concept plan.

FIGURE 3: HOW DECISIONS ARE MADE



The City's public engagement spectrum defines the public's level of influence in engagement processes.

Visit edmonton.ca/publicengagement for more information.

During Phase 2, all engagement opportunities were at the Refine level on the City of Edmonton's Public Engagement Spectrum.

REFINE

WHAT WE HEARD

Local residents, commuters, business and property owners, stakeholders and people who work in the project area shared a wide variety of perspectives during engagement. They use Yellowhead Trail and the surrounding road network in a variety of ways including driving vehicles, taking transit, walking and cycling. Because we heard from such a diversity of respondents, we heard many, and sometimes opposing, opinions.

This report attempts to reflect the diverse range of opinions while summarizing the issues and concerns voiced most often by engagement participants.

Three design options were shared in Phase 2 for public feedback:

- + Option 1: Service Road
- + Option 2: Conventional Interchange
- + Option 3: 127 Street Overpass / 121 Street Interchange

In all options:

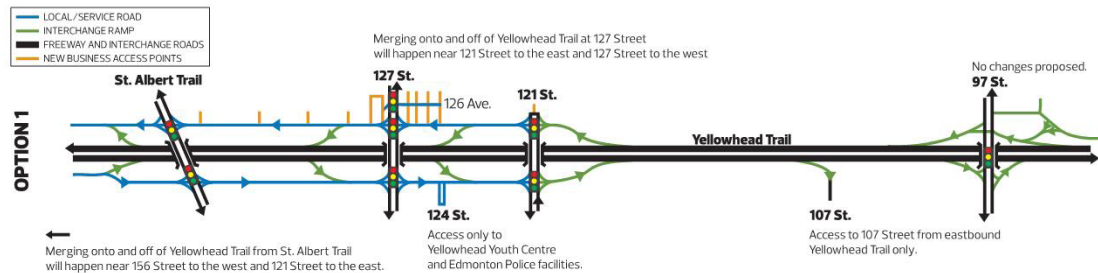
- + Yellowhead Trail will be three lanes of free-flowing traffic in each direction.
- + Yellowhead Trail is being realigned and straightened to remove the curve between 121 Street and 107 Street. This will accommodate plans for a future LRT bridge.
- + Service roads between 156 Street and St. Albert Trail will be used to provide access to St. Albert Trail from Yellowhead Trail eastbound. These service roads are being built as part of the 156 Street to St. Albert Trail project.
- + Pedestrians and cyclists will be able to cross Yellowhead Trail at St. Albert Trail, 127 Street and 97 Street. A shared-use path on the south side of Yellowhead Trail is being considered.
- + There are no major changes to the 97 Street interchange.

During Phase 2 we learned that regardless of their preferred option, respondents want the roadway design to provide free-flowing traffic along Yellowhead Trail while offering convenient access to adjacent communities and arterial roadways. Respondents support options and plans that:

- + Facilitate effective movement of traffic, people and goods for all modes of transportation, transit, walking and cycling
- + Provide direct and simple access on and off Yellowhead Trail
- + Use traditional interchange designs that users are familiar with
- + Maintain convenient access to businesses and properties
- + Minimize intrusions and impacts to adjacent communities
- + Distribute traffic throughout the network, without overwhelming adjacent arterial roadways
- + Separate vehicle traffic from people who walk and cycle

DESIGN OPTIONS

Option 1: Service Road



Nearly half of engagement participants are opposed to Option 1. Engagement participants question if the use of service roads will result in driver confusion, extend driving distances or increase travel times.

Benefits shared by respondents include:

- + All-direction access available at the 127 Street and 121 Street interchanges
- + On/off ramps spaced farther apart will provide easier merging for drivers
- + Free flow of traffic on Yellowhead Trail is superior to other options

Concerns shared by respondents include:

- + Limited access between 107 Street and Yellowhead Trail
- + Extensive use of one-way service roads and the perceived impact on congestion, delays and increased travel distance and time
- + Increased traffic volumes on 127 Street and expected impacts on noise, congestion and pollution for area residents
- + Service roads will be difficult or confusing to use and may cause drivers to miss exits

“ Better than Option 3 (far less complicated, more uniform traffic flow at interchanges), but still hate the lack of access to Yellowhead eastbound from 107 Street. Again, NAIT students and business / Kingsway access will be badly interfered with. ”

“ The ease of access to get onto the Yellowhead is much clearer and focused. It is simple and allows for the growing city to accommodate higher volumes of traffic. ”

“ Seems easy to get on and off, but not sure how congested the service roads would get. ”

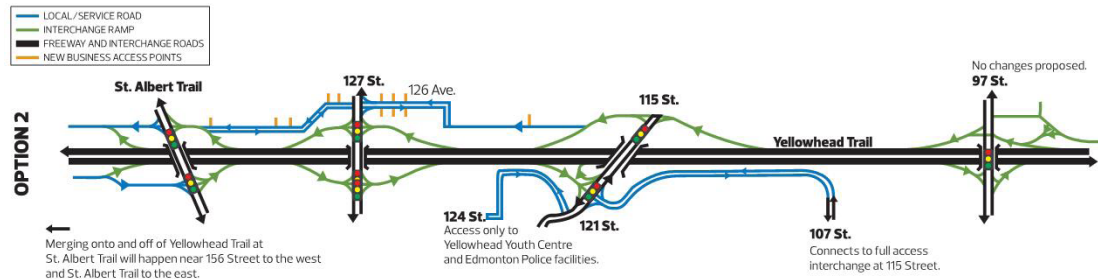
“ ...removing access to the Yellowhead from 107 Street will force traffic to either cut through the Westwood neighbourhood to get to 97 Street, causing traffic to be backed up through the neighbourhood, or reroute to 118 Avenue and cause even more chaos around NAIT, Kingsway and 118 Avenue/101 Street traffic circle. ”

“ One-way service roads on the north and south is annoying and just adds more roads cutting into properties. No exits at the overpasses and St. Albert Trail? No thanks! ”

“ I have seen far too many people get confused on service roads to be a viable option. ”

DESIGN OPTIONS

Option 2: Conventional Interchange



Option 2 has the highest level of support of the three options. Respondents are twice as likely to make a positive comment about Option 2 as they are to make a negative comment. Option 2 is perceived to be most similar to current travel patterns and is expected to be the easiest option to navigate and learn to use.

Benefits shared by respondents include:

- + On/off ramps located adjacent or near to the interchanges
- + Traditional interchange designs users are familiar with
- + Multi-directional access between Yellowhead Trail and 107 Street
- + Least amount of impact to adjacent communities

Concerns shared by respondents include:

- + Volume of traffic exiting and entering Yellowhead Trail between St. Albert Trail and 127 Street may make merging difficult
- + Traffic volume and delays as a result of combining 121 Street and 107 Street into one interchange
- + Driver confusion using the new 115 Street and Yellowhead Trail interchange

“ As someone who often travels the Yellowhead (westbound) and uses the three intersections: St Albert Trail – North, 127 Street – North, and 121 Street – South... I feel Option 2 gives me the most seamless access to all of the roads, depending on where I’m going. ”

“ This option gives direct access to 127 Street. It also gives those who use 107 Street full access to the Yellowhead through 121 Street. This option is the least confusing for drivers and the most economical as drivers can continue to their destination with the least amounts of stops. ”

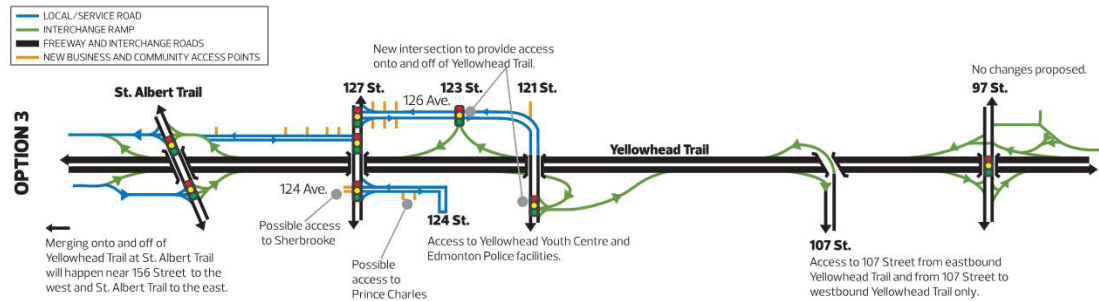
“ Appreciate access to 107 Street, but 121 Street looks confusing. ”

“ Merge patterns on Yellowhead Trail between 127 Street and St. Albert Trail are a serious cause for concern. Traffic merging onto and off of Yellowhead Trail will have serious congestion issues, dramatically increasing emissions. ”

“ Access to Yellowhead at 115 Street is somewhat confusing. It is also not clear whether it will scale well to increasing population at Blatchford. ”

DESIGN OPTIONS

Option 3: 127 Street Overpass / 121 Street Interchange



Half of engagement participants oppose Option 3. The new interchange at 121 Street is perceived to be both confusing and inefficient, leading to congestion and increased driving distance and travel time.

Benefits shared by respondents include:

- + Improved access into Hagmann Estate Industrial area
- + Access between Yellowhead Trail and 107 Street west of 107 Street

Concerns shared by respondents include:

- + Increased traffic volumes on 127 Street and 126 Avenue
- + No direct access between 127 Street and Yellowhead Trail
- + Limited access between 107 Street and Yellowhead Trail
- + Increased property acquisition and property impacts in Hagmann Estate Industrial area
- + Highest cost with reduced / complicated access

107 Street access to Yellowhead Trail west and egress from Yellowhead Trail to 107 Street south will take traffic off St. Albert Trail and 127 Street south to NAIT. 🗨️

This is a far better option. It's a nice balance between accessibility for businesses and for traffic flow. 🗨️

127 Street is a hub for travel and making people turn off and travel farther is extremely inconvenient. Furthermore, it will increase confusion for drivers as entrances and exits are not near the relevant streets. 🗨️

This option has the potential to destroy multiple businesses within our community. Not to mention the land that will require takeover just to get started. 🗨️

WALKING AND BIKING CONNECTIONS

The development of connections for people who walk and cycle at interchanges and on the south side of Yellowhead Trail is generally supported. They are perceived to be important for the safety of those who walk and bike and for maintaining connections between adjacent communities.

Suggestions for the inclusion of shared-use paths include:

- + Separating walking and cycling traffic from vehicle traffic for both safety and comfort
- + Providing walking and cycling connections on both sides of each interchange
- + Providing additional overpasses to support north-south traffic flow across Yellowhead Trail, especially over the CN Rail Walker Yard
- + Connecting to existing bike and shared-use trail networks
- + Ensuring the connections support all levels of mobility
- + Improving existing infrastructure, such as pedestrian crossing and curb ramps, on the 97 Street interchange

Those opposed to providing walking and cycling connections believe the connections will not be well used and are an unnecessary expense. They indicate the project should focus on the movement of vehicle traffic.

INTEGRATING FREEWAY DESIGN INTO THE SURROUNDING AREA

Suggestions from participants for integrating the freeway design in the surrounding area include:

- + Developing walking and cycling connections, for all levels of mobility, for both east-west and north-south travel
- + Planting trees and developing green spaces to improve aesthetics, support noise management, and enhance walking and cycling connections
- + Developing effective and visually pleasing noise walls and berms
- + Enhancing safety and crime prevention and managing homelessness in the area

EVALUATION CRITERIA

We shared draft evaluation criteria, to be used to evaluate each of the design options, and asked respondents to identify if we missed anything.



Economic:

- + Goods movement along and off Yellowhead Trail
- + Impacts to nearby railway operations and the Blatchford development



Technical feasibility:

- + Compatibility with current and future City projects
- + Construction
- + Utility impacts
- + Opportunity for future developments



User benefits:

- + Travel along, across, on and off Yellowhead Trail
- + Travel times
- + Neighbourhood access
- + Ease of use



Financial:

- + Construction, maintenance and rehabilitation costs of Yellowhead Trail and the new interchanges and overpasses
- + Costs associated with land impacts



Social and Community Sustainability and Sustainable Urban Integration:

- + The look of the corridor
- + Open and green space
- + Safety and security
- + Walking and cycling connections
- + Transit connections
- + Neighbourhood traffic impacts



Environmental:

- + Impacts to the environment, such as:
 - + Noise
 - + Visual
 - + Emissions
 - + Green space
 - + Landscaping

Respondents generally perceived the draft evaluation criteria to be complete as presented. Suggestions and comments raised most often include:

- + **User Benefits:** Evaluation of traffic flow should include analysis of commute times, peak congestion delays, access to adjacent communities, and ability to access areas of the city other than adjacent communities
- + **Economic:** Evaluate each option on its impact to business operations both during and after construction
- + **Technical Feasibility:** Ensure planning takes into consideration how current and existing projects and future growth will impact assumptions about traffic flow, traffic volume and desired destinations
- + **Technical Feasibility:** Ensure adequate drainage to accommodate peak storm and rainfall

What Happens Next?

Visit edmonton.ca/YellowheadSATto97Street to sign up to receive project updates by email.

Phase 3 Engagement

In Phase 3, the project team will consider all input gathered during Phase 2 and conduct further studies and the technical evaluation to identify the concept plan.

The recommended concept will be shared in Phase 3 and input received may be used to make minor adjustments or be carried forward to the next stage of design.

At the time of this report, following further technical study and consideration of public input, Option 3 has been eliminated from the process.

The technical analysis of Option 3 was consistent with concerns we heard from the public and it was evident it would not deliver on the objectives of the project. Option 1 and Option 2 are currently undergoing further technical study.

BE INFORMED AND GET INVOLVED

Sign up for updates for Phase 3 engagement activities planned for February 2021.

Yellowhead Trail Freeway Conversion Program

The Yellowhead Trail Freeway Conversion Program, identified in the City's 2019–2022 Capital Budget as a transformational project, will upgrade Yellowhead Trail to a freeway by the end of 2027. edmonton.ca/YellowheadTrail.