

Ring road worries Foothills residents

Red Deer Lake: Options to be studied

By Roxanne Blackwell
Staff Reporter

As the final kinks are being worked out with the southwest portion of Calgary Ring Road, some Foothills residents are upset that a solution has not been found to keep traffic flowing near 96 Street and Highway 22X.

At an open house at Spruce Meadows last week, residents came out to view the proposed plan which will see the \$5 billion southwest portion of the road run along Stoney Trail and then wrap north along the edge of the city.

Once the ring road is complete, access to Highway 22X at 96 Street will be closed, which is currently an essential access point for heading east, west, and north into the city.

MD of Foothills Coun. Suzanne Oel was at the meeting and said while many residents voiced their concerns to her, the maps at the open house didn't show the whole picture of what the MD is hoping to do.

"One of the things that wasn't there was the plan

that we have to put an alternative probably to the west," Oel said. "So we tried to explain that we will likely have another option where folks can come out a little further west and then head up. So we would be skirting around the school."

"We're going to find a way to move that traffic from the highway from 96 Street."

Suzanne Oel
MD Councillor

Oel said right now they're hoping to come up with a solution and are looking at ways to fix the problem by improving already existing roads.

"We're trying to figure out what is a way we can deal with this with some improvements to our municipal roads?" Oel said. "The other thing we want to deal with is if something blocked up the road for whatever reason is there

an alternative strategy for residents? And that would certainly be the improvement to Dunbow Road."

In the meantime, she said MD engineers are continuing to meet with Alberta Transportation and will work to find a solution together.

"We're meeting monthly with Alberta Transport on the ring road, our public works staff is continuing to be engaged with them," Oel said. "So whether they make a change or we make a change we're going to find a way to move that traffic from the highway from 96 Street."

Garry Lamb who is the urban construction manager for Calgary with Alberta Transportation, said he's also taking residents concerns into consideration and will continue to work with the MD to find a solution.

"I did hear that there were a number of residents at the meeting at Spruce Meadows who had some concern about that issue," said Lamb. "Really at this point in time, we're showing what the MD of foothills has asked us to show."

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When the concerns about access were first brought up, Alberta Transportation worked with the MD to come up with a solution. They decided to connect 96 Street across to 80 Street, which would connect over to Spruce Meadows Way where people could access the freeway. However, Lamb said it appears that option isn't sitting well with residents as it's a significant detour for those heading west. In response, Lamb said they may look at creating a connection further south of Highway 22X for residents to head west on to avoid a three-mile trip in the wrong direction.

"That would allow people to get up to Highway 22X. If you're going to go

west, it doesn't matter if you go to the west here or down here," Lamb said. "Or perhaps a connection of 96 Street across to what I call 52 Street at the bottom end of Red Deer Lake School."

Residents were equally unhappy about potentially re-routing traffic to flow right by a school.

"There's some concern that we'll be taking more traffic past the school area which is true, but everyone who drives in Calgary drives through school zones everyday and that's just part of what you have to live with, schools have to be on the road," Lamb said.

"I think at this point in time, we're going to wait for the MD to come back to us and tell us whether they would like to see us modify our plans."

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