

# Saskatoon Freeway Project Update – October 2019

## ISSUE

This report provides an update on the progress of the Province's Saskatoon Freeway project.

## BACKGROUND

The Government of Saskatchewan, through the Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure, is engaging in a functional planning study that will finalize the right-of-way plan, produce project cost estimates, and determine the interchange locations and configurations. The freeway is expected to be a four-lane, 55-kilometre long divided highway that begins at Highway 11 south of Saskatoon and connects with Highway 7 west of the city. The functional planning study will consider the placement of 16 interchanges, five railway overpasses, at least two flyovers, and one major river crossing. The study is scheduled to be completed in 2021. Currently, there is no timetable for a final decision regarding the freeway's construction.

The study is broken into three phases:

- Phase 1 – Highway 16 northwest of Saskatoon to the South Saskatchewan River
- Phase 2 – South Saskatchewan River to Highway 11 south of Saskatoon
- Phase 3 – Highway 7 west of the City to Highway 16 northwest of Saskatoon

The study's organization chart is shown in Appendix 1. It consists of two committees, six Technical Working Groups (TWG) and one Sub-TWG. Each of these committees and TWGs, except for the Executive Management TWG, have at least one City representative. Councillor Randy Donauer is a member of the Steering Committee. The report below provides a progress update for each TWG.

## CURRENT STATUS

### Stakeholder Engagement & Communications TWG

- The project website is live and has seen a steady growth in visitors. Regular updates are made to the website and also sent via email to subscribers.
- The stakeholder registry is complete and consultation continues.
- Public open houses are planned for later this year.
- Throughout the functional planning study process, a wide range of stakeholders and members of the public will be asked to share their input. A survey is available at [saskatoonfreeway.org](http://saskatoonfreeway.org) to better understand how stakeholders and members of the public would like to be engaged as the functional planning study progresses.

### Structural, Geotechnical & Pavements TWG

- Phase 1 of the Bridge Option Study is almost complete. This evaluates the type of bridge that will be constructed.

- Geotechnical borehole testing is planned once the Bridge Option Study is complete.
- Pavement review will begin after geotechnical investigation and traffic projection modelling is complete.

#### Transportation Planning & Utilities TWG

Phase 1 (Appendix 2 - Figure 2) is the most complex of the three phases. It is the north section of the Saskatoon Freeway and includes Highways 11, 12, and 16, as well as Wanuskewin Road, Millar Avenue, and the bridge over the South Saskatchewan River. This phase also contains proposed crossings of the South Saskatchewan River and a Canadian National Rail line.

The study team held a Design Workshop on June 27 and June 28, 2019 (Appendix 2). The purpose of this workshop was to bring together a diverse group of stakeholders to select a framework to address Phase 1 of the study. Agencies and associations with strong local knowledge of the area as well as members of the design team were invited to participate.

The Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure invited the following stakeholders to attend the Design Workshop:

- City of Saskatoon
- Rural Municipality of Corman Park
- Partnership 4 Growth
- Wanuskewin Heritage Park
- Meewasin
- North Saskatoon Business Association
- Saskatoon Tribal Council

The specific goals of the Design Workshop were for the participants to:

- Review four alternatives developed by the design team;
- Provide input from the perspective of individuals who work and live in the community;
- Identify best value performance criteria and evaluate which alternative will provide the best value; and
- Provide considerations for the design team to consider during development of future options based on the preferred alternative.

Based on the evaluation process in the Design Workshop, Alternative 4: Highway 11 Flyover (Appendix 2 – Appendix B) is the preferred alternative for the design team to develop further. The preferred alternative was selected as it best addressed the numerous technical challenges, including interchange spacing and access requirements, while ensuring the future Saskatoon Freeway meets all road design standards for safety, and future capacity needs for the community of 750,000 people.

Key features of Alternative 4: Highway 11 Flyover include:

- Realignment of Highway 11 to Wanuskewin Road;
- Interchange connection to Penner Road at Highway 11;
- Interchanges at Highway 12 and Wanuskewin Road (Highway 11) with the Saskatoon Freeway;
- Connector from Millar Road to Wanuskewin Road; and
- A flyover across the Saskatoon Freeway at an extension of Millar Avenue approximately at the old Highway 11 location.

After the selection of the preferred alternative, the Design Workshop participants provided some design considerations for the design team. These design considerations are being reviewed and incorporated into the options being developed for the next iterations of the preferred alternative. These options are expected to be finalized by late fall 2019 and presented to stakeholders and the public prior to the end of 2019.

#### Environmental & Heritage TWG

- The Desktop Baseline Heritage Resource Study is drafted.
- The wildlife and vegetation field surveys are to be completed in fall 2019.
- Meewasin is also conducting wildlife and vegetation field studies for the project, collecting information in the Northeast and Small Swales. These studies are expected to be completed in October 2019.

### **DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS**

The outcome of the transportation planning work to date will require the City to consider the transportation network to the south of the Saskatoon Freeway, and specifically plan for:

- The streets that will connect to the freeway;
- The streets that will flyover the freeway and provide regional connectivity; and
- The internal streets in the Riel Industrial Sector Plan.

### **IMPLICATIONS**

The information provided in this report does not result in any financial, legal, social, or environmental implications at this time.

### **NEXT STEPS**

The City will continue to work with the Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure and study consultants on the Saskatoon Freeway project.

Planning required for the transportation network south of the Saskatoon Freeway will continue.

### **APPENDIX**

1. Saskatoon Freeway Functional Planning Study – Organization Chart
2. Letter - Saskatoon Freeway Functional Planning Study Design Workshop for Phase 1 – Dated September 4, 2019

**Report Approval**

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