

7. Public Consultation

Three public open houses were held during the course of the study.

June 14, 2016 - The first was held during study phase one, Data Collection and Review, to alert area property owners and stakeholders to the study process, issues, scope and objectives and invite initial input.

February 8, 2017 - The second was held during study phase two, Alternative Development and Assessment. This session presented the range of alternatives considered and the preferred alternative, and again invited public input.

June 22, 2017 - The third open house was held during study phase 3, Recommended Alternative, to present the recommended plan and supporting rationale, and to invite final public comment.

Comments based on the information presented at the third open house were generally similar to the themes heard at the first and second open houses, including:

- + Ongoing concerns related to truck traffic and shortcutting through the country residential community to the east of the proposed interchange location and apprehension that the interchange will exacerbate these issues.
- + Concerns regarding current congestion levels and limited access to the QEII, particularly as this has resulted from increased travel to/from the CrossIron Mills Mall.
- + The need for local road network planning in the vicinity of the interchange. Recent restrictions included access to the east service road from Highway 566 limited to westbound right-off/right-on.
- + Questions concerning timing, priorities and funding for three interchange in the study area along the QEII. The public were generally advised that:
 - o Replacing the Highway 566 interchange is a provincial priority, but currently unfunded.
 - o Constructing Airdrie's proposed 40th Avenue partial interchange is a City priority; and
 - o Constructing the TR264 interchange is considered a longer term need.
- + Generally, there was support for the Parclo AB interchange configuration.

The adjacent landowners potentially affected by right-of-way requirements were contacted prior to each of the three open houses and were offered one-on-one meetings. Their interests largely involved access to TR264 and the QEII, understanding the extent of right-of-way requirements and future timing.

See the open house reports in Appendix L.

8. Conclusions

The need for a service interchange on the QEII at TR264 is development driven, primarily related to growth in the City of Airdrie, and anticipated future growth in Rocky View County. Traffic generated by this growth will initially be accommodated by Airdrie's proposed interchange at 40th Avenue. The TR264 interchange is considered a longer term requirement.

The 1.6 km interchange spacing along the QEII between existing Yankee Valley Boulevard and the proposed 40th Avenue and TR264 interchanges does not meet Best Practices for freeway planning. Service interchanges should be spaced a minimum of 2 km (preferably 3 km) apart to achieve optimal highway performance and maximize service life. There are two interchanges between YVB and Highway 566, where ideally there would only be one. However, the recommended Parclo AB interchange configuration achieves the desired merge/diverge and weave lengths between TR264 and 40th Avenue.

The interchange will be located alongside the existing TR264 road allowance, the current boundary between the City of Airdrie and Rocky View County, permitting direct access by future development in either municipality. TR264 ties back into its existing road allowance both east and west of the QEII. Future development and widening of TR264 east and west of the interchange footprint is a municipal responsibility.

The recommended interchange will easily accommodate the projected traffic volumes based on the future land use assumptions reflected by the Regional Transportation Model outputs provided for this study. If future urban land development is more extensive and intense, as assumed by more recent modelling performed for the *Highway 2 Corridor Improvement Study*, growth in commuter traffic volumes that exceed the capacity of the QEII and the TR264 interchange, will need to be accommodated by the inter-municipal arterial road network, connecting Airdrie with Stoney Trail, and by inter-municipal transit.

Preserving the existing 23.2m wide median is preferred over the narrower 15.8m wide median option (adding one lane to either side of the median) from a safety perspective. Although high-tension cable barrier (HTCB) can be used to mitigate cross-median collisions (and associated fatalities) along substandard median widths, its presence (particularly in proximity to the travel lanes) increases overall collision experience, property damage and associated traffic disruption.

The preferred offset to the first intersection location along the crossroad is 400m from the ramp terminal intersections. This offset is met on the west leg; however only 325m is achieved to the first intersection on the east leg, Airdrie's proposed Kingsview Boulevard. An additional 75m would place the intersection inside the adjacent country residential community. The design of the east ramp terminal intersection, uses a high right entry angle and yield condition to eliminate a weaving condition to Kingsview Boulevard.

The recommended plan will relocate Balzac Boulevard (existing west frontage road) around the southwest interchange ramps and pass under TR264 parallel to the CPR. This will permit connecting with an ultimate southerly extension of Airdrie's Main Street, by the municipality or developer. This will also support future access for emergency services and should divert local traffic off of the QEII.

The recommended plan will relocate the east frontage road (Barlow Trail/Rge Rd 294) around the southeast interchange ramps and intersect TR264 opposite Airdrie's proposed southerly extension of Kingsview Boulevard. However, to divert short local trip-making away from the QEII, particularly associated with the CrossIron Mills mall, a contiguous collector or arterial standard roadway connection should be established from Calgary's Metis Trail following the County's Dwight McLellan Trail and linked directly to a future southerly extension of Airdrie's Kingsview Boulevard. This would supersede a simple realignment of the

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existing service road.

The proposed interchange footprint straddles Nose Creek, which crosses the QEII Highway at TR264. All other interchange options considered were further south along the QEII and resulted in similar or greater impacts on Nose Creek and its tributary entering the study area from the northeast. Four crossings of Nose Creek will be required for the recommended interchange configuration.

The stormwater management plan follows the requirements of the *Nose Creek Watershed Water Management Plan*. The creek realignment:

- + Establishes a new open channel length that matches the existing open channel length.
- + Has been designed to ensure there will be no change in water input volume into the realigned creek channel from interchange runoff. Runoff will be managed by two constructed stormwater ponds located adjacent to and within the interchange footprint.
- + Avoids the proposed stormwater ponds and the existing wetland in the northeast interchange quadrant.
- + Has been designed with parallel berms such that most overland flow in the interchange area is directed into the stormwater ponds rather than into the creek.

The rural community in the study area, east of the QEII, identified ongoing concerns regarding the traffic patterns that have evolved since completion of the CrossIron Mills Mall south of Highway 566. The issues include a congested Highway 566 interchange, limited access to the east frontage road (Barlow Trail), truck and other traffic diverting through the country residential area east of the highway, a perceived need to upgrade the local road network, and the expectation that the Highway 566 interchange will be upgraded in the near future. Although the TR264 interchange was presented as a longer-term development, there was still some concern that it would exacerbate traffic conditions in the community.