



LINK - COLLEGE DRIVE

Engagement Report

April 4, 2025



CONTENTS

Contents	2
Engagement Summary	3
Engagement REPORT	7
1 Background.....	8
1.1 Summary of Engagement Strategy	9
1.2 Participants.....	9
2 Engagement Activities.....	11
2.1 Survey	11
3 What We Learned	12
4 Evaluation of Engagement	15
5 Next Steps	16

ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

In March 2025 the City of Saskatoon (City) engaged community members to provide information about the College Drive Link (Bus Rapid Transit) design and listen to and acknowledge concerns.

We asked and listened on the following topics:



- **Dedicated with-flow transit lanes (rather than contraflow)** through the center of College Drive.
- **Pedestrian connection between the Stadium Parkade and the University of Saskatchewan** changes to an at-grade crosswalk rather than a pedestrian overpass.

Why Are We Doing This Work?

The Link system is working towards a high-quality transit design to provide our growing City with a variety of transportation options. Link will benefit everyone in Saskatoon, whether you take the bus, walk, bike or drive. Link is a premium transportation system designed to improve capacity and reliability compared to conventional bus systems. It allows for more people to move more efficiently through optimized routes and dedicated travel lanes, while retaining the low-cost and flexibility of buses.

College Drive is a well-travelled corridor and changes to it will impact vehicle traffic, bus riders, cyclists, pedestrians and more.

Therefore, the City wants to ensure citizens are well informed and have the opportunity to engage on the design for the area. From March 17-19, 2025 the City engaged the community on the drawings and design related to how Link will function along College Drive.

The City of Saskatoon's Link Project – College Drive

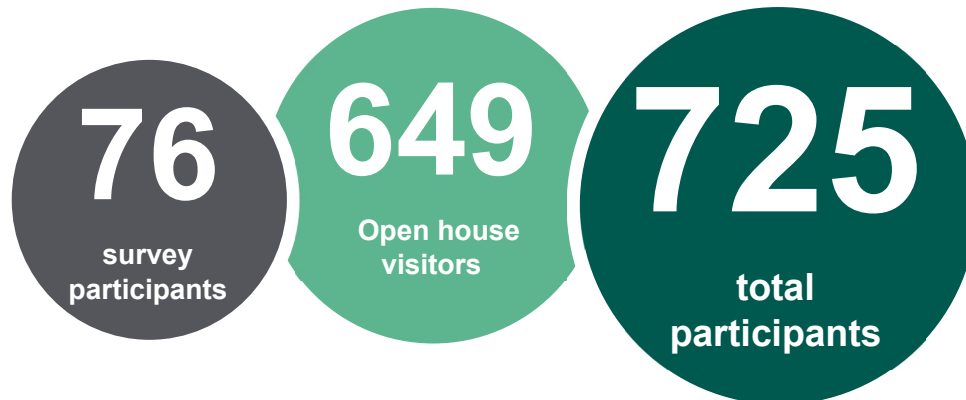


This project is possible through the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program.

How the Feedback Will Be Used

Feedback from participants will be summarized and presented to City Council in the Spring of 2025. This condensed report outlines the feedback from the March 2025 Link College Drive Open Houses and the Link College Drive Survey. For more information and detailed results please see the Engagement Report below.

WHAT WE DID



The City engaged with various community members, businesses and property owners through holding 5 separate Open Houses in 3 different locations during different times of day. An Engage Page and a Survey were also administered to inform residents and collect feedback on the design for Link College Drive.

Who We Engaged With:

- ⊕ Businesses and associations
- ⊕ Building and property owners
- ⊕ USask students and staff
- ⊕ Royal University Hospital
- ⊕ Jim Pattison Children's Hospital
- ⊕ Neighbourhood residents
- ⊕ College Drive Commuters

How We Gathered Input:

- ⊕ Five Open Houses over three days
- ⊕ Survey for community members
- ⊕ Correspondence including emails and phone calls

Questions we asked participants:

- **Which neighbourhood** do you live in?
- How do you currently **use College Drive**?
- **What do you think of the design** for College Drive?



WHAT WE LEARNED

Neighbourhood Representation

- All survey participants live in Saskatoon, residing in 33 of the 65 neighbourhoods.
- 30.4% of respondents reside in neighbourhoods surrounding College Drive.

How People Use College Drive

When asked how they currently use College Drive (participants could choose more than one answer):

- 48.0% commute by **car**
- 35.3% ride a **bus** on College Drive; and
- 40.7% **walking** or **biking**.

Participants also provided information on where they were headed via College Drive:

- 50.7% are travelling to and from downtown by either **bus** or **car**; and
- 70.4% **drive** or ride the **bus** to U of S or RUH/Jim Pattison Children's Hospital.

Thoughts on the Design for College Drive

When asked what they thought of the design of College Drive respondents provided their feedback, which is summarized by the following themes:

Traffic

The most mentioned concern was how the design may impact traffic flow on College Drive because of the loss of one traffic lane in each direction being replaced by one dedicated bus lane in each direction. Some respondents indicated that they are looking forward to the change, stating that they believe the design will improve traffic and transit flow. Some were glad the design is now “with-flow” instead of the original “contra-flow” design. A higher number of respondents were dissatisfied as they anticipate that traffic will be much worse in an area that is already “a problem area” for traffic. Many expressed concerns over the additional traffic light on College Drive because it could slow their commute, some anticipate a “back-log” or “bottle neck” during high traffic times and others worry that adjacent neighbourhoods will get busier as commuters change their route as a result of the lane reductions and high traffic on College Drive.

Appearance, Aesthetics and Comfortability

Respondents indicated that they liked the design for the platforms/stations or “mini terminals”, they liked the space and accessibility, as well as the green spaces worked into the plan. Aesthetically, folks indicated that the streetscape and the improved and integrated pathways and crosswalks are “exciting” and “may attract more residential and commercial development/investment”. Many respondents indicate that the design will improve transit in the area and are glad to see transit being

made a priority. Some felt that the new station may be too small to meet the growing demand of the USask and College Drive commuters, too hot in the summer due to the absence of trees and too crowded on colder days when people are trying to stay warm inside the shelter. Many were concerned that the stations and shelters are too small to handle the large crowds that gather to wait for the bus, especially on colder days.

Active Transportation and Options

Many respondents indicated that they appreciate the designs sensitivity towards active transportation and the shift from moving as many automobiles as possible to moving people safely in a variety of ways. A few participants liked the pedestrian improvements but would like to see separated bike lanes and urged that bicycle traffic should be considered further.

Pedestrian Overpass

The comments about the removal of the pedestrian overpass were mixed. While some respondents indicated support for the new at grade crossing, others disagreed and stated that the overpass should be kept and that they believe a crosswalk here will unnecessarily slow traffic and cause problems.

Safety

Some participants supported the design being mindful of traffic and pedestrian safety. Those who expressed their concern for pedestrian safety worried that the intersections have “too many moving parts” and will be confusing. Some were concerned with pedestrian safety as this may invite illegal crossings to shorten the walk to the bus stop.

Snow Removal

Participants were concerned that with a center median/station there will be no other option than to pile snow on sidewalks where people need to walk. Folks ask that the City have a good and consistent snow removal plan for this area.

Other Considerations

From the various comments provided throughout the engagement activities, the following topics were also emphasized by participants:

Accessibility: Many participants felt that the College Drive Link design looks very accessible and applauds this improvement and consideration.

Wiggins Ave: Many participants expressed concern for safety and efficiency at the Wiggins and College Drive intersection and did not think this design will improve this particularly concerning intersection. Some expressed their dismay at no tangible improvement to this intersection. A common suggestion was an overhead foot bridge and bike crossing at Wiggins as this is a very busy intersection for all kinds of vehicle and active transportation. Some suggest closing Wiggins to vehicle traffic.

Costs: Numerous participants expressed concern with the cost of “ripping up and rebuilding College” and some suggested using the curb lane as the dedicated bus lane in order to save money.

Some participants provided suggestions to improve the design, including:

- Some suggested dedicated Eastbound right turn lanes at Clarence/College as well as Cumberland/College.
- Some would like to see better access for Field House along eastside of Field House Road with the addition of a sidewalk.
- Some suggested widening University Bridge and many requested pedestrian overpasses for access to both USask and RUH/JPCH, stating that this would improve safety for pedestrians and improve vehicle flow on College Drive.
- Wiggins Ave would be better with one-way southbound traffic flow and many respondents asked that more thoughtful consideration for bicycle and pedestrian traffic be considered for this area. While many respondents expressed approval for the stations and medians along College Drive, some suggest that further research, care and consideration needs to be made regarding the vegetation and infrastructure in the medians.
- Participants suggested ways to improve safety on intersection crosswalks, such as using tactile paving or reflective crosswalk paint to slow/calm traffic, consideration of a “pedestrian scramble...to allow direct movement from one platform to the other”, putting the College Drive and Cumberland crosswalk on the east side only “so cars turning (left from Cumberland to College) could go and not need to worry about pedestrians”.

NEXT STEPS

A report on the Engagement and College Drive Link Design will be presented to City Council in the Spring 2025. For more information about the project and when the report will be presented to City Council, please visit our [Engage Page](#).

We thank all participants who provided their feedback for this and other City of Saskatoon projects.

ENGAGEMENT REPORT

1 BACKGROUND

Saskatoon is working towards a high-quality transit design to provide our growing City with a variety of transportation options. Link (bus rapid transit) will benefit everyone in Saskatoon, whether you take the bus, walk, bike or drive. High-quality transit allows a city to grow without slowing traffic down. When prioritized, transit has the potential to reduce vehicle congestion, provide environmentally efficient and responsible transportation, and reduce both personal mobility expenses and overall public infrastructure expenses.

Link is a premium transportation system designed to improve capacity and reliability compared to conventional bus systems. It allows for more people to move more efficiently through optimized routes and dedicated travel lanes, while retaining the low-cost and flexibility of buses.

Frequent and reliable public transit opens up personal mobility to everyone, giving each person the freedom to travel anywhere in the City. Many people are unable to drive, and a number of drivers would appreciate the realistic choice to walk, cycle, or take public transit instead, at least sometimes. The BRT system, combined with housing density along the transit corridors, means that more people will have access to services within a short walk or quick bus ride.

Transit, when it is well used, produces important benefits for the community: air-quality improvements, less land consumption than an auto only transportation system, lower energy requirements and lower accident costs.

Eight Link station platforms were constructed in 2024. Construction is anticipated to take three years, with service launching in 2028. More than 73% of the cost is being covered by our partnerships with the Province of Saskatchewan and the Government of Canada.

To ensure Link is meeting the needs of the community, the City of Saskatoon is engaging with many interested and affected parties to gather guidance and living experience to inform and improve the project.

The purpose of this Engagement Report is to outline the results of the City of Saskatoon's (City) engagement with interested and affected parties in the area of College Drive, including the University of Saskatchewan (USask), Royal University Hospital (RUH), Jim Pattison's Children's Hospital (JPCH), Emergency Services (Fire, Medavie, Campus Security, Saskatoon Police Service), Varsity View Neighbourhood and the wider community. The project is now at a point where we are informing the public about the new design and construction timeline for College Drive and listening to feedback about the design.

1.1 Summary of Engagement Strategy

Participants were provided the opportunity to review the Link College Drive design drawings and renderings, background information and the functional plan – Clarence Avenue to Preston Avenue both in-person during open houses or online via the Engage Page and Project Page. For this stage of engagement on College Drive the City focused on the following engagement goals:

Asking and Understanding:

- Inform the community of the project and listen to their feedback on the finalized design.
- Validate and determine overall support for the finalized design.
- Listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations and provide feedback on how public input influenced the design.

A summary of the participants, level of influence, engagement objectives, engagement goals and engagement activities completed are provided below.

Table 1: Summary of engagement goals

Participants	Level of Influence	Objective	Engagement Goal	Engagement Activities
Impacted Groups	Ask	Present proposed design to determine support and listen to, and acknowledge, concerns.	Understanding	*Correspondence Open Houses Survey

** Correspondence refers to emails, phone calls and mailouts to interested and affected parties.*

A summary of engagement activities, activity dates, intended audience, and number of participants engaged is provided in the table below.

Table 2: Summary of engagement activities

Participants	Activity	Timeframe	Participants
Public	5 Open Houses	March 17, 18, 19, 2025	649
Public	Survey	March 17 to 31, 2025	76
Total Participants:			725

1.2 Participants

Participation in this stage of Engagement was open to the Public. The participants outlined below were groups the City identified as especially impacted and affected and therefore advertisement efforts were especially focused here. These groups included:

1.2.1 Impacted Groups

Those who may be impacted or disproportionately impacted by the finalized Link design and the coming 2026 construction include the following groups:

- Businesses and residents in neighbourhoods adjacent to College Drive from Clarence Avenue to Preston Avenue:
 - Varsity View
 - Nutana
 - Central Business District (downtown)
 - Grosvenor Park
 - Greystone Heights
 - University of Saskatchewan
 - College Park
- Community members commuting to and from the area
 - Employees and visitors to USask
 - Employees and visitors to JPCH
 - Employees and visitors to RUH
 - Employees and visitors to Downtown Saskatoon

2 ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Participants provided their feedback through a survey, open houses or by contacting the project team directly. All engagement activities are described below.

2.1 Survey

The City conducted an online survey from March 17 to March 31, 2025. The survey included 3 closed- and 1 open-ended questions to identify considerations and overall support for the finalized designs. Respondents were able to access the survey by QR code during open houses, City Engage Page link and the Link Project Webpage. A paper survey was also provided as an accessible option during open houses.

2.1.1 Intended Audience

The survey was intended for all identified stakeholders and community members.

2.1.2 Marketing Techniques

The following techniques were used to reach the intended audiences.

1. City Website
 - a. Updates to the Engage Page were made to encourage participation in the online survey.
 - b. Updates to the Project Webpage were made to encourage participation in the online survey and links were provided to access design drawings and renderings to inform the survey responses.
 - c. Internal advertising included correspondence to Mayor and Council, Engagement calendar alerts and a MyCity article.
2. Social Media
 - a. Posts to Facebook and Instagram publicized the open house events.
3. Flyer Mailout
 - a. Event flyers (1,450) were mailed to identified properties in Varsity View and Nutana, informing them about the open house events and weblinks to find more information.
4. Email
 - a. Emails (1,200) were sent to identified stakeholders, outlining the purpose of the Link College Drive project and encouraging them to attend an open house to learn more.
5. News Release
 - a. A news release was circulated to share the event and engagement opportunities.
6. Portable Billboards
 - a. Eight billboards were placed around the city at key locations to advertise public events, plus two electronic signs on College Drive by Preston Avenue.
7. Corporate Information Sharing
 - a. Electronic posters were sent to USask and SHA communications to share information through their channels (i.e. email, digital platforms where available).
8. Newsletters
 - a. Event information was shared through identified newsletters, targeting businesses in the Downtown/ Varsity View area
9. Digital Media
 - a. Advertising screens on USask Campus

- b. Digital Billboards with a captive audience shared event information to the patrons visiting Circle Center Mall and Midtown Plaza.
 - c. Digital Banners shared information on CKOM, Bell and Corus.
- 10. E-Newsletter
 - a. E-newsletter sent out to all Link subscribers.

2.1.3 Analysis

The survey results were analyzed for the following indicators:

- Perceptions or opinions about the Link College Drive design.
- Thematic analysis of survey comments provided regarding perceptions and opinions about the design for College Drive.

Mixed methods research was used to analyze the data. Qualitative methods included the thematic analysis and open coding of responses.

3 WHAT WE LEARNED

Neighbourhood Representation

- All survey participants live in Saskatoon, residing in 33 of the 65 neighbourhoods.
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How people use College Drive

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dissatisfied as they anticipate that traffic will be much worse in an area that is already “a problem area” for traffic. Many expressed concerns over the additional traffic light on College Drive because it could slow their commute, some anticipate a “back-log” or “bottle neck” during high traffic times and others worry that adjacent neighbourhoods will get busier as commuters change their route as a result of the lane reductions and high traffic on College Drive.

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4 EVALUATION OF ENGAGEMENT

Engagement Survey Results

One aspect of a successful engagement session is informing the public well and providing accessible avenues for feedback. Most survey participants indicated that the information was clear and understandable, they were able to provide their input fully, they understood how their input will be used and that the survey took a reasonable amount of time to complete.

The Project Team also administered a very brief Engagement survey at the open house events. A limited number of attendees took the time to complete this additional survey but those who did indicated that they attended the open house to learn more about the College Drive design, they wanted to share ideas with the project team, they wanted to see how the design will improve their daily routine and for general interest. When asked how their experience of the open house was, nearly every participant indicated that they were very pleased.

5 NEXT STEPS

A report on the Engagement and College Drive Link design will be presented to City Council in the Spring 2025. For more information about the project and when the report will be presented to City Council, please visit our [Engage Page](#).