

Saskatoon Freeway Planning Study – Phase 1 Endorsement Request

ISSUE

The Ministry of Highways has provided the City of Saskatoon a final draft for the Saskatoon Freeway Functional Planning Study – Phase 1 Functional Design Report and requested that City Council review and formally endorse the Phase 1 report.

BACKGROUND

History

In 1999, a partnership involving the Saskatchewan Highways and Transportation (now Ministry of Highways), the Rural Municipality of Corman Park and the City of Saskatoon embarked on the Saskatoon Long Term Transportation Planning Study. This study was completed in 2001 and resulted in the signing of the Fundamental Principles of Agreement (see Appendix 1). This study established the general desire of the partners to pursue the development of a highway route around Saskatoon from Highway 11 (south) to Highway 14 (west) via an east and north corridor.

Subsequently, general location studies were undertaken during the years listed below to establish the alignment of this highway, including:

2005	East Perimeter Highway Functional Planning Study <ul style="list-style-type: none">From Highway 11 (south) to Highway 16 (west)
2008	Perimeter Highway Study Phase 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none">From Highway 16 (west) to Highway 14 (west)
2018	South Saskatoon Freeway General Location Study <ul style="list-style-type: none">From Highway 14 (west) to Highway 7 (west)From Highway 11 (south) to Highway 5 (east)

City Council endorsed these alignments for the Saskatoon Freeway project on February 27, 2006, December 15, 2008, and April 30, 2018, respectively.

In 2019, the Government of Saskatchewan, through the Ministry of Highways, began 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 16 northwest 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. There is no timetable for a final decision regarding the freeway's construction.

Originally, the study was broken into three phases:

- Phase 1 – Highway 16 northwest of Saskatoon east 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 2. 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.

Current Status

In February 2019, the Ministry of Highways held a kickoff meeting to begin the Saskatoon Freeway Functional Planning Study. The Ministry of Highway's consultant, SNC-Lavalin, led this meeting.

The primary goals of the study include:

- Developing a right-of-way plan;
- Producing cost estimates;
- Inclusive stakeholder engagement; and
- Endorsing the Functional Plan including interchange locations and configurations.

In November 2021, the Ministry of Highways indicated that Phase 3 was being removed from the scope of this study and will be completed in the future.

In December 2021, the Ministry of Highways provided the City of Saskatoon with the final draft for the [Saskatoon Freeway Functional Planning Study – Phase 1 Functional Design Report](#), along with the supporting [appendices](#), and a formal request to endorse the study (Appendix 3).

Phase 2 of the study is ongoing and planned for completion later in 2022.

City of Saskatoon's Current Approach

The Administration has reviewed the final draft report for Phase 1 and a summary of review comments is provided in Appendix 4. Several of the review comments are minor, or housekeeping, in nature.

The proposed exceptions to the final draft report are as follows:

1. The post-development drainage storage along ramps and ditches be designed based on the City of Saskatoon 1:100-year design storm at the detailed design stage to align with City and regional design standards for storm water storage.
2. At the detailed design stage, incorporate permanent easements not less than twice the depth of utilities to facilitate open trench excavation for planned water and sewer utilities.
3. Include construction of a flyover, to City of Saskatoon arterial standards (including active transportation facilities), for Range Road 3055 be included.

4. The Penner Road connection across Highway 11 be designed to an urban arterial standard (including active transportation facilities) and connect with planned active transportation facilities along the CN rail line and the expected link to Wanuskewin Park (expected to be beneath the free bridge structure).
5. Include construction of a full active transportation connection connecting the existing Cross Canada Trail along Wanusekwin Road to Wanuskewin Park.
6. Include the option of aligning Warman Road/Range Road 3052 along the Highway 11 alignment south of the Saulteaux First Nation land to connect to Township Road 380, as opposed to the existing alignment that bisects the First Nations lands.
7. Revise the final draft report to include the findings of the additional wildlife surveys noted in the report.

OPTIONS

Option 1 – Do not endorse the study

This option would have City Council receive the study results for information only, or formally identify that it is not endorsing the results. In the case of formally not endorsing the study, documentation to the Ministry of Highways should be provided to outline the rationale for the lack of endorsement.

Advantages:

- None evident.

Disadvantages:

- Does not provide certainty to the Government of Saskatchewan on the acceptance of the Saskatoon Freeway in principle by the City of Saskatoon.
- May delay the endorsement of the Study, which in turn:
 - further lengthens the time where lands are frozen from being developed through the continuation of a 500-metre subdivision and development restrictions currently in place;
 - does not enable future transportation and land use planning to proceed; and
 - hinders economic development in the area.

Option 2 – Endorse the study without exceptions

This option would have City Council endorse the study without exceptions, as presented in the Saskatoon Freeway Functional Planning Study – Phase 1 Functional Design Report and supporting appendices.

Advantages:

- The direction to the Ministry of Highways would be very clear.
- Future work on this Phase of the Saskatoon Freeway may be easier to implement by the Ministry of Highways.
- Certainty is provided to landowners and developers on where the Saskatoon Freeway will be, enabling land use and transportation planning to proceed.

Disadvantages:

- The opportunity to document issues unresolved, or not resolved to the City's satisfaction, may be lost.

Option 3 – Endorse the study with exceptions

This option would have City Council endorse the study with the exceptions as identified in this report.

Advantages:

- The direction to the Ministry of Highways would be very clear.
- Certainty is provided to landowners and developers on where the Saskatoon Freeway will be, enabling land use and transportation planning to proceed.
- The issues identified by the Administration would be documented and could be addressed in the developing of the final report of Phase 1 or addressed in future stages of the project.

Disadvantages:

- None evident.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Standing Policy Committee on Transportation recommend to City Council:

That City Council endorse the Saskatoon Freeway Functional Planning Study – Phase 1 Functional Design Report and supporting appendices with the exceptions outlined in this report (Option 3).

RATIONALE

The following was considered in developing the recommendations:

- There is no benefit to the City in not endorsing Phase 1 of the study.
- The exceptions identified by the Administration can be documented in the study and could be addressed when the Ministry of Highways finalizes the Phase 1 report or addressed in future stages of the project.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The financial implications of the Saskatoon Freeway have not been identified. Future work on the Saskatoon Freeway, including the construction, is expected to be funded by the Government of Saskatchewan.

ADDITIONAL IMPLICATIONS/CONSIDERATIONS

Endorsement of Phase 1 of the Study sets in place a significant infrastructure project that will require accommodation in future transportation and land use planning projects by the City of Saskatoon. The Transportation, and Planning and Development departments will consider the required planning work and provide an update to City Council prior to the next multi-year budget process on required projects.

For example, the Riel Sector Plan will require updating if Phase 1 of the Saskatoon Freeway is endorsed, and the segments of Highways 11 and 12 ‘inside’ the freeway will come under the jurisdiction of the City.

COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES

None planned by the City of Saskatoon.

APPENDICES

1. Saskatoon Freeway Planning Study – Phase 1 Endorsement
2. Saskatoon Freeway Planning Study - Organizational Chart
3. Letter from Ministry requesting Phase 1 endorsement - December 16, 2021
4. City of Saskatoon Administration Review Comments

Report Approval

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