Frequently Asked Questions

The Need for a North Commuter Parkway

Why is a North Commuter Parkway needed?

The North Commuter Parkway is part of the Bridging to Tomorrow initiative which also includes the Traffic Bridge Replacement project. Both will provide significant benefits to the citizens of Saskatoon and the province.

Bridging to Tomorrow is about investing in our future for the benefit of everyone and is focussed on:

- Making strategic investments in public infrastructure to address the existing travel demands of our rapidly growing city and province.
- Having effective and efficient infrastructure that is integral to the jobs, growth, and prosperity that defines the remarkable performance of the Saskatoon economy, which is critical to the quality of life enjoyed by our citizens.
- Providing critical commuter connections in key areas of the city, addressing traffic congestion, reducing intersection delays, shortening travel times, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- Ensuring reliable and responsive service, using strong management and fiscally responsible strategies, communicating effectively, and demonstrating innovation and creativity.
- Achieving our strategic goals related to continuous improvement, asset and financial sustainability, quality of life, moving around, environmental leadership, sustainable growth and economic diversity and prosperity.
- Achieving the planning goals for the Growing Forward! Shaping Saskatoon initiative.

How will Saskatoon Transit use the bridge? Will there be dedicated lanes for buses?

The bridge will be six lanes, three on each side, and able to accommodate a dedicated transit or High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lane in the future if required.

Project Costs and Funding Model

What are the estimated project costs?

The estimated capital cost of the North Commuter Parkway is $211.4 million, and the estimated capital cost to replace the Traffic Bridge is $41.2 million. The total estimated capital cost to construct Parkway and replace the Traffic Bridge is $252.6 million.

How will the Parkway be funded?

In May 2013, City Council approved that the North Commuter Parkway Project be combined with the Traffic Bridge Replacement project to take advantage of joint financing and competitive pricing; and that Administration continue to pursue available funding for these projects from the Federal and Provincial Governments.

A funding application was submitted to PPP Canada (P3 Canada) in June 2013. The P3 Canada Fund is focused on provincial, territorial, municipal and First Nations public private partnership infrastructure projects. The amount of the funding support, in combination with any other direct federal assistance, may not exceed 25 per cent of the project's direct construction costs.

On June 9, 2014, P3 Canada announced the Government of Canada will contribute up to $66 million of the direct construction costs to build the North Commuter Parkway and replace the Traffic Bridge.

The Province of Saskatchewan also announced a contribution of $50 million to be used to help fund the building of the Parkway.

The City of Saskatoon will contribute the remaining funds to complete the project.

What are the benefits of the P3 funding model?

- Dollar for dollar, P3s tend to deliver better "value for money" over the long term – when all costs, risks, repairs and maintenance are accounted for, it is often more cost-effective than the city building and maintaining the infrastructure on its' own. Savings realized can be used to fund other core services or offset other costs.
- They provide a way to finance needed infrastructure that may not be affordable for the City to deliver on its own.
- They ensure projects are delivered on-time and on-budget – the transportation needs of citizens can be addressed sooner, and the impact on property taxes can be minimized.
- Fixed payments over the life of the agreement make it easier to plan and budget accurately.

Why is the City using a P3 delivery model for this project?

Using the P3 Design-Build-Finance-Operate-Maintain (DBFOM) model, the City and a private sector partner will enter into a 30-year agreement to design, build, finance, operate and maintain the North Commuter Parkway and the new Traffic Bridge.

The P3 approach has been used successfully in major municipalities and provinces across Canada and we believe it is the right approach for this important project. The Civic Operations Centre is also using the P3 approach. For more information on the benefits of the P3 approach to that project, please see Public Private Partnerships.

Is there precedence for this funding and the timing?

The federal government, through P3 Canada recently announced $200 million in funding for a major highway bypass that will divert traffic around the City of Regina. The federal government believes using the P3 approach in this case will allow the bypass to be completed years earlier than it normally would be.

Several roadway and bridge projects have been undertaken in Alberta in recent years, and delivered with overwhelming success. The first P3 project in Alberta was the Southeast Anthony Henday Drive project in Edmonton; with 24 bridge structures, this project had a larger scope than the Parkway Project and was delivered within 33 months of the P3 agreement being signed.

About the Parkway

What is the Parkway?

The North Commuter Parkway Project (the Parkway) includes 10km of new major arterial roadways (extension of McOrmond Drive and Central Avenue - four, five and six lanes), and a 400m long six-lane river bridge. The bridge and roadways will include pedestrian and cyclist trails.

What parts have four lanes, five lanes and six lanes?

Marquis Drive and McOrmond Drive will be increased from four to six lanes at each end leading up to the six-lane bridge.

McOrmond Drive will be five lanes from the east side of the bridge to the intersection with Central Avenue.
McOrmond Drive will be four lanes from the intersection with Central Avenue east to the intersection with Fedoruk Drive.

Central Avenue will be four lanes.

Will the Parkway be a freeway?

No, the Parkway is designed to be an arterial road and bridge. The operating speed of the proposed roadway and bridge west of Central Avenue is expected to be 70 km/hr. The operating speed of the proposed roadway east of Central Avenue is expected to be 50 km/hr.

Will heavy commercial trucks be allowed on this bridge?

The North Commuter Parkway is neither a designated truck route, nor a freeway. Bylaw 7200,The Traffic Bylaw states that commercial hauling should follow designated truck routes except for local deliveries which require trucks to take the most direct route from a designated truck route to their destination.

How much traffic will use this Parkway?

Over 20,000 vehicles per day are projected to use the bridge in the first year of operation. With a future population of 300,000, up to 40,000 vehicles are expected to use the Parkway each day. At a future population of 400,000, over 50,000 vehicles are expected to use the Parkway each day.

How will the additional bridge impact traffic flow on the Circle Drive North Bridge?

Opening day traffic volume on the Parkway is expected to result in a significant reduction in existing traffic using the Circle Drive North Bridge as it will provide a shorter and faster commute for many people in current and future neighbourhoods. The Parkway will also result in additional traffic reductions on the City’s other river bridges.

Will the Meewasin Valley Trail continue under the bridge portion of the Parkway?

The Meewasin Valley Trail currently runs adjacent to

Wanuskewin Road on the west side of the river in this area. This project will include a pedestrian crosswalk at the intersection of Wanuskewin Road and Marquis Drive. The Meewasin Valley Trail does not currently extend this far north on the east side of the river, but provisions are being made to provide for a future trail crossing of the Parkway on the east side of the river.

Are sound attenuation walls planned for future neighborhoods located adjacent to the bridge?

The provision of sound attenuation will be considered as part of future land development in the area. As the details of these future developments are not available at this time, sound attenuation along undeveloped areas are not within the scope of the Parkway project.

Will I be able to access the Parkway directly from McOrmond Drive, Central Avenue and Marquis Drive?

Yes. Please see Concept plan for North Commuter Parkway Project image.

How long will the Parkway last before it needs replacement?

The bridge section will be designed and constructed to a minimum life cycle of 75 years, as required by the Canadian Highway Bridge Design Code. The associated roadways will be designed and constructed to a minimum life cycle of 50 years. A concession period of 30 years is being proposed for the project at this time. Regular maintenance work will be required to keep the new infrastructure in good condition.

How can you justify the need for a six-lane bridge?

The concept plan originally recommended a four-lane bridge that would cost $102.5 million and could be expanded to six lanes in the future.

Expanding to six lanes in the future would require removal of the existing shoulders, bikeways and sidewalks, adding two lanes and rebuilding shoulders, bikeways and sidewalks. The cost of this expansion in the future would cost about $30 Million (2013 dollars) more than building a six-lane bridge to start with.

Isn't the biggest need in this city to have freight (truck) traffic move efficiently and effectively?

The Perimeter Highway will serve a strategic role as a component of the National Highway system and will serve some commuter traffic demand. However it is also necessary to provide an additional river crossing to adequately provide for commuter traffic between east side neighbourhoods and the north end employment area.

Why will the Parkway decrease traffic Circle Drive South?

We expect a significant amount of commuter traffic between neighbourhoods in northeast Saskatoon and the Marquis Industrial area to shift to the Parkway. With traffic capacity available on Circle Drive North, traffic across Saskatoon’s other river bridges is expected to shift through a “sorting process” that lowers overall trip times for users. This effect cascades to south Saskatoon bridges as users change their routes to reduce trip times. Also, if construction or traffic delays occur on other bridges, the Parkway provides another option to keep traffic moving.

What is the "sorting process"?

The term “sorting process” relates to a change in existing traffic patterns that occur when drivers are offered alternatives to reduce their daily trip times. For example, a current regular user of the University Bridge may alter their route to Circle Drive North if congestion is reduced in that area, which in turn offers current users of the Broadway Bridge an opportunity to reduce their trip time by using University Bridge instead.

What impact will the Parkway have on the neighborhoods it borders/goes through?

The Parkway will greatly reduce commute time for residents who live in many east side neighbourhoods and work in the north end employment area.

What new neighborhoods are being planned in the east and north east?

The University Heights Suburban Development Area (SDA) is made up of Saskatoon’s north east neighbourhoods, the University of Saskatchewan (University) lands, Agriculture and Agri-food Canada research lands, and future urban development lands. The University Heights SDA is bounded by 14th Street and College Drive on the south, the River on the west, City limits on the north, and the University’s Kernen Crop Research Farm on the east.

The University Heights Sector is approximately 16 square kilometres (4,000 acres) of the University Heights SDA that is unserviced land awaiting future development. The Sector is bounded by the Silverspring and Evergreen neighbourhoods on the south, the River on the west, and City limits on the north and east.

At full build-out of the Sector, the total estimated number of additional dwelling units is 12,308,the estimated additional population is 28,131 people, and the total estimated employment is 8,256 jobs. At full build-out of the Sector, not

including significant infill development that the University's Vision 2057 projects, the University Heights SDA will house 75,593 people.
How will the Parkway affect traffic coming and going to Warman and Martensville?
Current traffic congestion on Idylwyld Drive and Circle Drive North will be alleviated as commuters transition to alternate routes.

Why are we building this Parkway now?

Commuter traffic crossing the Circle Drive North Bridge continues to increase, causing congestion and travel delays. With major land development ongoing in University Heights (Evergreen, Aspen Ridge), the East Sector (Holmwood), and the Marquis Industrial area, the Parkway will ensure current traffic constraints are addressed and future traffic problems are mitigated before new developments are completed.

How is this project connected to the Integrated Growth Plan?

The Integrated Growth Plan (recently branded Growing Forward! Shaping Saskatoon), adopted by City Council in June 2012, outlines a transit, land use, roadway, and water and sewer servicing strategy for the growth of Saskatoon to a population of 500,000 people.

As part of the plan, additional infrastructure (roads and bridges) is needed to address growing transportation demands, and to meet the City's Strategic Goal of Moving Around. The plan identified an additional river crossing for commuter traffic between east side neighbourhoods and the employment area in the north end, and traffic between the west side neighbourhoods and the north end employment area.

The Parkway and the Proposed Perimeter Highway

Is the Province of Saskatchewan committed to build the Perimeter Highway? What is the proposed timing?

At this time, the Perimeter Highway is proposed. No decisions have yet been made by the Province to proceed with the Highway within a specific timeframe.

Why are we building both a Parkway and a Perimeter Highway?

The Perimeter Highway will serve a strategic role as a component of the National Highway system and will serve some commuter traffic demand. However it is also necessary to provide an additional river crossing to adequately provide for commuter traffic between east side neighbourhoods and the north end employment area.

Why are they so close together? Aren't you over-building for this area?

The possible alignments for the Parkway are limited by the location of the Northeast Swale crossing on the east side, the location of arterial roadway connections on the west side of the river, existing development on the west side of the river, and roadway geometry guidelines.

The proposed alignment for the Perimeter Highway was selected by the Ministry of Highways several years ago. The Perimeter Highway is still in the planning stage, but a number of changes have occurred since the original alignment was selected, including substantial residential development in east Saskatoon, at a rate much higher than initially anticipated. Project Management and Building Process

How will the project be managed?

A governance committee has been established which will provide overall strategic oversight of the project and senior decisions/approvals for matters not delegated to the project team. The City's project team will be responsible for project development, planning, and management of the project on behalf of the project sponsor. The City's project team will be supported by a team of financial, legal, and technical advisors as required to successfully deliver the project.

What is the building process and who will be involved?

1. Functional Plan – Prepared by the City Administration and approved by Council.
2. Conceptual Design (based on the approved functional plans) – Developed by the City Administration and its technical advisor.
3. Issue Request for Qualifications
4. Qualifications – Proponents respond to the Request for Qualifications with details regarding their project teams, experience, and qualifications. Three proponents are short-listed to proceed to the Request for Proposals stage.
5. Proposals – Proponents respond to the Request for Proposals with detailed designs, commercial terms, and other information. With respect to the roadways associated with the project, this would include general alignments and road right-of-way cross-sections, complete with stipulated lane, walkway, and bikeway requirements. For the bridge, proponents will determine the vertical profile, architecture, and structural design.
6. Award – The P3 agreement is awarded to the lowest compliant bid.
7. Design and Construction – The successful proponent will be responsible for overall design and construction of the project, including all roadways, bridge structures,

walkways, bikeways, and ancillary infrastructure. Traffic controls and street lighting, will be installed by the City.

8. Operation and Maintenance – The successful proponent will be responsible for operating and maintaining the new infrastructure for a concession period of 30 years.
9. Hand-Back – At the end of the concession period, the proponent will transfer responsibility for the infrastructure to the City. The P3 agreement will include provisions which will ensure the infrastructure is in "like new" condition at the time of hand-back.

What will the City do if the project is not completed on time or if there are cost overruns? Will the contractor be fined?

Using a Design-Build-Finance-Operate-Maintain project delivery method, the private sector assumes all of the risk with respect to schedule and cost overruns. The City acknowledges that certain delays are unavoidable and will have to be discussed at such time as they occur, however substantial completion payments will not be made until the project is completed.

Will the City choose a contractor who can provide 24-hour a day labour?

It will be left to the bidding proponents to determine whether 24-hour work days will be necessary to complete the project within the City's schedule, though it's unlikely that 24-hour work days would be employed for the entire duration of the project.

How is the traffic bridge a part of this project?

The Traffic Bridge Replacement Project is part of the Briding to Tomorrow initiative. In May 2013, City Council approved that the North Commuter Parkway Projkect be combined with the Traffic Brdige Replacement project to take advantage of opportunities for joint financing and competative pricing.