



51st Street and Millar Avenue Intersection Improvement

What We Learned - Engagement Summary
October 23, 2024



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51st Street and Millar Avenue Intersection Improvement Project Overview

The City of Saskatoon is reviewing the intersection of 51st Street East and Millar Avenue to identify a permanent design that addresses the safety and operational issues that exist at this [intersection](#).

A review of the Millar Avenue and 51st Street intersection was conducted to assess the level of service after the construction of the North Commuter Parkway. A review of the intersection identified problems in the following areas:

- Safety concerns at the driveways north and south of the intersection,
- Poor level of service during peak hours,
- Does not meet accessibility standards,
- Delays due to train crossings on 51st Street, east of the intersection, and
- Challenges for large vehicles heading westbound to make a right turn northbound.

Three different options were developed to address these issues, including:

1. Option 1 (Improve Accessibility) - [Roll Plan A](#)
2. Option 2 (Relocate Driveways) - [Roll Plan B](#)
3. Option 3 (Complete Reconstruction) - [Roll Plan C](#)

In addition to the 51st Street and Millar Avenue Intersection Improvement project, civic staff are undertaking the Connecting the Millar Avenue Project. The Connecting Millar Avenue project is reviewing Millar Avenue (from 43rd Street to Marquis Drive) for design of walking and cycling facilities. Given the similar geographic extent, engagement activities for both projects were combined. The study limits of the 51st Street and Millar Avenue Intersection Improvement project scope are within the study limits of the Connecting Millar Avenue project.

Summary of engagement activities for 51st Street and Millar Avenue

The goal of this engagement was to **inform and consult with** businesses and property owners directly adjacent to the 51st and Millar Avenue intersection. Additional work was done to inform the public about the potential changes. For a summary of the engagement strategy for the project see Table 1.

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Table 1: Summary of Engagement Strategy

Engagement Event		Engagement Purpose	Participants	Engagement Goal	Engagement Activities
1	Virtual Meetings with Stakeholders	Communicate and gather feedback	Businesses and property owners directly adjacent to the 51st Street and Millar Avenue intersection.	Ask, gathering feedback from stakeholders on their preferred option for the 51 st Street and Millar Avenue intersection improvement.	One-on-one stakeholder meetings
2	Open House	Communicate and gather feedback	Businesses and property owners directly adjacent to the 51st Street and Millar Avenue intersection. General public	Inform, share the roll plans and gather feedback and preferred option on the 51 st Street and Millar Avenue intersection improvement.	Open house Engage page
3	Online Survey	Gather feedback	Businesses directly adjacent to the 51st Street and Millar Avenue General public	Inform, share the roll plans and gather feedback and preferred option on the 51 st Street and Millar Avenue intersection improvement.	Online survey Engage page

One-on-one Stakeholder meetings

There are 41 businesses and property owners directly adjacent to the 51st Street and Millar Avenue intersection. Letters were sent out to these businesses and property owners to inform them of the project and to provide them the opportunity to meet with City staff to provide their feedback.

Only four businesses responded. One business provided their feedback through a phone call and summarized their concerns and preference through email. Three virtual one-on-one meetings were held with the other businesses who responded to the City's email. During the meeting, roll plans outlining the three different options were presented to the businesses to give them a visual representation of the proposed changes. Minutes were taken during the meetings to ensure questions and concerns from the business were documented. The businesses were given the opportunity to ask questions and select their preferred option.

What We Learned from Stakeholder Meetings

Preferred Option

One business preferred Option 1, one preferred Option 2 and the other two preferred Option 1 but found Option 2 to be acceptable.

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Option 1

One business preferred Option 1 because it does not change the driveway access to their property. With this option, three of the businesses wanted to know how much land acquisition would be required as they were concerned with losing parking spaces and spaces for their signs.

Amongst the two businesses that preferred Option 1 but found Option 2 to be acceptable, one mentioned that Option 1 was preferred as it was the least restrictive. The other mentioned that Option 1 will be favourable for their business.

Option 2

Amongst the two businesses that preferred Option 1 but found Option 2 to be acceptable, one business had reservations about the closure of the entrance to the refuse area on their property but expressed their willingness to have the entrance closed if they can continue their easement agreement with the adjacent property owner.

The other business disclosed that relocating driveways will create issues for them.

Option 3

All four of the businesses that met with the City were opposed to Option 3. Concerns raised were that the option will restrict the entrances to their establishments to have right-in/right-out access to/from Millar Avenue. For two of the businesses, property acquisition was their main concern with this option.

Open House

The open house event was hosted with the Connecting Millar Avenue project on July 16, 2024 from 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm, at the Rusty Macdonald Library. The engagement activity was promoted through the 51st Street and Millar Avenue Intersection Improvement project's [Engage Page](#) which is shared with the Connecting Millar Avenue Project. There were 14 attendees. At the open house, there were display boards showing the various options so that attendees had visualizations of the options. The project team was available to answer questions. Five attendees filled out the event evaluation forms and two of them left comments on the form.

What We Learned from the Open House

Most of the attendees provided feedback to the project team. One business owner adjacent to the intersection and one property owner adjacent to the intersection attended.

Some of the attendees indicated their support for Option 2 and others also showed their preference for Option 3. Comments heard from attendees were about accessibility and, pedestrian or cyclist safety concerns at this intersection. Some attendees made suggestions about changes to the configuration of driveway accesses at the intersection.

Two of the attendees that filled the event evaluation form wrote that they commute via the 51st Street and Millar Avenue intersection. Others use the roadway to commute or to access businesses, events and recreational facilities. Four out of the five attendees that filled out event evaluation forms preferred Option 2. Reasons included that this option would improve safety while being the least disruptive, and that this option is the most likely to be constructed. Regarding Option

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2, one participant commented that they were concerned about moving the driveways away from the intersection. Only one attendee that filled out the form preferred Option 3, commenting that the option is a safer option than the others. No participant that filled out the form chose Option 1.

Online Survey

The online survey questions for the 51st Street and Millar Avenue intersection improvements were added to the Connecting Millar Avenue online survey. The survey ran from July 2 to July 30, 2024, a link to the online survey was provided through the project's [Engage Page](#). There were two specific questions in the survey related to the 51st Street and Millar Avenue project. There were 172 respondents to the whole survey. For the two 51st Street and Millar Avenue project questions, approximately 70 respondents answered question 1 and 34 respondents answered question 2.

What We Learned from the Online Survey

Question 1

When asked which option was preferred for the Millar Avenue and 51st Street Intersection Improvements, of the 70 respondents, 21 preferred another option, 19 respondents preferred Option 2 and the rest of the respondents selected Option 1 or 3 – see Figure 1, below.

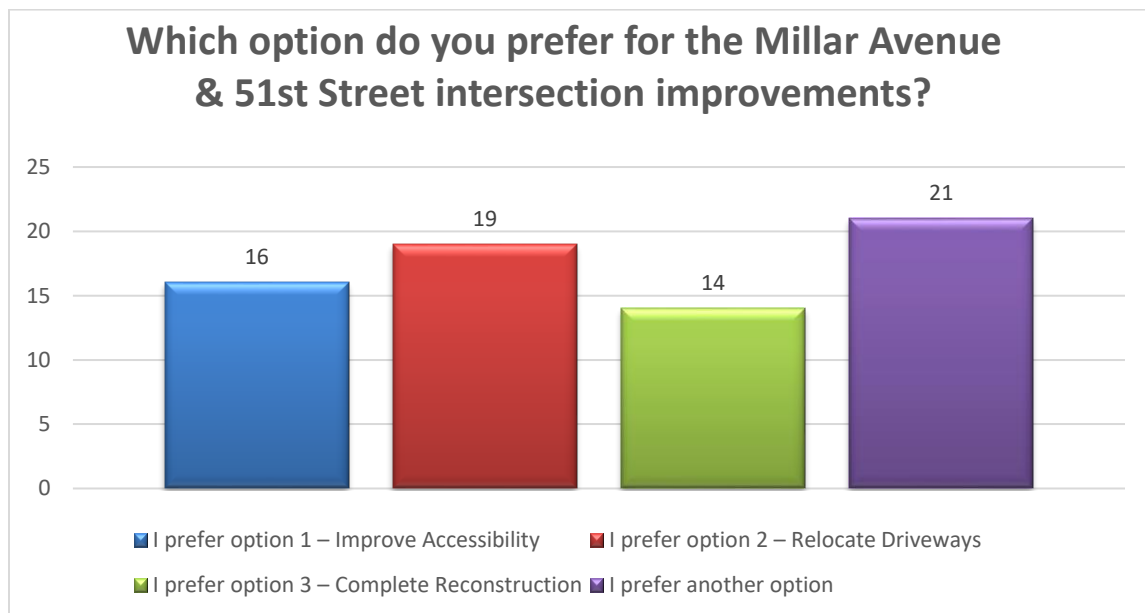


Figure 2: Preferred options

Question 2

Respondents were asked to provide further details on concerns they have with Option 1, 2, or 3. Below are some of the common themes heard.

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Feedback specific to their preferred option

- “Option 2 seems an appropriate balance between improving the intersection safety and costs/interruptions to business access.”
- “Option 2 or 3 are the winners for me. Closing off that...entrance/exit [at] McDonalds that faces west right by the intersection would do wonders. I have had so many close calls in my car by people blindly turning out of that or stopping very fast after turning to the south when heading west; that needs to be closed for sure and 2 and 3 address that. THANK YOU for proposing to complete the path that crosses the track on the south side of 51st...”
- “This intersection becomes very congested during peak times, and reconstruction is the best option. However, the plan C proposal does not go far enough. Dedicated right then lanes in all direction need to be included rather than sharing on the straight through lane (especially on Millar going North). An additional southbound dedicated left turn lane is also crucial.”
- “I’d prefer option 1 because my option isn’t likely feasible but here it is anyway. Build a pedestrian overpass or tunnel! No need to move anything or slow traffic, just build a pedestrian walkway.”
- “I think a full reconstruction is very necessary but also option one would help somewhat, option 2 seems like a cheap route/bandaid fix that ultimately wouldn’t do enough to help.”

Some of the respondents indicated that option 2 or 3 would solve the concerns at the intersection.

Concerns about existing driveways

- “I am extremely concerned about the existing placement of the driveways. If there is a pathway going across them, there are a lot of potential conflict points where cars would be distracted by the intersection and wouldn’t be paying attention to the pedestrians/cyclists.”
- “That turn into McDonalds currently is always blocked for people turning left into the parking lot by people stopped at the traffic light. Driveways on the other side (Tim’s and the Co-op) can be similar. This would discourage dangerous driving maneuvers”
- “The McDonalds needs its own service road or relocated driveway, people stop to turn left into the driveway and others turning behind them cant see at all until its too late, so option 1 wouldn’t work, it will have to be option 2 or 3!”

The driveway into McDonalds was a concern that some respondents raised.

No support for the project

Some respondents were not in support of the project. Some expressed that the government needs to spend money on other projects.

- “Leave it alone unless you’re putting in pedestrian overpasses. It’s hard enough to cross the street without adding pedestrians into the mix. It can take 10 minutes to get a chance to turn left across Millar from 43rd-51st at lunch time, and if you add crosswalks, I can guarantee that one spot to turn gets taken by a...pedestrian.”
- “Do not do any of this”
- “Not safe at all save...money”

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Uncertainty or no preference about the options

- “I am not sure which is the best option”
- “I do not have a strong opinion on this - just looking online I have a hard time visualizing the different options.”
- “Unclear on B and C differences.”
- “...I'm not able to offer an opinion because I don't understand what you're trying to say on the display board maps. Very confusing for a lay person to try and figure out what the proposed changes are. I will say that I think the current intersection design is a disaster, with my biggest issue being the placement of driveways (McDonald's off Millar...).”

Limitations

The number of attendees at the open house and survey respondents may not represent most people that use the intersection. The survey did not clearly articulate the thoughts of the respondents that preferred another option. Some participants may have limited access to internet or technology that presented challenges in accessing the online survey. Other participants may not have a clear understanding of the roll plans.

Next Steps

Engagement results will be shared with the project team in the Transportation Department to inform next steps. The engagement summary will be appended to the Administration report for the Standing Policy Committee on Transportation (SPCT).