

# Saskatoon Freeway Project Update

## ISSUE

The purpose of this report is to provide information on the progress of the Province's Saskatoon Freeway project.

## BACKGROUND

In 1999, a partnership involving the Saskatchewan Highways and Transportation (now Ministry of Highways & Infrastructure (MHI)), the Rural Municipality of Corman Park and the City of Saskatoon (City) 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 No. 11 (south) to Highway No. 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
  - a) From Highway No. 11 (south) to Highway No. 16 (west)
- 2009: Perimeter Highway Study Phase 2
  - a) From Highway No. 16 (west) to Highway No. 14 (west)
- 2018: South Saskatoon Freeway General Location Study
  - a) From Highway No. 14 (west) to Highway No. 7 (west)
  - b) From Highway No. 11 (south) to Highway No. 5 (east)

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

The Standing Policy Committee on Environment, Utilities and Corporate Services at its meeting held on April 1, 2019, considered the Development of the Swale – Northeast Swale Working Group Update and resolved, in part:

- “2. That the Administration report further on the process from the Technical Working Group – Environment and Heritage and the impacts on the planning of the Saskatoon Freeway.”

## CURRENT STATUS

### Saskatoon Freeway Functional Planning Study

In February 2019, MHI held a kickoff meeting to begin the Saskatoon Freeway Functional Planning Study (Study). MHI'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.

The Study is broken into three phases as shown in Appendix 2. Each phase is expected to take one year to complete.

### City of Saskatoon Involvement

The Study's organizational chart is shown in Appendix 3. 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.

### Technical Working Group – Environmental and Heritage

The Saskatoon Freeway will be crossing a number of environmentally sensitive areas, including the Northeast Swale and South Saskatchewan River valley. The Environmental and Heritage TWG includes diverse members from the City, Meewasin Valley Authority (Meewasin), Wanuskewin and Swale Watchers and will provide a thorough review of the environmental and heritage impacts and mitigation options. The Environment and Heritage TWG will meet regularly to discuss how to cross these environmentally sensitive areas in a sustainable way, how to reduce or mitigate the impacts to these areas, and identify what environmental and heritage objectives should be met in the design of the highway.

To assist in ultimately mitigating impacts, Meewasin has been retained to:

- Complete on-site environment field studies this summer to collect additional information on the wildlife and vegetation in these sensitive areas; and
- To compile all known previous information, including information from MHI, Meewasin, City, and the University of Saskatchewan.

Additional environmental work will be completed when progressing to construction to obtain environmental approval from regulatory agencies, typically 1 to 3 years prior to construction. This can include a full Environmental Assessment review.

## **DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS**

The first steps of this project are focused on identifying issues with the proposed alignment, developing design objectives and confirming the underlying highway network needs and traffic projections. The Committees and TWGs have begun meeting and are scheduled to meet at regular intervals.

## **NEXT STEPS**

The City will continue to work with MHI and SNC-Lavalin to complete the Study.

**APPENDICES**

1. Saskatoon Long Term Transportation Planning Study – Fundamental Principles of Agreement
2. Saskatoon Freeway Functional Planning Study Phases
3. Saskatoon Freeway Functional Planning Study – Organizational Chart

**REPORT APPROVAL**

Written by: Sheliza Kelts, Transportation Engineer, Transportation  
Reviewed by: David LeBoutillier, Engineering Manager, Transportation  
Jay Magus, Director of Transportation  
Approved by: Angela Gardiner, General Manager, Transportation & Construction  
Department

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