

## 1.0 Engagement

The approach to creating the communications and engagement plan for the Transportation Corridor Study Review Project was seen as an opportunity to respond to the need for change as heard from stakeholders and citizens during previous transportation corridor study projects.

What The City heard leading up to this project was overwhelmingly that citizens and stakeholders would like to be engaged earlier and more often during the transportation corridor study project lifecycle. With this in mind, the project team created a communications and engagement approach for this project that would seek to involve citizens and stakeholders earlier in the project with the view of this approach serving as a pilot for communications and engagement for future transportation corridor study projects.

The project team consistently received feedback about the engagement and communications approach for each phase of the project and stakeholders and citizens were generally pleased with the process for this project.

### 1.1 Engagement and Communications Plan

The Transportation Corridor Study Review Project team conducted a multiphase, engagement program to gather stakeholder and citizen feedback to inform the decision-making process in support of the new Transportation Corridor Study Policy.

In order to fulfill the direction of Council's Notice of Motion to develop a community engagement and communications approach which collaborates with stakeholders and uses The City's engage! Policy, the project team created a communications and engagement approach for the project divided into three parts that would "understand the as is", "share learning" and "build process".

The program ran from June 2013 until July of 2014 and strategically targeted various internal and external stakeholders and citizens. Strategic communications encouraged city-wide participation in engagement events that ranged from awareness building, information sharing-style events all the way to events that reached the collaborate level on The City's engage! Spectrum of Strategies and Promises.

Overall communications goals:

- Build awareness and understanding about the Transportation Corridor Study Review Project
- Provide timely, clear, responsive and objective information to assist stakeholders and citizens during all phases of the engagement program
- Promote opportunities for participation in and encourage attendance at project engagement events
- Develop accessible and understandable communications materials for each engagement event throughout the engagement process
- Respond to stakeholders and citizens in a timely manner and share with them what was heard throughout the engagement program, how feedback was incorporated into decision-making and/or explain why feedback wasn't used

Overall engagement approach:

The engagement program in support of the Transportation Corridor Study Review Project was divided into three phases:

- Part A “Understanding the As Is” was designed to gather feedback about past experiences stakeholders and citizens had with previous transportation corridor study projects. The project team wanted to hear about what we did well and where we could improve our engagement and communications process to create a baseline understanding of stakeholder expectations when it comes to engagement during transportation corridor studies. This phase of engagement was targeted at communities which had experienced transportation corridor studies in the past and internal stakeholders.
- Part B “Shared Learning” was designed to build understanding and to create a “state of readiness” for stakeholders and citizens to participate in the writing of the Transportation Corridor Study Policy. Part B was also used to reflect back to participants what we heard during engagement Part A, share what the project team had learned through case studies and research into best practices for undertaking transportation corridor studies, gathered feedback about how stakeholders and citizens would like to be involved in the policy writing process and recruited stakeholders to form a Citizen Working Group. This part of engagement marked the city-wide launch of the project.
- Part C “Process Building” was designed to collaborate with the self-selected Citizen Working Group to evaluate and integrate engagement feedback from previous parts of the engagement program to work together to create a draft Transportation Corridor Study Policy and Interim Transportation Corridor Study Guidelines. Part C was also used to gather and incorporate feedback from internal and external stakeholders and citizens about the draft policy and guidelines before finalizing the policy and submitting to City Council for approval.

## **1.2 Understanding the As Is**

In support of Part A: Understanding the As Is of the engagement program, the project team held three *Conversations: Planning Transportation Corridors* workshops, an internal stakeholder workshop and an online survey with a total of a 139 participants.

The project team held three *Conversations: Planning Transportation Corridors* workshops on June 20, Nov. 20 and Nov. 23, 2013 as part of the engagement program.

NOTE: Engagement events were originally scheduled to take place consecutively in the month of June but were rescheduled due to significant flooding in the Calgary area. The events were rescheduled for November in consideration of flood recovery efforts and the municipal election in October.

Invitations to the events were sent to stakeholders and community associations located within communities that had participated in past transportation studies. Social media and articles in community association newsletters were also used to inform stakeholders and citizens of the

events along with the development of a project webpage on Calgary.ca. A total of 61 stakeholders and citizens attended the workshops.

Each of the engagement events, in person or online, asked participants to answer a set of questions about four topics relating to past experiences with transportation corridor study projects and to provide information about improving the current planning process.

The questions about four topics during engagement Part A are the following:

**Topic one:** What aspects did you like about the transportation planning process you participated in? What can The City do to help make the planning process experiences more consistent and valuable?

**Topic two:** What aspects did you not like about the planning process you participated in? What could have been done differently by The City to help make your experience better during the planning process?

**Topic three:** What types of transportation projects and/or issues do you want to be involved in? How would you prefer to be involved in transportation projects?

**Topic four:** What types or groups of stakeholders and citizens do you think should be involved in transportation projects? At what point in the planning process do you want to be involved?

**General themes we heard:**

- **Timely engagement**

Stakeholders commented that engagement needed to be conducted at the right time and before decisions were made. The questions need to be more open and not concentrating on just what stakeholders' preferences were. Overall, stakeholders requested that they be brought in early in the project (some as early as conception) and throughout the life of the project. They also asked for the final results and execution. In short, they want to be kept informed. There was a lot of discussion around being asked for input when the perception was that decisions had already been made and that this was now 'lip service'.

There was also interest in keeping engagement sessions smaller and more plentiful, as well as providing as much notice as possible.

Some additional feedback we heard from citizens is that, they would like to have more advanced notice of engagement opportunities, they would like to have more opportunities to participate at the onset of projects and throughout them as well as engagement opportunities that have fewer participants thereby allowing for more meaningful interactions among attendees and with City staff. This is opposed to the current system of having one large event at the beginning of a project.

- **Communications**

Several stakeholders mentioned communications and awareness of engagement sessions as something that needs to be improved. There were requests for information sharing, being transparent, being repetitive in the messaging as well as a need to provide more information visually – pictures and maps were suggested. There was an expression of interest to have more web and online content, in addition to the in-person sessions and other alternative methods such as phone calls. It should be noted that in-person sessions (open house, workshops, town halls) are still the preferred method, but there is considerable interest in alternative methods to participate (phone and online surveys, online forums, 311, focus groups, etc.). Emphasis was placed on having clear, timely communications and updates on the project – including scope changes.

- **Preparation and manpower**

A number of stakeholders mentioned the need to simplify the information being presented into common categories such as costs, impacts, affects, efficiencies, pros and cons. There was an interest in having the appropriate people at sessions to answer questions that were specific to their area of expertise and to expand this beyond the ‘technical’ aspects of transportation. There were several comments asking for land planners to be at these sessions as well and to look at Calgary in its entirety rather than as a sum of its parts; in short, to consider the larger context of the project and its scope.

There were also requests for less ‘loaded’ questions and to provide neutral facilitation as there was some discussion around leading questions, preference questions rather than decision option questions.

- **Interests**

Many stakeholders stated that they would like to be involved in projects that will affect their community. The areas of interest were largely around linkability – so roads, bike/pathways, transit; but expressed interest in awareness in what is being done or considered across the city.

Of particular note, there was an interest in learning more about the plans for Crowchild Trail as well as the North Central LRT project. There was also mention to consider mobility and access issues and to be more accommodating of those suffering from mobility issues. Although this was not echoed by several stakeholders, there is a significant risk attached if Administration does not consider these issues when planning future events.

- **Involvement**

Stakeholders reiterated the need to be inclusive of groups and to not let special interest groups or more vocal groups be the only ‘voice’ that is heard in engagement sessions. There were considerable comments about trying to ensure a more representative sample of Calgarians, but also some reflection that anyone who wants to participate

should, but concentration should be on the more affected or impacted stakeholder groups such as communities.

## Recommendations

- Keep in-person sessions but keep them smaller and on-point
- Provide alternative methods to gather input such as websites, phone surveys, 311
- Exhaust communications efforts so that stakeholders are very aware of sessions and how to participate
- Be inclusive in providing subject matter experts – include other business units outside of Transportation, and outside of The City
- Work on being more neutral in facilitating and attending sessions so that stakeholders feel they have the freedom to voice their input and that decisions have not been pre-determined

### 1.3 Shared Learning

In support of Part B: Shared Learning of the engagement program, the project team created a four- part plan to share information and promote the second phase of stakeholder and citizen workshops through place-based engagement, held two *Conversations: Planning Transportation Corridors* workshops for stakeholders and citizens, held a workshop with third-party consultants often contracted to undertake transportation corridor studies on behalf of The City and recruited volunteers to form the Citizen Working Group that would help to write the new policy.

Part B of the engagement program ran from February to April 2014. Stakeholders and citizens were invited to participate in all of the events through email invitations, social media, community newsletters and through the place-based engagement. The project team created a series of information display boards to provide background information about the project and to help prepare stakeholders and citizens for participation in policy creation. The team also created an online survey to help recruit volunteers to join the Citizen Working Group.

#### February 2014 - On the Road with the Transportation Corridor Study Review Project Team

The Transportation Corridor Study Review Project team hit the road to bring the Transportation Corridor Study Review Project to stakeholders and citizens. The month of February marked the kick-off of the second part of our engagement program we like to call “shared learning”.

The project team visited various locations around the city to share information about the Transportation Corridor Study Review Project, to answer questions to share what we have learned from Part A of our engagement program.

#### March 2014 - Conversations: Planning Transportation Corridors

The City’s Transportation Planning team hosted two workshops in March to gather input from citizens.

This was the second opportunity for public input into the Transportation Corridor Study Review Project and the project team was building on what we heard in the first phase of engagement.

On March 8, Transportation Planning invited external stakeholders and citizens to attend either a morning or afternoon workshop to learn more about the Transportation Corridor Study Review Project and to “share learning” about what has been heard through previous engagement, through research into best practices and previous case studies.

In total, approximately 25 people attended the workshops where the project team asked attendees to put themselves in the position of The City’s Transportation Planning team and use a provided, fictitious transportation corridor study scenario to create a plan for communicating and engaging the public. The case study exercise helped to share the process of a transportation corridor study and participants provided feedback about when in the process the public should be involved. The exercise helped to prepare participants for the next phase of engagement: Part C Process Building and policy writing.

April 2014

#### Consultant engagement

During Part B of the engagement program in support of the Transportation Corridor Study Review Project, the project team invited third-party consultants that had worked with The City Transportation Planning on previous transportation corridor study projects to a workshop on April 8, 2014.

The consultant workshop was part of the “shared learning” phase of engagement in support of the project and feedback gathered was used to help draft the Transportation Corridor Study Terms of Reference Policy.

#### Citizen Working Group

During Part B of the engagement program in support of the Transportation Corridor Study Review Project, the project team asked external stakeholders and citizens to volunteer to be part of the Citizen Working Group to work together with the project team to write the new Transportation Corridor Study Policy.

In total, 17 members of the public signed-on to take part in the Citizen Working Group and together members and the project team scheduled two meetings on April 12 and April 24, 2014.

### **General themes we heard:**

#### **Involvement**

- Citizens and stakeholders should be involved during these three phases of the transportation corridor study technical planning process:
  - Identify and define study areas and needs
  - Develop possible transportation corridor concepts
  - Identify preferred transportation corridor concepts
- Stakeholders who should be invited to participate in transportation corridor studies should include the following:
  - Directly affected stakeholders, homeowners, residents

- Indirectly affected stakeholders, general public
- Motorist, cyclists, pedestrians
- Local business, schools, churches
- Community associations
- Urban planners
- Silent minority

## **Communications**

- Public should be informed about the project and engagement events by the following methods:
  - 
  - City website, social media
  - Print media ads
  - Radio and TV
  - Through community associations
  - 311
  - Direct email lists
  - Councillor email lists/by Councillors' office
  - Community newsletters/door to door flyers/direct mailers
  - Community signs/bold signs
  - Ads on transport/online/at shopping centres
  - Interactive maps/mobile phone app

## **Engagement and influence**

- Public engagement events should include the following:
  - Workshops
  - Open houses
  - Online surveys
  - Events should match the type of project/project timing
  - More place-based engagement at LRTS, Plus 15s, farmers' markets etc.
- Community feedback should be used to influence decision-making in the following ways:
  - Find themes
  - Balance professional expertise with community feedback and policy
  - Try to blend input and build consensus
- In the past, engagement programs worked well when the following was included:
  - Grassroot tactics
  - Flexible/iterative programs
  - Engaging early with a comprehensive communications and engagement plan
- In the past, engagement programs didn't work well because of the following reasons:
  - Lack of flexibility in the process
  - Unclear expectations about how citizen and stakeholder feedback would be used/not used
  - Overuse of technical terms/saying what we need to say instead of what stakeholders need to hear
  - Not input during project scoping/in the early stages

## Policy

- The new policy should include the following:
  - Should be scalable to the project and be flexible
  - Seek to maximize “public acceptance” early in the process
  - Provide a framework/expectations so citizens can understand what to expect
  - Define process for identifying stakeholders, level of engagement, timelines etc.
  - Should follow CTP principles
  
- The new policy should not include the following:
  - Should not dictate timelines, formats, strategies, project objectives, goals
  - Should not require a consensus or definite number of people participating in engagement

### 1.4 Process Building

In support of Part C: Process Building of the engagement program, the project team created a two- part plan to use the engagement feedback from the first two parts of engagement to outline and draft the new policy and associated guidelines for implementing the policy. Part C of engagement was the third and final phase of the engagement program prior to presenting the policy to City Council for approval.

During Part B of the engagement program in support of the Transportation Corridor Study Review Project, the project team asked external stakeholders and citizens to volunteer to be part of the Citizen Working Group to work together with the project team to write the new policy with a total of 17 people volunteering for the working group.

Together, the project team and Citizen Working Group held two meetings in the month of April to begin the process of writing the policy. The project team and Citizen Working Group corresponded with each other via email and a project dropbox was created.

The first meeting with Citizen Working Group included a handout of The City of Calgary policy document template and an explanation of what each section should and should not include. The meeting then moved into a content creation discussion for each of the policy sections.

Prior to the second Citizen Working Group meeting, the project team used the feedback from the first meeting to create a draft of the policy as discussed and decided by the working group. During the second meeting, the project team and working group reviewed the draft to make sure the content reflected the feedback provided and worked through each section of the draft policy to review, discuss and finalize content.

The second part of two-part plan invited citizens and other stakeholders to review the draft policy once completed by the project team and the working group. The project team held two

information sessions on May 6, 2014 and posted the policy on the project webpage to solicit feedback and comments.

Approximately 20 citizens and stakeholders attended the information sessions. The project team invited participation through direct emails, the project website and social media. Attendees were given a copy of the draft policy and were asked to write their comments about each section on corresponding notepads so the project team could include feedback prior to finalizing the content of the draft policy. The project team directed attendees to include feedback about content and confirmed editing for grammar, spelling, formatting, style etc. would be done once the content development was completed.

**General themes we heard:**

- Spelling and grammar should be reviewed
- Some wording in general should be stronger, more defined
- Procedure/guidelines should include significant consultation with stakeholders and a measurement tool to measure the success of the policy
- Language to clarify some points/content should be added
- Add more information to the background section including how transportation corridor projects are selected, more information about the CTP, how corridor studies relate to other City projects