
From: Web NoReply
Sent: Sunday, February 4, 2024 4:24 PM
To: City Council
Subject: Email - Communication - Meghan Mickelson - Saskatoon Freeway Planning Study – Phase 2
Endorsement Request - CK 6003-1
Attachments: 2024-02-04-Phase 2 Swale Watchers.docx

--- Replies to this email will go to swalewatchers@gmail.com ---

Submitted on Sunday, February 4, 2024 - 16:23

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, February 04, 2024

To: His Worship the Mayor and Members of City Council

First Name: Meghan

Last Name: Mickelson

Email: swalewatchers@gmail.com

I live outside of Saskatoon: No

Saskatoon Address and Ward:

Address: [REDACTED] 2nd St E

Ward: Ward 6

Name of the organization or agency you are representing (if applicable): Swale Watchers

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 ?: 7.2.2

Comments:

Please view our attached letter.

Attachments:

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



February 4, 2024

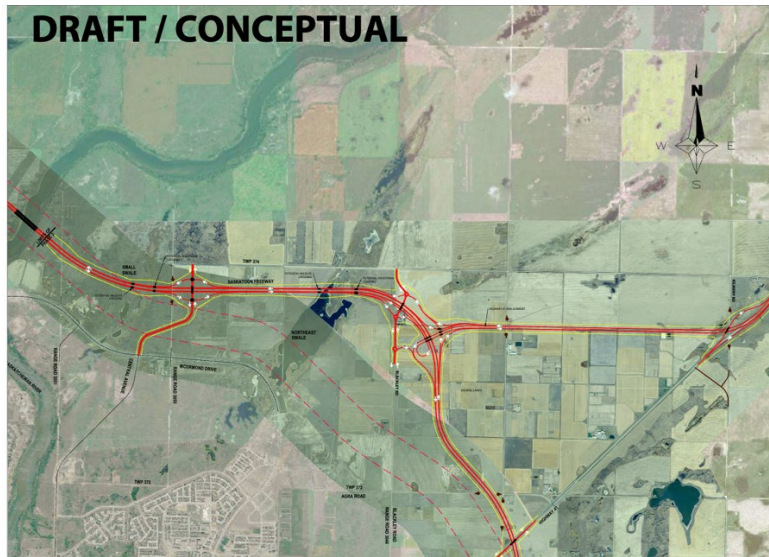
Re: SPC Transportation, February 6, 2024, Agenda item 7.2.2
Saskatoon Freeway Planning Study Endorsement Request

As you know, Swale Watchers have been recognized as key stakeholders in discussions about the Saskatoon Freeway from the moment the project was launched. In fact, our presence was seen as so central that we were invited to serve in an official capacity on the Environmental and Heritage Technical Working Group. It quickly became clear, however, that there was no room in the Ministry of Highway's process for meaningful dissent or alternative visions. There would be no "minority report" permitted from the Working Group, and our critique of the route through the Swales would not be acknowledged. As a result, we resigned from the Working Group – but Swale Watchers have remained fully engaged and determined in our opposition to this project.

We thought then, as we think now, that forcing a major highway – eight to ten lanes of high-speed traffic – through two prized natural areas is regressive and unwise. Our best advice to you is to vote for Option 1 and reject the proposed route for Phase 2 of the Freeway through the Swales. But if this is impossible for you – whatever your reasons may be, whatever interests you serve – we urge you, at the very least, to take your time with this critical decision.

You may have noticed, as we have, that the file provided to support this discussion is incomplete. The most obvious omission is the absence of the Report that you are being asked to approve. The item attached to the agenda under this heading turns out to be a one-page MOU from 2002 calling for a bridge to be built where Chief Mistawasis Bridge now stands. How is Council to demonstrate due diligence on this important issue when the Report is missing? How can the public participate in decision-making without being properly informed?

Recommendation 1: that Council refers this agenda item back to your administration with instructions to resubmit it with the Phase 2 Report attached.



The analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of the two options you have been offered, Yeah or Nay, is also incomplete. Even without the full Phase 2 Report to refer to, we know that the chosen route will send eight lanes of traffic through the Northeast Swale and will expand to ten lanes where it crosses the Small Swale. The damage will extend beyond the ‘number of lanes’, as evident in the simulation of the new freeway here: <https://vimeo.com/648993683>

It is simply not accurate to list the disadvantages of approving this development as “none evident.” Building the Freeway in this corridor will cause irreversible harm to both Swales, fracturing a connected ribbon of grassland and wetland habitats into broken fragments and exposing these lands and waters to increased risk from invasive species, toxic chemicals and noise and light pollution.

City Council has expressed a clear and unanimous intention to protect the Swales, understanding that they are irreplaceable natural assets and will only grow in value and importance in the future. As Councillors, you have both the right and the responsibility to consider the full range of consequences that will stem from your decisions.

Recommendation 2: that Council instructs City administration to provide a thorough, science-based assessment of the impacts on the Northeast and Small Swales and other environmentally sensitive assets (eg. the Green Ash forest at the proposed river crossing) if the route for Phase 2 is approved.

Finally, the City is currently developing a suite of new policy tools to protect and manage natural areas, including – crucially – a strengthened Wetland Policy. This improved framework is expected to be presented to Council in the coming months, with the objective of moving Saskatoon forward on several of its Strategic Goals – Quality of Life, Sustainable Growth and Environmental Leadership – and to assist it in balancing its Triple Bottom Line. Clearly, City

Council would be wise to evaluate Phase 2 of the Freeway against its own emerging policies and best practices.

Recommendation 3: that Council instructs City administration to develop an Option 3, calling for consideration of the Phase 2 impacts on the Swales and other environmentally sensitive assets in their entirety in light of the forthcoming Wetland Policy and Natural Areas Framework.

Respectfully submitted,

Meghan Mickelson
Candace Savage
Co-chairs, Swale Watchers
<https://swalewatchers.org/>