

Secrecy at City Hall

8 messages

Let's Rethink the Green Line <info@greenlineinfo.ca>
Reply-To: Let's Rethink the Green Line <info@greenlineinfo.ca>
To: lindsaypatrick367@gmail.com

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Let's Rethink the Green Line



Too much secrecy about a project that drastically impacts Calgary's future

Why is the Green Line Board and Council so elusive about the Green Line numbers?
What is Council afraid of? What don't they want us to know?

The secretive, in-camera meetings, ongoing delays and excuses about the design and alignment changes confirm that citizens don't honestly know what's going on with the Green Line.

We're in the dark because it's virtually impossible to uncover details. After all, too many decisions, including crucial financial information, are protected under FOIP (Freedom of Information) until 2037, denying us the right to know this project's scope and costs.

When Council discusses Phase 1 of the Green Line next Tuesday, we expect it to vote to proceed with the project without disclosing significant costs or risks to the City's financial future.

What is Council hiding from us?

Could it be that there isn't a business case for the Green Line, and perhaps there never was? Was the City so seduced by the Trudeau government's 'green' funding for housing and transit, money that comes with costly conditions, that they didn't do their homework?

If the rationale and business case for the Green Line were sound, why not disclose the total costs of both Phase 1 and 2? Why not reveal full development, construction, operating, and maintenance costs—the full meal deal, not bits and pieces that distort the magnitude of risk for the City and taxpayers?

How can Council commit to Phase 1 without a plan or budget?

Taking advantage of summer inertia, City Council will vote to proceed with Phase 1 during its July 30 meeting. They will commit to high-cost, high-risk tunnels under downtown's problematic flood plain, a decision that raises serious safety and financial concerns. Despite very few, if any, new riders, they will commit to the shortened line from Eau Claire to Shepard (or Ogden rail yards). They will continue writing blank cheques to international consultants responsible for tripling cost overruns for several other Canadian LRT projects.

Calgarians will have to dig deep to cover a vast funding shortfall

The Phase 1 budget was set at \$5.5 billion, with a combined \$3 billion commitment from provincial and federal taxpayers. Calgary taxpayers will have to cover a funding gap of \$2.5 billion.

The Green Line Chair has repeatedly said they need another \$2 billion to complete Phase 1, likely to cover the risks of underground tunnels. We expect Phase 1 costs to reach \$8.0+ billion. Calgary taxpayers could be on the hook for a \$5 billion shortfall! For only the Phase 1 'Nowhere Line.' If ever built, Phase 2 to the airport and higher-density communities that guarantee new riders could cost upwards of \$20 billion.

The benefits touted by the Green Line Board—creating transit services for a growing city, building housing around transit stations, and getting cars off the Deerfoot—won’t happen for another 15 - 20 years. By then, Calgarians will be locked into a high-cost, fixed rail system instead of innovative, flexible, door-to-door transit solutions already appearing in other cities worldwide.

Do you trust Council to make the right decision for taxpayers?

Council won’t share the ballooning costs and lengthy time frame because it knows taxpayers’ patience has worn thin—and with good reason.

- They approved 8% tax increases and their raises.
- They hid grossly inflated electricity fees, not to be addressed until 2025.
- They ignored crater-like potholes, parks, trees and green space.
- They mismanaged critical infrastructure, leaving Calgary with severe water restrictions for almost two months.
- And they thumbed their noses at concerned citizens who rejected blanket rezoning.

Their track record is dismal! Their reputation is in tatters!

Demand transparency on the Green Line. Councillors must come clean.



We have so many questions and need more honest answers!

1. ***What are the actual costs of the Green Line?*** Please don't fudge the numbers and pitch lowball estimates. We want the total costs of the Green Line: Phase 1 (\$8 billion?) plus Phase 2 (\$20 billion?), as well as operating and maintenance costs for the entire scope of the project (another 60%?). All in, are we talking \$30+ billion?
2. ***What about the Spanish billionaire who owns the companies behind the Green Line?*** The two bidders for the Green Line are part of the same parent company, owned by Spanish billionaire Florentino Pérez, who boasted he would win the project whichever bid the city approved. [ACS-ACCIONA CEO Green Line Contracts August 2022](#) This process was not transparent and above board.
3. ***Why brand-new ground-loading cars instead of compatible platform cars?*** Because they look cool isn't the correct answer! The City chose CAF, another Spanish subsidiary, to manufacture new ground-loading rail cars incompatible with current C-Train platform-loading cars. They ordered 28 cars, requiring another operations and maintenance facility. It seems like the Spanish owners wrapped up this deal from start to finish. [City chooses Spanish firm to supply cars for the Green Line.](#)
4. ***Do ridership numbers support this mega-investment?*** Calgary has no ridership potential to warrant a high-cost fixed rail solution. Neil McKendrick, a former Calgary Transit Planner, advises that "the level of ridership between southeast Calgary and downtown is significantly less than needed to justify an LRT line. Ridership from this area barely supports the existing bus routes. Phase 1 doesn't offer sufficient benefits to achieve the lofty ridership projections used to promote this project. No evidence supports connecting north and southeast LRT lines with an expensive, risky tunnel." [McKendrick-A-Business-Case-for-the-Green-Line-Jun-2021.pdf \(greenlineinfo.ca\)](#)
5. ***What deals have been made with developers?*** Harvard Developments sold a portion of Eau Claire land to the City for the C-Train station at 2 Street S.W. They plan to transform the area into a mixed-use development over the next several years. What other concessions besides the Eau Claire station did the City make to Harvard? What other land deals have been made along the route to Shepard? How can Council make these financial commitments without

knowing Phase 1's construction and operating costs and whether the project is even financially feasible?

6. ***How did the City expropriate 23 townhomes with no approved plan or budget?*** Facing the loss of their homes at below replacement costs to make way for the Green Line, Eau Claire homeowners objected to the land grab. The subsequent inquiry was critical of the City's approach, stating that transparent and forthright communication was "in short supply or absent." [City moves to expropriate townhouse complex in Eau Claire to make way for Green Line LRT](#)

Do you trust Council to make the right decision?

We've watched this Council fumble decisions for months. They failed to deliver vital water supplies to citizens, ignored Calgarians who voiced concerns on blanket rezoning, irresponsibly raised our taxes, and continued pursuing a radical climate emergency plan with an \$80+ billion budget.

The Green Line could be the greatest fiasco yet. Similar to Toronto, transit costs could lead us to bankruptcy and ruin our reputation as the economic and commercial centre of Western Canada.

Phase 1 alone is ten times bigger than the new event centre! Yet, many Calgarians are unaware of the secret decisions of Council and Green Line Board.

Calgarians deserve a more innovative, affordable transit plan, learning from other cities as they face skyrocketing costs for their LRT projects built by the same Spanish consortiums.

The time to voice your concerns is right now! It could be your last chance to influence your Ward Councillor before Tuesday, July 30.

Tell your Councillor to rethink Green Line costs!

[Contact the Mayor, City Council and the Green Line Board](#)

“The trouble with secrecy is that it denies government the wisdom and resources of the whole community.”

J. Robert Oppenheimer, Director, Manhattan Project

[The Green Line Ad Hoc Citizens' Committee](#)

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info@greenlineinfo.ca

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