



May 22, 2026

Edmonton City Council
c/o Office of the City Clerk
City of Edmonton
1 Sir Winston Churchill Square
Edmonton, Alberta, T5J 2R7

To City Council:

Re: Item 7.1 Central Area Bridge Renewal Update, Infrastructure Committee, May 25, 2026

On behalf of the Edmonton Downtown Business Association (EDBA), we have outlined a series of considerations when discussing the Central Area Bridge Renewal Update on Monday. We appreciate the magnitude and importance of this work and acknowledge the City's proactive planning to address the anticipated replacements of the Low Level and High Level bridges.

Bridges are not only critical pieces of infrastructure - they are essential economic lifelines that connect Downtown Edmonton to the broader region. Ensuring reliable, predictable access to and from downtown must remain a central priority during both the planning and construction phases.

Maintaining Access and Minimizing Economic Disruption

Downtown Edmonton businesses are already managing the cumulative impacts of multiple concurrent construction projects. As additional major infrastructure work is undertaken in upcoming years, it is essential that the City adopt a coordinated, business-friendly approach to planning & design and to construction management. When advancing the planning phase, we strongly encourage the City to:

- To prioritize continuous and reliable access for residents, employees, goods movement, and services during all phases of construction
- Minimize overlapping disruptions across bridges, key access corridors, and other capital projects
- Establish clear contractor performance expectations in meeting timelines and elevated expectations for site cleanliness, wayfinding, communication, and the use high quality traffic control materials
- Provide real-time communication and navigation support to ensure downtown remains accessible and welcoming

While the report identifies efforts to coordinate construction and maintain bridges in service, we emphasize that access reliability must be treated as an economic imperative. Disruptions that reduce accessibility will directly impact business viability, employment, and downtown investment.



Need for a Coordinated Downtown Access Strategy

The bridge renewal program presents a rare opportunity to rethink how downtown connects to surrounding areas, specifically the south side. We recommend that the City:

- Develop a comprehensive downtown access and mobility strategy aligned with bridge replacement projects
- Evaluate opportunities to simplify and improve road network connections, including more direct routes across the river valley
- Address known challenges, such as constrained or indirect connections that create inefficiencies and safety concerns
- Ensure that future infrastructure supports both current and projected demand

Planning future bridges based solely on historical alignments risks missing an important opportunity to optimize network access for a growing city.

Future-Proofing and Economic Competitiveness

We appreciate the City's commitment to multi-modal transportation, including transit and active modes. At the same time, it is critical to recognize that:

- Automobile access and goods movement by vehicles remain essential to downtown economic function
- Businesses, service providers, and customers continue to rely on efficient vehicle access
- Enable reliable public transit connections across the river that integrate with the existing and planned transit network
- Future mobility trends, including autonomous and ride-share vehicles, will further increase demand for flexible and efficient road infrastructure
- Consider how these bridges could support future passenger rail service in Alberta, specifically the Calgary–Edmonton economic corridor

We encourage the City to ensure bridge replacements take a balanced, future-focused approach that supports all modes of transportation while improving downtown connectivity.

Placemaking and City-Building Opportunities

While the report states that the plan is for “functional bridge replacements (i.e. not signature bridges)”, we encourage the City to think creatively about the role of future bridges as part of Edmonton's civic identity social infrastructure. Beyond their functional role, bridges can:



- Serve as iconic landmarks and gathering spaces
- Incorporate lookout points, public amenities, or unique design elements
- Strengthen Edmonton's identity and enhance the river valley experience

While managing costs are critical for large infrastructure projects, we encourage the City to also determine how these bridges can enhance the attraction of Edmonton as a destination for residents and businesses.

Conclusion

The EDDBA understands the City's need to consider the eventual replacement of the Low Level and High Level bridges. At the same time, the success of these projects will depend on maintaining downtown accessibility, minimizing disruption, and ensuring that infrastructure investments support long-term economic vitality.

We would welcome the opportunities to further engage with the City throughout the planning and construction phases - to ensure that planned bridge replacements enhance the accessibility, vibrancy, and competitive position of Downtown and Edmonton overall.

Sincerely,

James L. Robinson
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