
From: Web NoReply
Sent: Sunday, March 3, 2024 1:23 PM
To: City Council
Subject: Email - Communication - Ripley Riis - Saskatoon Freeway Planning Study – Phase 2 Endorsement Request - CK 6003-1
Attachments: Call to Action - Saskatoon Freeway.pdf
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Submitted on Sunday, March 3, 2024 - 13:22

Submitted by user: [REDACTED]

Submitted values are:

I have read and understand the above statements.: Yes

I do not want my comments placed on a public agenda. They will be shared with members of Council through their online repository.: No

I only want my comments shared with the Mayor or my Ward Councillor.: No

Date: Sunday, March 03, 2024

To: His Worship the Mayor and Members of City Council

Pronouns: They/them/theirs

First Name: Ripley

Last Name: Riis

Phonetic spelling of first and/or last name: Rip-LEE REE-s

Phone Number : [306](tel:306) [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

I live outside of Saskatoon: No

Saskatoon Address and Ward:

Address: [REDACTED] Preston Ave S

Ward: Ward 8

What do you wish to do ?: Submit Comments

What meeting do you wish to speak/submit comments ? (if known):: Standing Policy Committee on Transportation

What agenda item do you wish to comment on ?: Agenda Item 7.2.1

Comments:

See attached letter to the council.

Attachments:

Will you be submitting a video to be vetted prior to council meeting?: No

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to you today to support others' criticisms of the proposed new Saskatoon Freeway, to speak as someone with experience in design and environmental assessment on alternatives that show this proposal does not adequately address the concerns of our community, and to share my own experiences with the importance of what this Freeway project is potentially threatening.

I. A CALL TO NOT ENDORSE PHASE 2 OF THE SASKATOON FREEWAY

Firstly, I am in favour of the Swale Watchers urgent recommendations for the Saskatoon City Council which state:

1. Given that the Biological Assessment and the Functional Planning Study for Phase 2 of the Saskatoon Freeway demonstrate that irreversible harm would befall the Northeast and Small Swales – two of Saskatoon's most valuable and valued natural areas – if the project proceeds as planned, we urge you not to endorse the Functional Planning Study for Phase 2 of the Saskatoon Freeway.
2. Recognizing that the ultimate authority over where, when or if this project is completed lies with the province, rather than with the City of Saskatoon, we urge you to call on the Government of Saskatchewan to choose a route for the Saskatoon Freeway that does not intrude on the Swales and to guarantee that the project will be subject to a thorough, impartial Environmental Impact Assessment.

II. ACCEPTING THE NECESSITY OF A FREEWAY FOR THE GROWTH OF THE CITY OF SASKATOON DOES NOT MEAN THAT SENSITIVE ECOSYSTEMS LIKE THE SWALES NEED TO BE HARMED AT ALL

Secondly, if this project is indeed designed to look to the future of 2063 as the current assessment states, constructing it so close to the current outskirts of the city does not seem to adequately consider the population growth cited – which will likely result in further northern and eastern expansion of city limits surrounding the Swales. Extending the design of this freeway as to pass to the north of the Small and Northeast Swales, or some other design that does not bisect these critical regions, may have many benefits for both the environment and future city planning.

The idea of simply avoiding “sensitive areas” of the Swales is not a tactic which adequately represents what building a freeway through them would do. A freeway is a structure that would divide these Swales into two sections to the north and south, effectively separating the two sections by a barrier which poses danger to any fauna moving between those sections – which inherently also impacts the flora there. This undercuts the ecology and resilience of a swale. These long, interconnected spaces are important because of their size and diversity, and placing a freeway in any way which splits a swale into two disconnected portions effectively creates two smaller and less diverse, but therefore more vulnerable ecosystems. This project would not only damage the sections of the Small and Northeast Swales that would be disturbed by construction

and the freeway itself, but also the entire ecosystem, causing irreparable harm to what would be left of both halves of the Swales.

Avoiding bisection of not one but two critical ecosystems, then, would not only avoid this irreversible damage, turning two already sensitive areas into four even more sensitive areas, but also look forward to the future of our community.

III. ANIMALS AND PLANTS ARE NOT THE ONLY REASONS TO PROTECT THE SWALES

Lastly, as someone born in the City of Saskatoon and someone who has lived their entire life here, I would also like to speak to the importance of the Swales not only for their flora and fauna, not only for the environment, but the importance of that environment for our city and its communities.

The house I grew up in was just a brisk walk or a brief bike ride away from the Northeast Swale. We lived close enough that my parents told me stories of deer eating in our backyard before the fence was built. Even as I grew up and the city limits moved further from us, wildlife was frequent throughout the neighbourhood: deer by the dozen, coyotes, owls, hawks, skunks, even a porcupine. My parents took me to see the Northeast Swale on a regular basis – most often in the space labelled as the Northeast Swale Recreation Area – whether we were walking the family dog, or my father was taking me for a lengthy bike adventure. I have seldom seen my parents more excited than bringing me to the window to watch the wildlife pass, and never more excited than seeing those same animals on the Swale. The first to spot something special would raise a hand to instruct the others to stay still and quiet so that we could simply stand and observe as whatever animal it was that day enjoyed its home that we were so joyous to witness.

Finding the first crocuses blooming as the snow recedes, noting flattened sections of grass where only hours before deer had laid down to rest, watching deer leaping through the grass as graceful as prancing angels, hearing the haunting song of coyotes in the dead of night, listening to the beautiful solace of wind running through the wolf willows and grasses, seeing the stoic grace of the Swale under moonlight or its vast embrace cast in blood red at sunset – moments like these are those that I and everyone lucky enough to experience them hold dear about the Northeast Swale. These moments are those which a freeway crossing any part of the Small or Northeast Swales endangers.

It is with a fearful heart that I and many others request the Committee do its part to ensure that the Saskatoon Freeway project can be completed in a way that does not imperil the natural beauty and resilience of our Land of Living Skies. Thank you to those who have read my words, thank you to those who have fought for the safety of the Swales before my time such that I was able to have the privilege of experiencing them, and thank you to those who continue to fight.

Sincerely,

Ripley Christen Riis