

LRT options open to online comments

Apr 03, 2010 06:00 am | By Kristina Jarvis

The City of Edmonton has opened up online consultations for the proposed northwest LRT line to St. Albert.

The website, which went live on March 22, allows users to watch YouTube videos of Adam Laughlin, Edmonton's director of facility planning in transportation, explaining the three proposed routes that would start at NAIT and lead to St. Albert's proposed park and ride south of the Superstore.

"It's just a way for people to comment who can't make it to the open houses," explained Laughlin in an interview. "It's an interactive way to allow us to understand the impact on neighbourhoods."

The website is moderated by Nanos Research, which specializes in public opinion research. Laughlin said moderation ensures comments remain relevant and on topic, adding there were very few problems with the site to date.

Edmonton hosted two open houses, on March 23 and 24, to allow residents of both Edmonton and St. Albert to see the designs and ask questions of city planners. Laughlin said several representatives from the City of St. Albert, including Mayor Nolan Crouse and transit director Bob McDonald, attended the sessions.

“We’re cognizant of that regional connection,” Laughlin said about the consultations with St. Albert. “We can’t lose sight of the idea that we have the chance to help the region.”

McDonald said the public consultations have helped the city understand the needs of transit riders. He believes the proposed routes would work well for St. Albert residents who want another way to get to Edmonton.

“What we know of our customers, they want the route that would get them to downtown Edmonton the fastest,” he said. “St. Albert, as evidenced by our contributions to the study and our agreement to build the park and ride, is willing to help out with this.”

McDonald’s counterparts in Edmonton tell him around 1,300 comments have been registered on the northwest LRT consultation website. He encourages St. Albert residents to use the website to let planners know what route they would like to see built.

Laughlin said the comment section on the site will close in early April, when the city will collect the results. Alignment recommendation will go to Edmonton city council in early June, however construction is potentially years in the distance. The northwest line is estimated to cost \$1.5 billion.

“The priorities in the city right now are the north line to NAIT, a west route, then the southeast,” he said. “We have a number of steps involved before we can build it.”

The website can be found at www.northwestlrt.econsultation.ca.