



June 26, 2024

Council Meeting

Re: Report of the Standing Policy Committee on Public Works Dated June 11, 2024

2. Preliminary Design Study Route 90 Improvements - Taylor to Ness Avenue

Greeting Mayor and Council,

There is compelling evidence that the cost to widen Route 90 has been grossly underestimated, the benefits overstated and more effective, less costly alternatives ignored. The Transportation and Land Use Coalition (TLUC) urges Council members not to approve the Administration's request to approve the preliminary design for the reconstruction and widening of Route 90 at your June 27, 2024 meeting until these issues are fully addressed and in a transparent manner.

Council and Winnipeg taxpayers were told in 2011 that the project's estimated capital cost would be **\$129-million** (\$2009). The current estimate is that capital cost has soared to **\$521.6-million**, an **increase of 404%**. This is far more than can be explained by either construction inflation during this period or changes in project scope. **We urge Council members to hold the Administration accountable by requesting that they explain why the cost of this project has been seriously underestimated.**

A preliminary analysis by TLUC members reveals **numerous concerns with the Route 90 Benefit-Cost Analysis Technical Report** that underpins the Administration's request to widen Route 90 in conjunction with its reconstruction.

First, the report **understates the scale of the proposed widening** using wording and headings such as ‘Two-lane versus Improved Three-lane Facility’. In fact, many portions of Kenaston from Academy to Taylor will have far more than just two lanes added. For example, Kenaston at Academy will be expanded from four to ten lanes. Also notable is that the report excludes mentioning that a third span will be added to the St. James Bridge to accommodate the widening. This omission is significant given that **this project competes with scarce infrastructure dollars needed to repair or replace the Arlington, Louis and Redwood Bridges.**

Second, the **Administration’s report makes several questionable assumptions** that:

- make the project’s benefit-cost analysis appear more favourable; and
- excludes other assumptions that have the opposite effect.

For example, there is **no rationale given for why administrative and contingency costs are excluded** from the calculation of the project’s benefit-cost ratio or internal rate of return to justify the extra expense to widen Route 90 as part of its reconstruction. In addition, the decision to **exclude debt and financing charges and loss of property tax revenues** from private property purchased or expropriated for the widening are two of many decisions that **skew the benefit-cost analysis.**

The TLUC finds it troubling that the Administration failed to provide transportation and urban planning experts from the community the opportunity to review and provide feedback on key assumptions used in the Administration’s draft benefit-cost analysis. As was done for the Southwest Rapid Transit Corridor, **Council should not rely upon the Administration’s report alone and insist that a new, independent benefit-cost analysis for the proposed widening of Route 90 be done.**

Third, claims by proponents that widening Kenaston will result in major benefit in **goods movement** and **access to Centreport**, and is also essential to the **development of Naawi-Odena** are ‘red herrings’. The Administration’s report admits that a mere **4%** of traffic along this route are related to the movement of goods. The report also states that “outside peak hours travel times will be **marginally worse** than the existing facility” on both weekdays and weekends due to an increase in signalized intersections.

For the development of Naawi-Odena, the Administration notes that there “Currently there are **no known land development or intensification projects that are entirely contingent on adding a third lane to Route 90** in the study area” and “As such, there is **no additional municipal revenue** associated with this project.”

In addition to the above, the TLUC has other serious issues with the proposed widening of Kanaston and adding a new, third span to the St. James Bridge including:

- an increase in greenhouse emissions and negative environment impacts;
- failure of the project to meet the new Transportation Master Plan's proposed goal to reduce single occupant use to 50% by increasing use of other more sustainable modes (e.g., vehicle passenger, transit, cycling, walking, etc.);
- significant adverse impact on city finances due to the increased cost of the project attributable to the widening and extra bridge span;
- diversion of funding from other priorities such as transit and Transportation Demand Management; and
- insufficient public engagement process and an ineffective Public Advisory Committee.

In conclusion, reconstructing Kenaston and rehabilitating the St. James Bridge should not be used to justify an expensive, uneconomic and unsustainable widening of Kenaston and adding a third span to the St. James Bridge that, even the Administration admits, will result in “**ongoing time savings that are marginal**” and has a **negative benefit-cost analysis** when mitigated construction delays during two construction seasons are excluded.

Sincerely,

Richard Milgrom & Marianne Cerilli
On behalf of the Transportation and Land Use Coalition