

Metro Line NW LRT Extension Project

Summary of Public
Engagement Report

Phase 2 Engagement

Summer/ Fall 2018



Prepared for:

The City of Edmonton

Metro Line Extension Project Edmonton
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What We Heard Report- Metro Line Northwest Extension Project

Overview

Building on the engagement completed in the concept validation phase of the Metro Line NW extension project in 2017 and early-2018, in mid-2018 the City of Edmonton invited the public to learn about the project team's recommended design options for the extension, and to share their opinion on these recommendations. This engagement took two primary forms: online, through a survey distributed by the City between July 10 and August 17, and in person, at two public information sessions in September and at 'Fun Day' in Ward 2.

Participants were informed of the design options for several crossings of the Metro Line NW LRT Extension. For each crossing, the project team's recommended option and an alternative were presented. In most cases, this was between a grade-separated and an at-grade option. The survey also invited participants to share the reasons for their preference.

Grade separation refers to the placement of the LRT track above or below street level, allowing transit to operate above or below road traffic. At-grade refers to track that is level with and runs alongside vehicular and pedestrian road traffic. At-grade rail offers the primary advantages of cost effectiveness (lower construction, development and maintenance costs than grade-separated alternatives), and ease of access. Grade-separated rail is considerably more expensive than the at-grade alternative, but offers the primary benefit of little to no impact on vehicular traffic and -- in the case of below grade -- less visual and auditory impact on the surrounding area.

For each intersection, the majority of respondents indicated a preference for the grade-separated option. In the case of Yellowhead Trail and the CN Rail Walker Yard, the majority supported the bridge over the tunnel option. These preferences align with project team's recommendations. The most common theme given as support for at-grade options was cost savings – for construction, development, and maintenance – while the most common theme in support of grade separation was reduced impact on traffic.

Project Background

In 2013, City Council approved the proposed Northwest LRT Concept Plan. The following year, the City requested to have the plan validated to confirm that the concept was feasible, justifiable and would operate successfully. The Northwest LRT Concept Plan Report (2014) identified Metro Line concept recommendations but left many items for further definition including consideration of grade separations, sustainable urban and neighbourhood integration with station locations and access, evaluation of additional segregations, potential Operations and Maintenance Facility (OMF) sites, and the concept of 'urban to suburban' style LRT. Input on these and other considerations is necessary to confirm the vision and final concept for the Metro Line.

In 2016, funding became available through the Public Transportation Infrastructure Fund (PTIF), setting the stage for concept validation and preliminary engineering for the Metro Line NW extension project.

Communications and Engagement Background

In May 2017, the City of Edmonton and the Metro North Partners (MNP) initiated public engagement and communications for the Concept Validation phase of the Metro Line NW LRT extension project. The first stage of engagement on the Concept Validation phase was intended to reintroduce the extension project to the community, and to obtain input to help finalize the concept design.

This engagement provided the project team with an understanding of the public's specific concerns and opinions related to the alignment, LRT operations, and the role of LRT in contributing to the sustainability and livability of communities. These determinations helped to focus engagement efforts for the second stage of the engagement process.

In January 2018, public engagement sessions were held with stakeholders and residents along the approved Metro Line NW LRT alignment. Attracting over 350 attendees over 3 events, these public engagement sessions focused on the Phase One concept plan. Phase One of the project includes an initial extension of the existing line into Blatchford. Participants were asked to advise on the following:

- Preferences for grade separations at key locations
- Preference for the level of design for Express Bus Service
- Any issues or concerns associated with placement of the alignment, such as traffic movements, pedestrian/cycling realm, noise/visual impacts, access to transit service, potential impacts on surrounding land uses, etc.
- Overall level of interest and support for the project at this stage

In the weeks that followed the Metro Line NW LRT Extension January 2018 public engagement sessions, the feedback collected was compiled and evaluated. This information was shared in the report that was presented to City Council on March 21, 2018.

Summer and Fall 2018 Engagement Summary

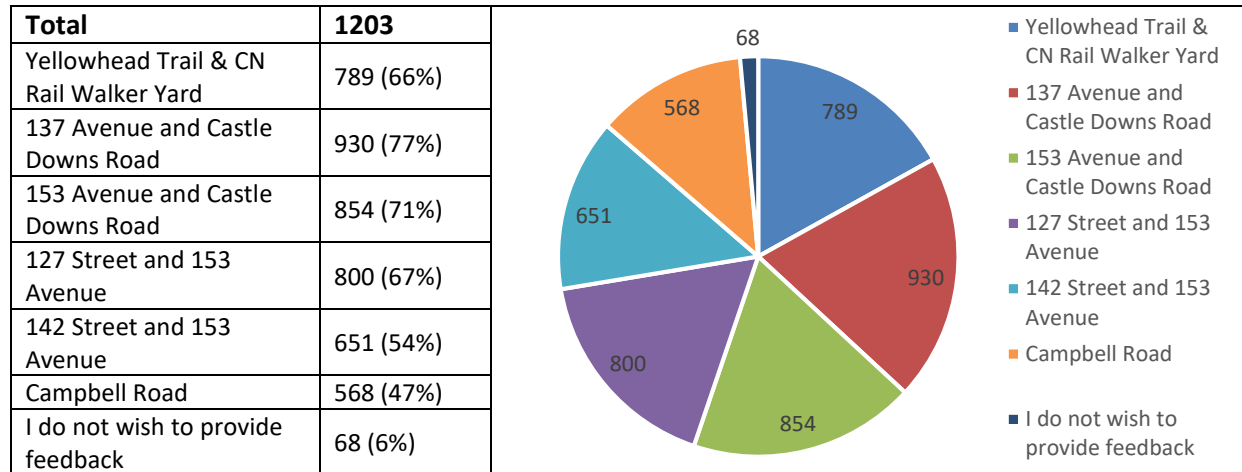
The project team developed a survey that shared information on the design options for intersections that will change as a result of the Metro Line Extension. The project team's recommended option was identified for each intersection. The survey invited the public to share their preferred design option for each intersection along with reasons for their preference. The survey was open to the public from July 10 – August 17, with 1,203 respondents in total.

Respondents were shown renderings of two options per intersection: the City's recommended option, and an alternative. The advantages and disadvantages of each option -- typically, one grade separated and one at grade -- were listed. They were then asked which option they preferred, and were invited to provide additional comments (such as the rationale for their preference).

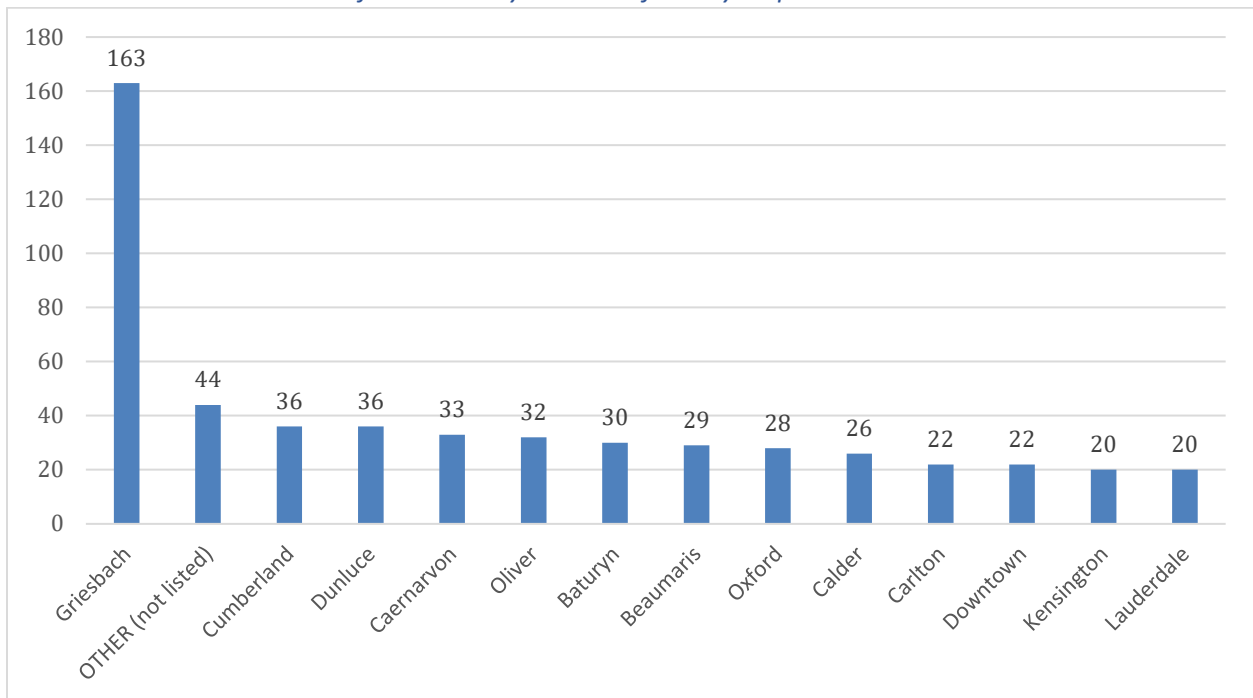
Engagement Summary - Survey

Demographics

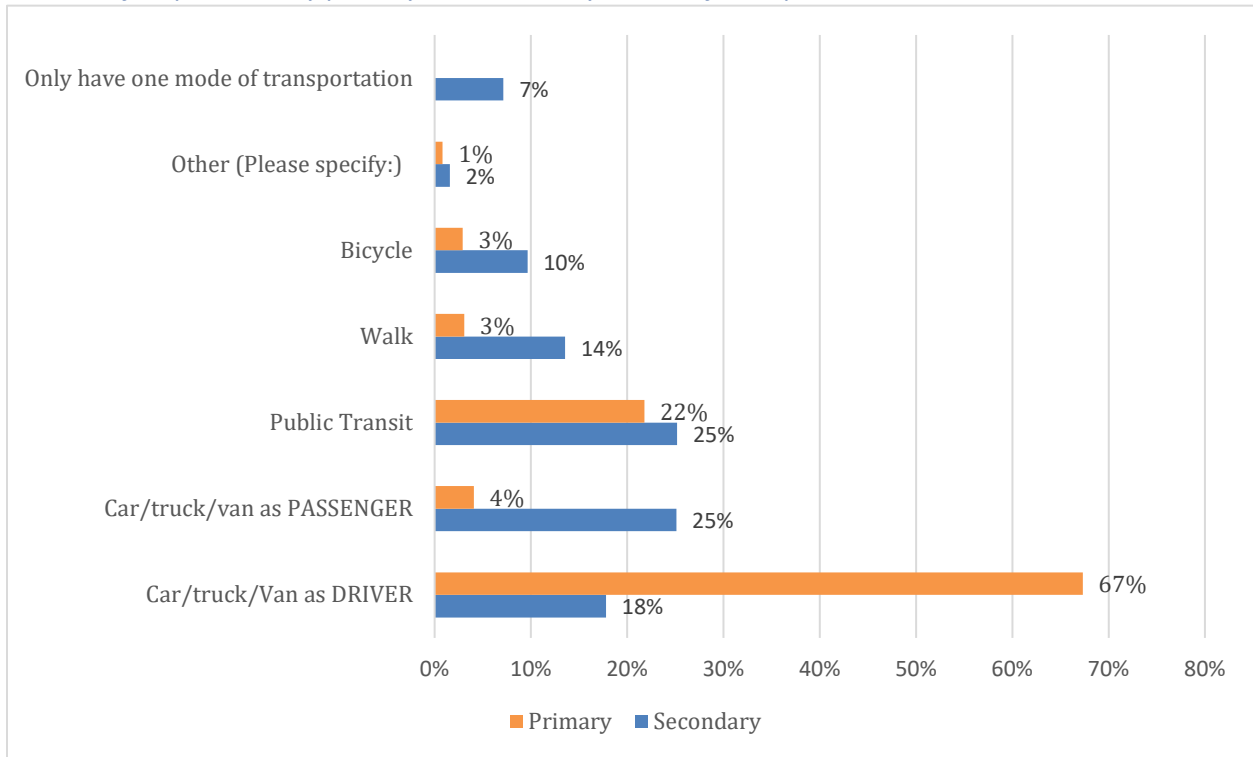
Number of respondents commenting on each location



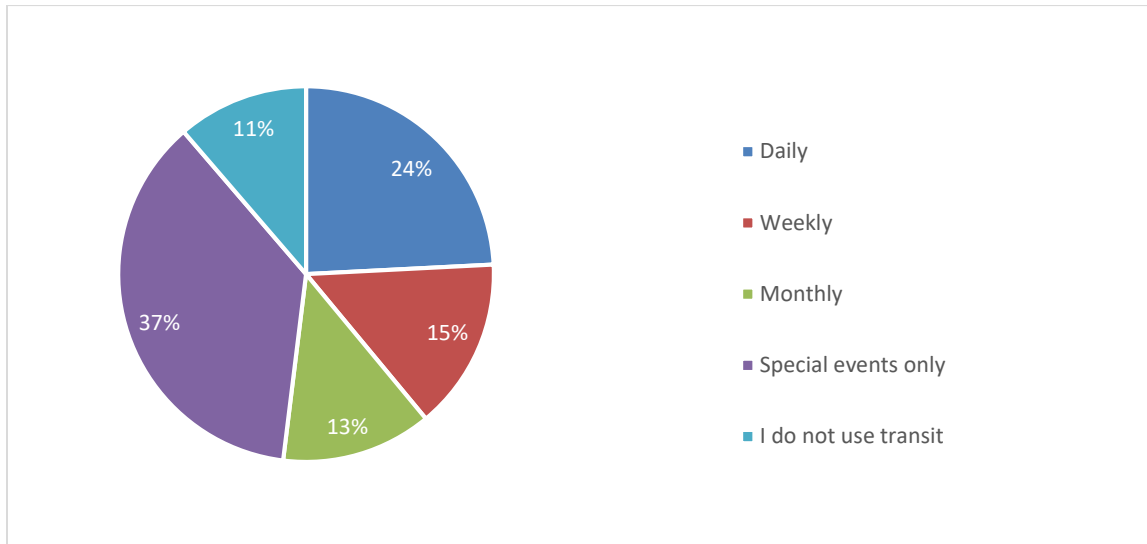
Most common communities of residence by number of survey respondents



Number of respondents by primary and secondary modes of transportation



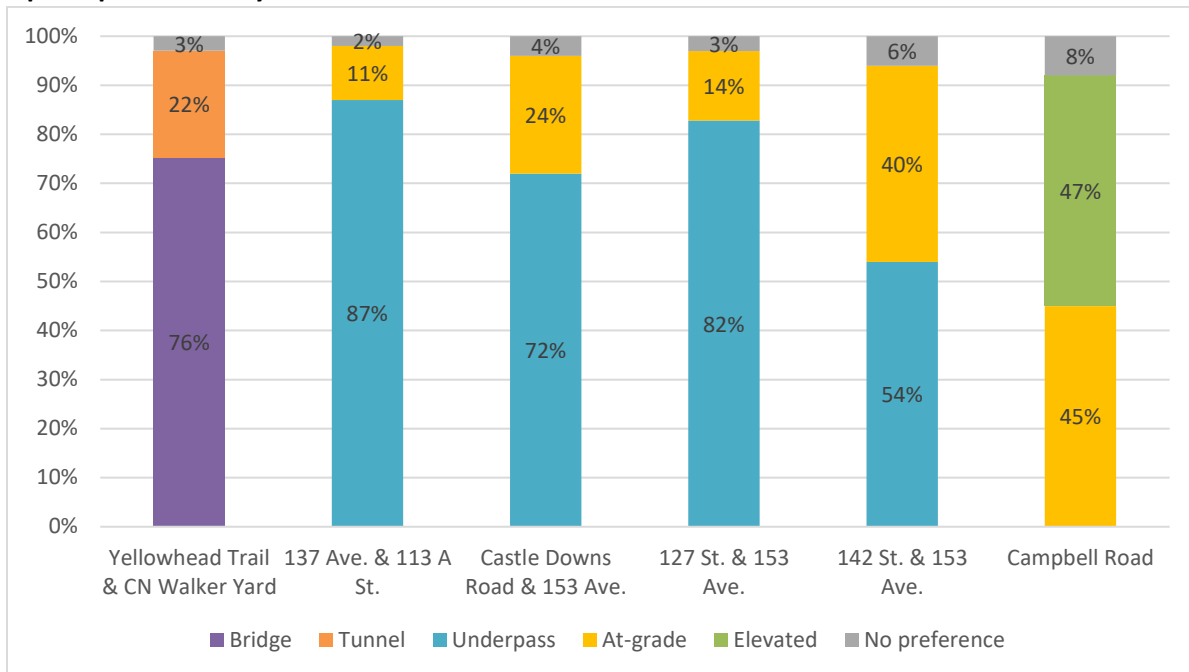
Frequency of transit use by percentage of respondents



Support and Themes

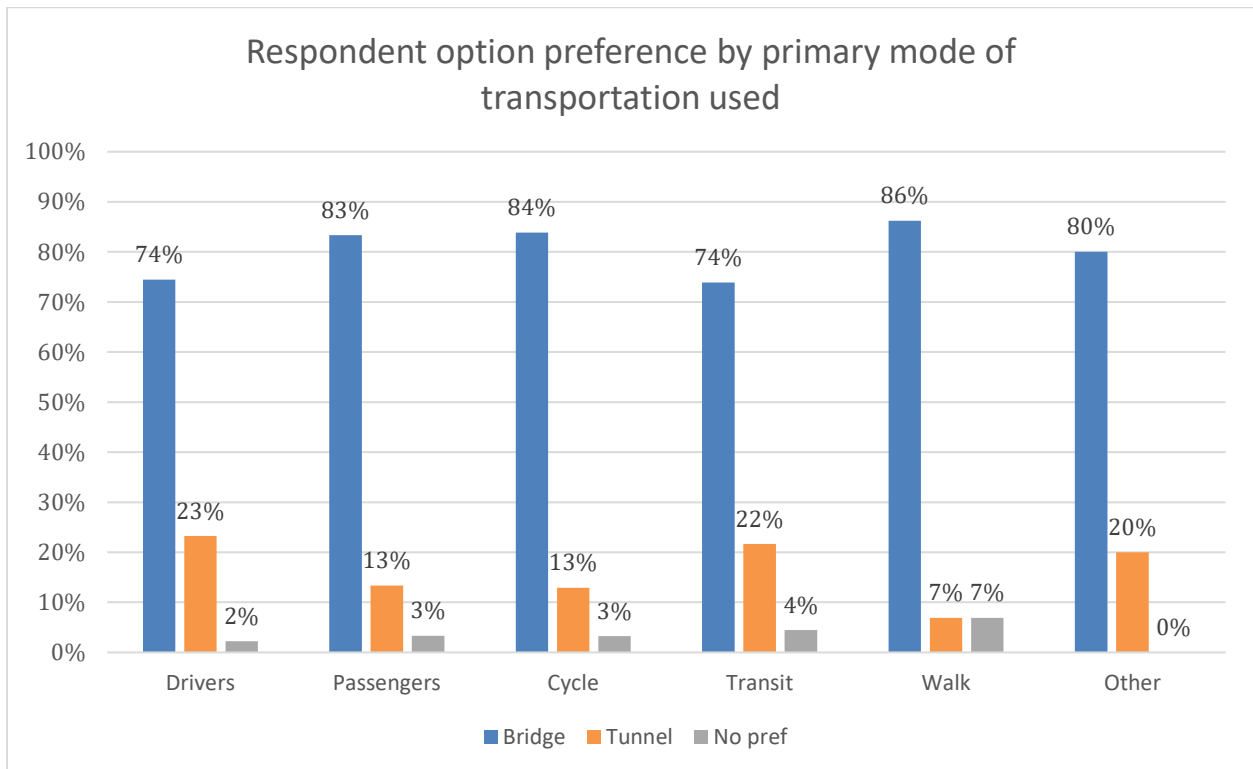
Key themes were very consistent across locations for each of the options. Feedback was divided broadly into two categories: in favour of grade separation, or in favour of at-grade. In general, supporters of the grade-separated option placed a very strong focus on traffic impacts, emphasizing that grade separation would mitigate negative effects on congestion. Improved LRT service (speed and reliability) was a common theme, as well. Supporters of the at-grade option highlighted cost savings, particularly relative to the advantages that the more expensive grade separated option would have at some intersections. Many at-grade supporters also listed ease of access -- particularly for those with mobility issues -- as a significant benefit.

Option preference by intersection



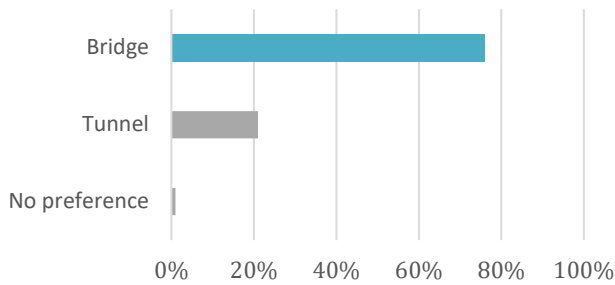
What We Heard (4,578 open-ended comments)

Yellowhead Trail & CN Rail Walker Yard

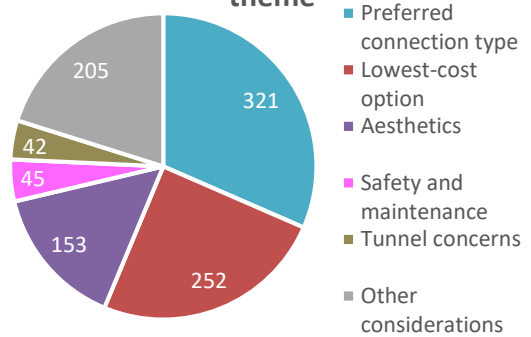


Bridge option (76% of responses)

Percentage of responses by option



Number of comments by theme



Preferred connection option for pedestrians and cyclists
(321 comments)

- safer connection option for pedestrians and cyclists
- improved shared-use path connection
- provides access to downtown

Lowest-cost option
(252 comments)

- lower cost than tunnel

Positive Aesthetics
(153 comments)

- visually appealing
- improvement over currently unsightly rail yard

Safer and/or easier to build and maintain
(45 comments)

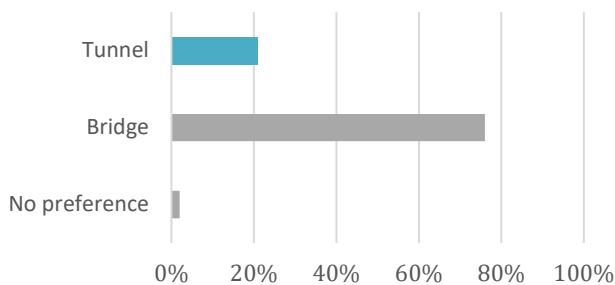
- safer than tunneling under train yard
- faster and less disruptive construction process
- easier to expand for future use if needed

Concerns regarding tunnel
(42 comments)

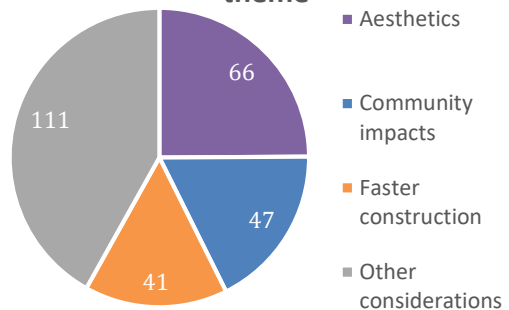
- tunnel presents more safety concerns
- flooding risks associated with tunnel
- more likely to impact CN tracks

Tunnel option (21% of responses)

Percentage of responses by option



Number of comments by theme

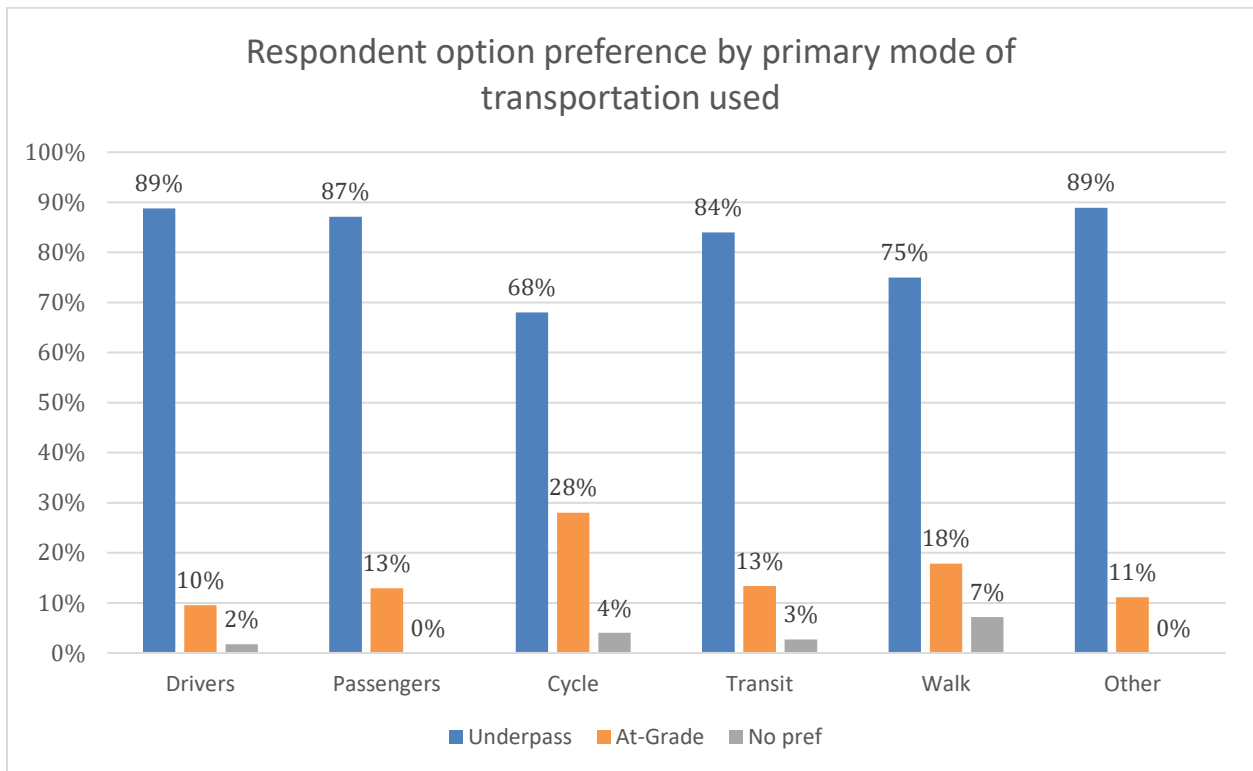


Aesthetics

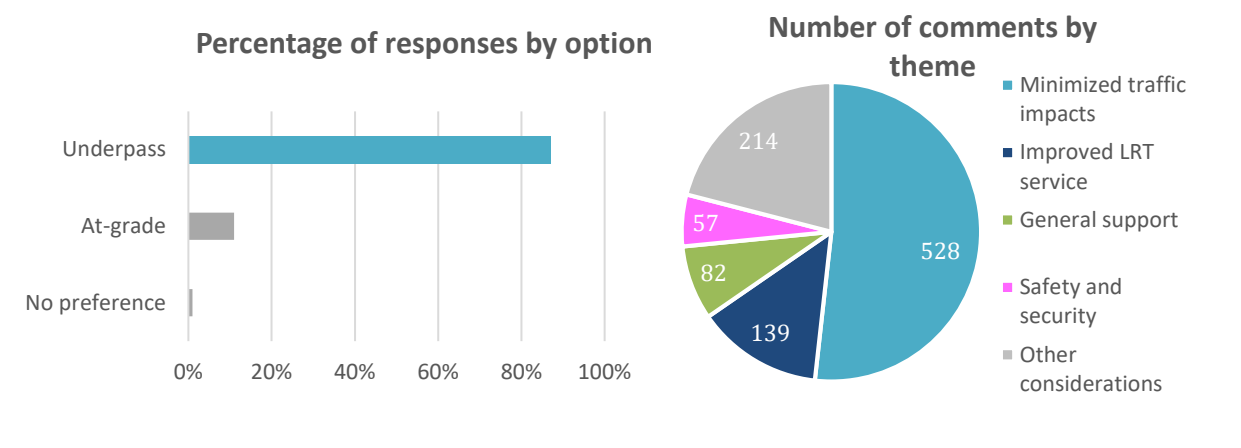
- skyline is maintained

(66 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● bridge is too obtrusive
Fewer negative effects on community (47 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● cleaner and less obstructive option ● less disruption to vehicle traffic
Faster construction and maintenance (41 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● doubt that bridge timelines are accurate ● easier winter maintenance of tunnel option (including snow removal)
No preference (2% of responses)	
General indifference (8 responses)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● no preference so long as solution is grade separated and does not affect traffic

137 Avenue and Castle Downs Road

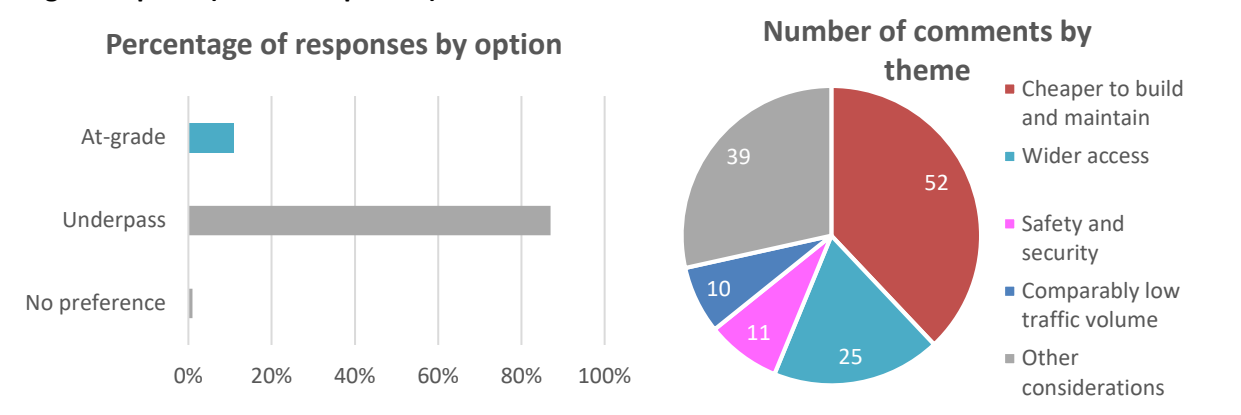


Urban LRT Underpass (Trenched) option (87% of responses)



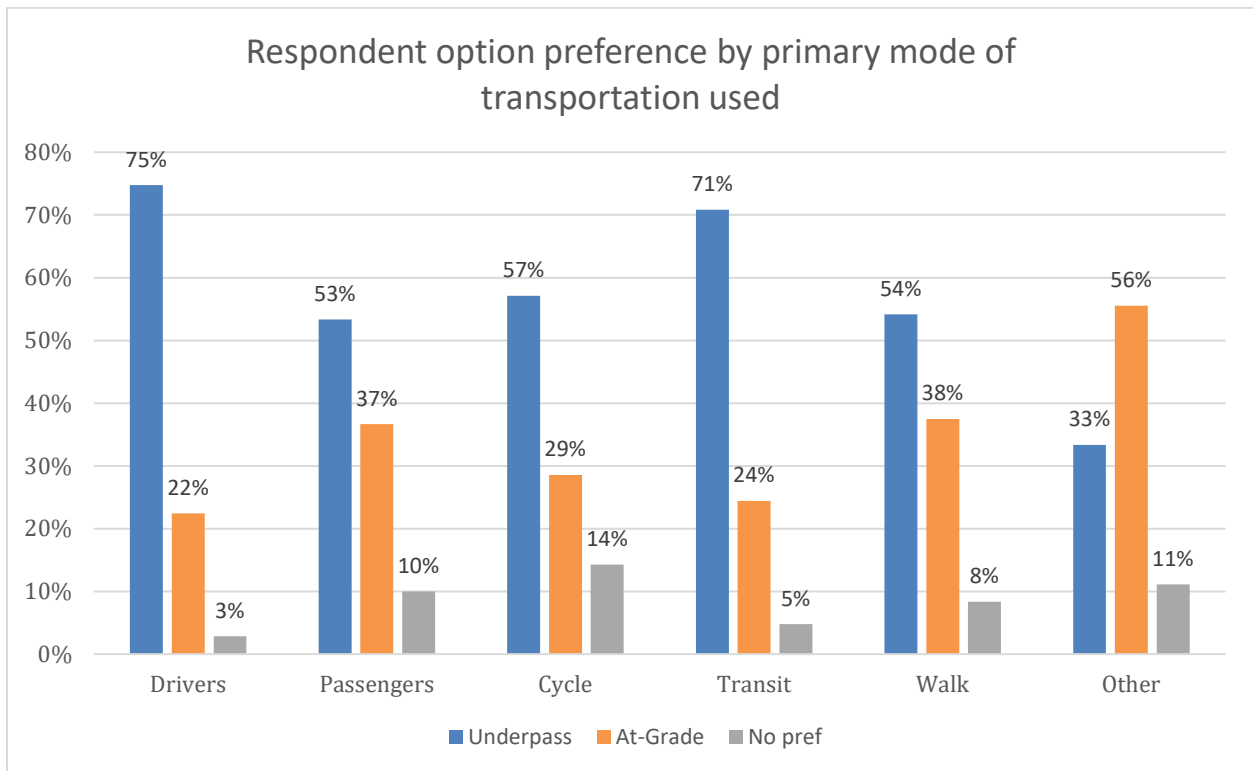
Minimized traffic impacts (528 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● reduced impact to vehicle traffic and waiting times ● lack of faith in signalling system to mitigate traffic issues
Improved LRT service (139 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● improved public transit flow between bus and LRT connections ● improved speed and reliability of travel
General Support (82 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● more cost-effective to maintain ● preferred for better integration with cycling, pedestrian, and vehicle traffic
Safety and security (57 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● lower chance of collisions with vehicles and pedestrians
Cost is worthwhile (42 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● higher cost of underpass option is worthwhile and provides better long-term value

At-grade option (11% of responses)

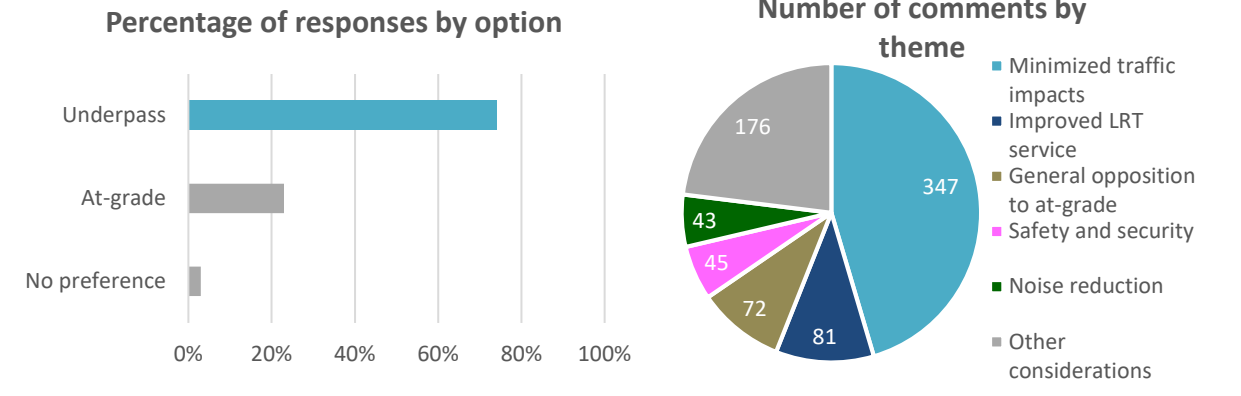


<p>Cheaper to build and maintain (52 comments)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● long-term cost savings in maintenance ● use cost savings for more complicated intersections
<p>Wider access (25 comments)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● easiest to access for pedestrians and people with mobility issues
<p>Safety and security (11 comments)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● increased visibility and less potential for crime
<p>Comparably less traffic impact than other crossings (10 comments)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● design will impact traffic less compared to other at-grade crossings
<p>No preference (1% or responses)</p>	
<p>Both options disruptive (6 comments)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● while both options are disruptive, grade-separated solution may be less disruptive

153 Avenue and Castle Downs Road

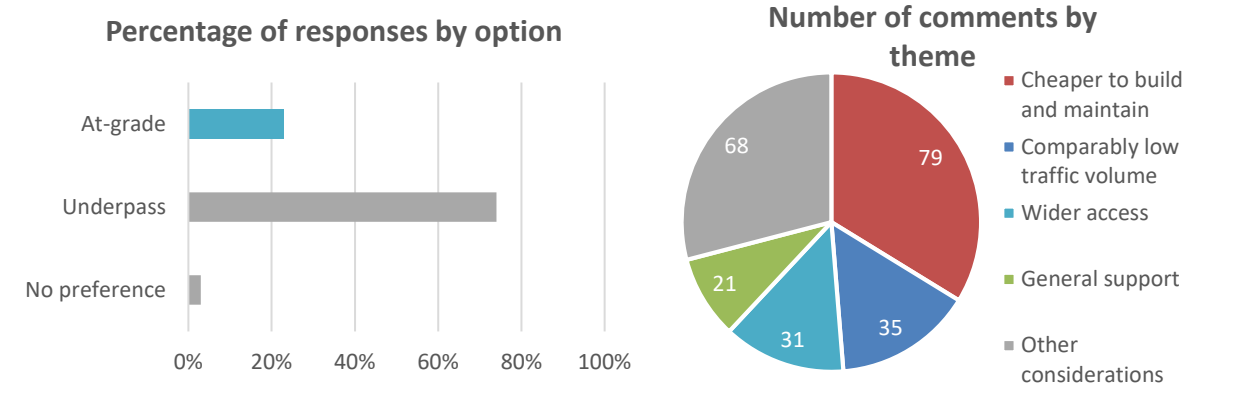


Urban LRT Underpass (Trenched) option (74% of responses)



Minimized traffic impacts (347 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● reduced impacts on vehicle traffic ● no reliance on signalling system ● more aesthetically pleasing than at-grade crossing
Improved LRT service (81 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● increased reliability of service ● faster travel speeds
General opposition to at-grade crossings (72 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● too many issues associated with at-grade LRT crossings ● if the cost of grade-separated solutions is prohibitive, do not move forward with LRT extension
Safety and security (45 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● minimized risk of collisions with vehicles or pedestrians
Noise reduction (43 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● minimized disruption from warning bells and other noise

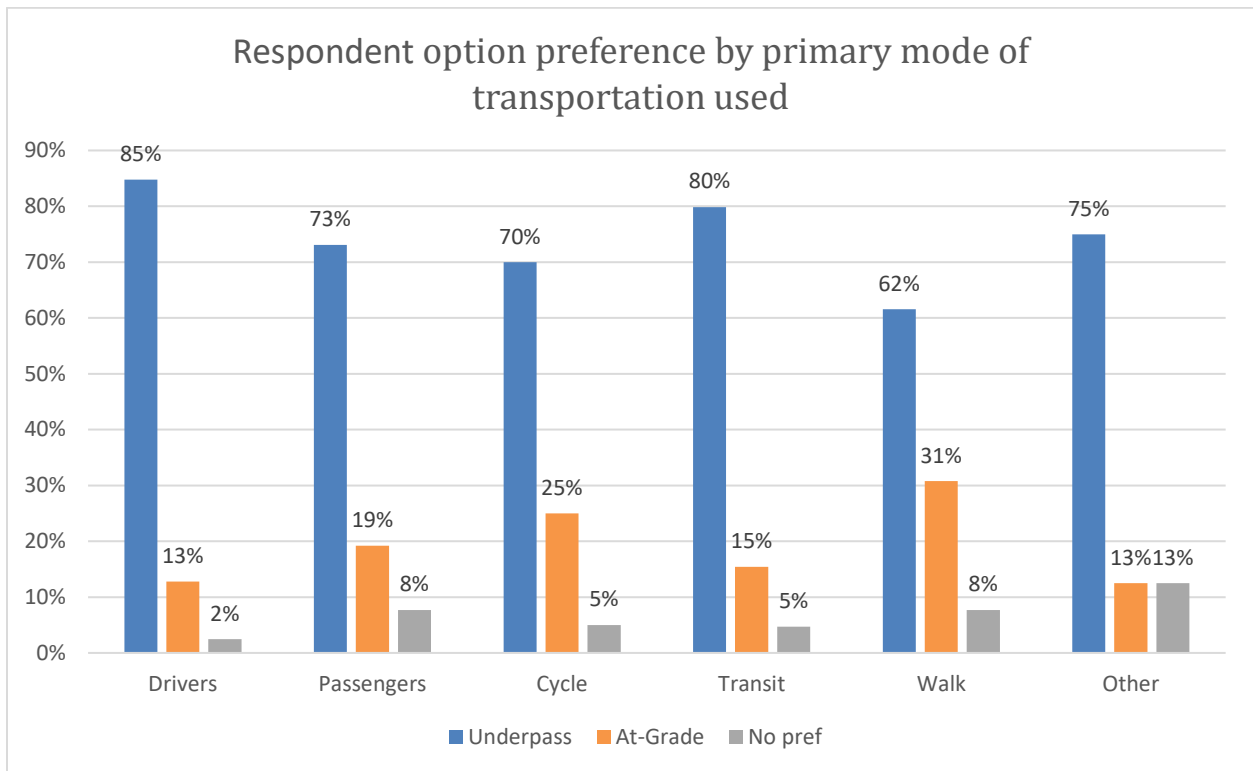
At-grade option (23% of responses)



Cheaper to build and maintain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● lowest-cost option
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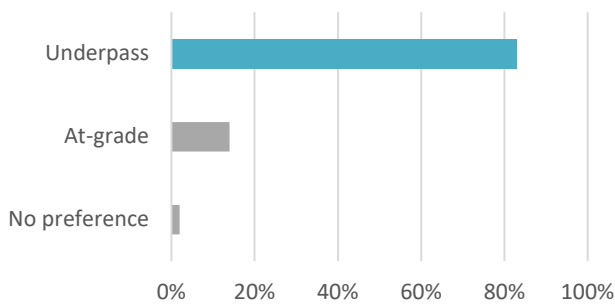
(73 comments)	
Comparably less traffic impact than other crossings (35 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● less disruption to vehicle traffic compared to other crossings ● cost savings can be put toward other intersections
Wider access (31 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● easiest to access for pedestrians and people with mobility issues
General support for at-grade option at this crossing (21 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● preferred overall option
No preference (3% of responses)	
Benefits and drawbacks to both options (7 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● trenched options are better for minimizing traffic impacts while at-grade crossings better serve pedestrians

127 Street and 153 Avenue

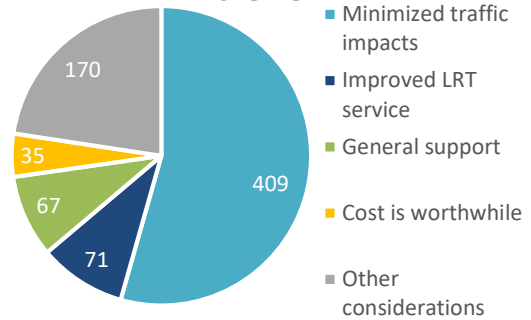


Urban LRT Underpass (Trenched) option (83% of responses)

Percentage of responses by option



Number of comments by theme



Minimized traffic impacts
(409 comments)

- reduced impact on vehicle traffic
- uniquely high-traffic area that would be best served by an underpass option
- skepticism that traffic impacts have been adequately evaluated by the City

Improved LRT service
(71 comments)

- increased reliability of service
- faster travel speeds

General support
(67 comments)

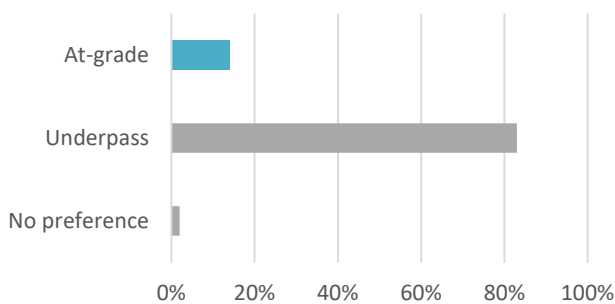
- intersection already faces challenges with traffic, minimizing disruption as much as possible would be best
- desire to avoid a NAIT-like situation
- desire to build infrastructure that will accommodate requirements of a growing city

Cost is worthwhile
(35 comments)

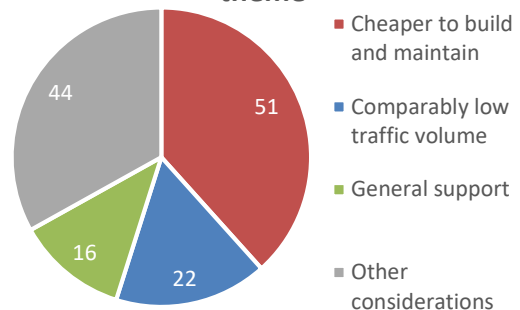
- higher-cost underpass option is worthwhile and provides better long-term value

At-grade option (14% of responses)

Percentage of responses by option

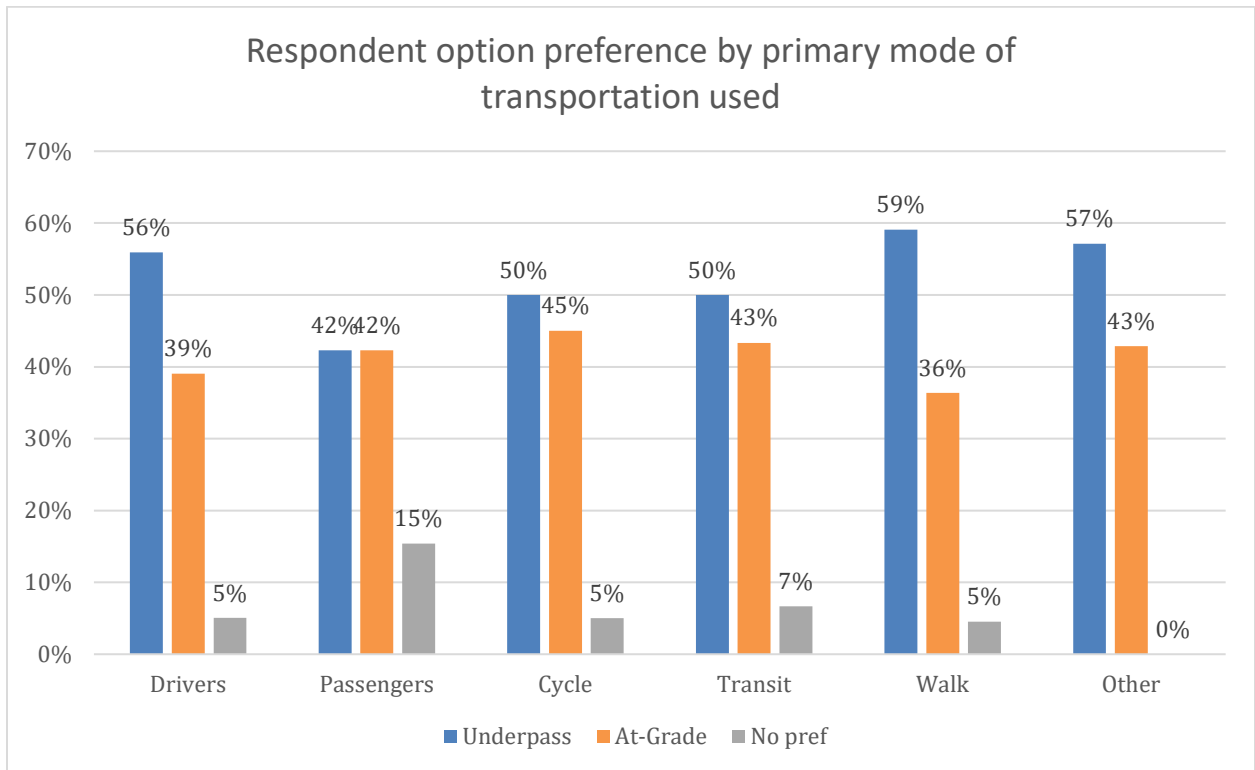


Number of comments by theme

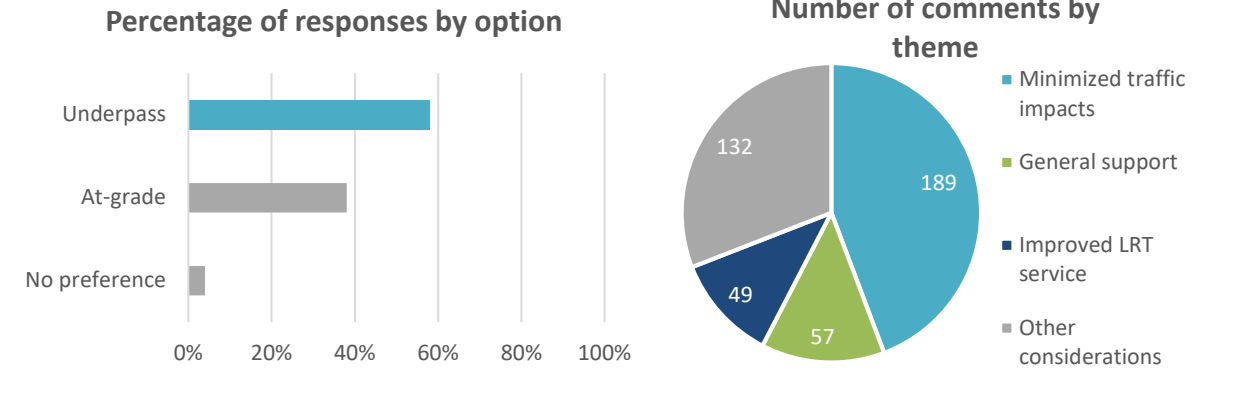


<p>Cheaper to build and maintain (51 comments)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● lowest-cost option ● will expedite construction of the LRT extension
<p>Comparably less traffic impact than other crossings (22 comments)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● design will impact traffic less compared to other at-grade crossings ● cost savings could be put towards other crossings
<p>General support (16 comments)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● area is primarily commercial ● at-grade crossing would provide adequate solution
<p>No preference (2% of responses)</p>	
<p>General opposition to LRT extension (4 comments)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● cost of LRT extension not worth the benefit ● impact on vehicle traffic will be too great

142 Street and 153 Avenue

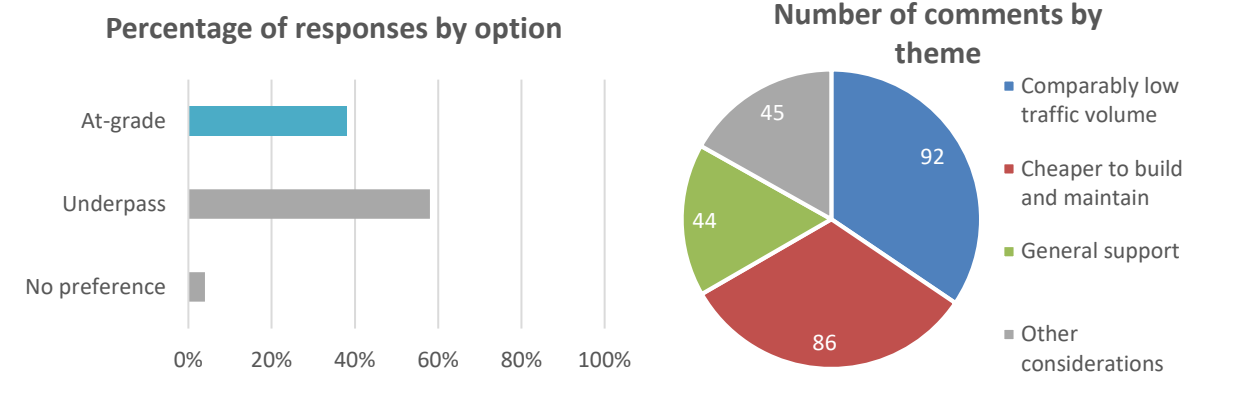


Urban LRT Underpass (Trenched) option (58% of responses)



Minimized traffic impacts (189 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● reduced impact on vehicle traffic ● underpass solution best suited to accommodate demands of a growing area
General support (57 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● reduced impacts on travel and surrounding community ● desire to avoid a NAIT-like situation
Improved LRT service (49 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● increased reliability of service ● faster travel speeds ● reduced chance of collisions with vehicle traffic

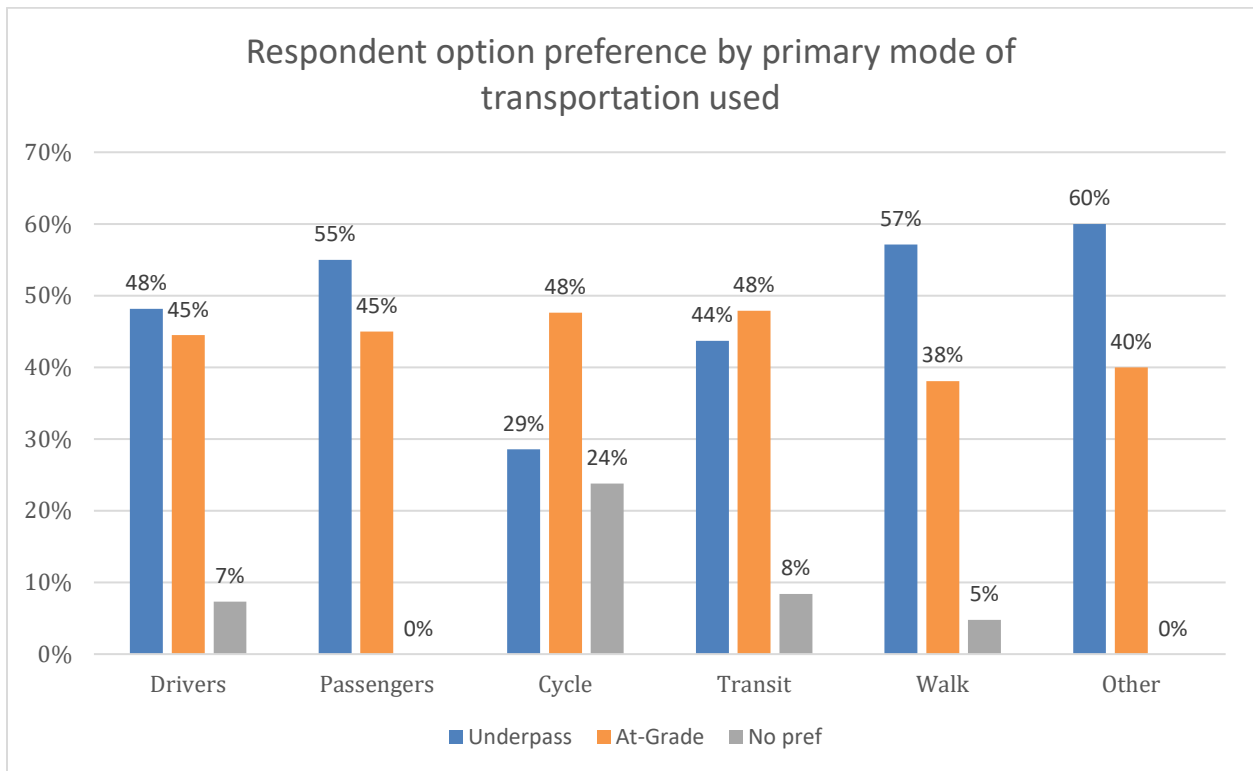
At-grade option (38% of responses)



Comparably less traffic impact than other crossings (92 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● lower traffic volume compared to other crossings ● road can be widened if needed ● primarily commercial and industrial vehicle traffic
Cheaper to build and maintain (86 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● lowest-cost option ● cost savings can be applied to other

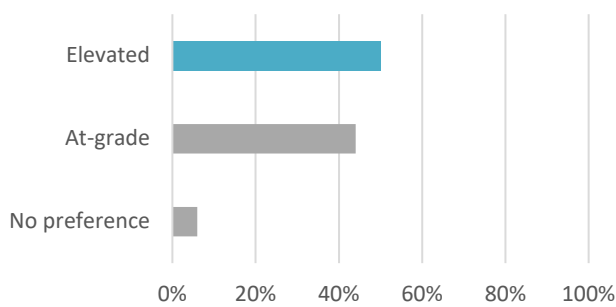
	crossings
General support (44 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support for location and track layout • agreement with City assessment
No preference (4% of responses)	
Benefits and drawbacks to both options (8 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • desire to balance traffic concerns with costs
Insufficient information (5 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • desire for more information on traffic modelling and projected area growth before making a decision

Campbell Road

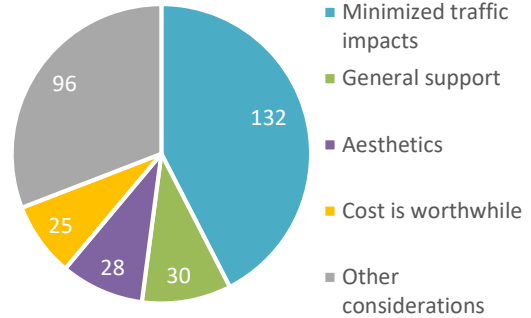


Elevated option (50% of responses)

Percentage of responses by option



Number of comments by theme



Minimized traffic impacts
(132 comments)

- reduced impact on vehicle traffic
- lack of faith in signaling systems and City assessment of traffic impacts

General support
(30 comments)

- desire to build infrastructure that will accommodate requirements of a growing city
- preference for underground or tunnel options

Positive aesthetics
(28 comments)

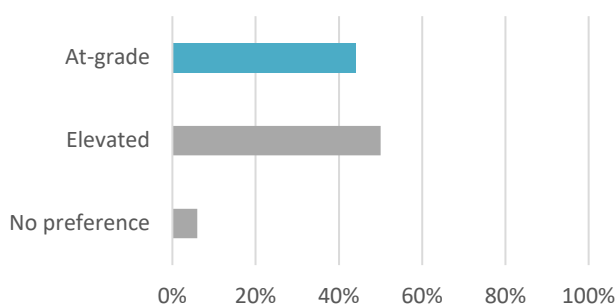
- modern design is visually appealing

Cost is worthwhile
(25 comments)

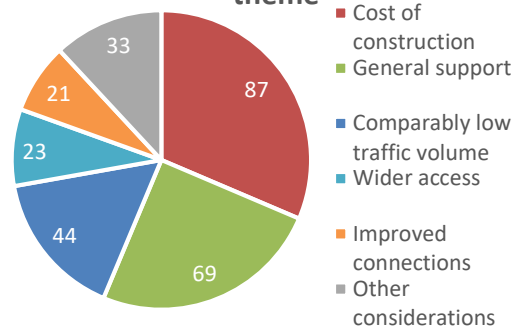
- higher-cost option is worthwhile and will provide better long-term value when St. Albert extension is implemented

At-grade option (44% of responses)

Percentage of responses by option



Number of comments by theme



Cheaper to build and maintain
(87 comments)

- lowest-cost option

General support
(69 comments)

- elevated option not necessary for this crossing

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● future area developments can account for at-grade LRT line ● expediting construction should be the highest priority
Comparably less traffic impact than other crossings (44 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● lower traffic volume compared to other crossings
Wider access (23 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● easiest to access for pedestrians and people with mobility issues
Improved connections between transit modes (21 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● easier transition for pedestrians to transit and between Park and Ride
No preference (6% of responses)	
Insufficient information (9 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● traffic information and diagrams were found to be confusing ● more information on future plans for development of the area needed before a decision can be made
Benefits and drawbacks to both options (6 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● choice dependent on how and when extension to St. Albert will be planned

Other comments

Preference for grade-separated options (161 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● above- or below-grade options preferred for minimizing traffic disruptions and providing increased safety
Begin construction as soon as possible (93 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● prioritize over other projects
Minimize traffic impacts (88 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● options that reduce disruption to vehicle traffic should be prioritized ● traffic flow should not be interrupted by LRT
Development considerations (85 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● complete in phases to allow for sooner use of the LRT line ● stations should be large enough to accommodate future population growth ● put route on old airport grounds ● minimize environmental impact where possible

Additional considerations (84 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● incorporate more Park and Ride lots ● consider noise and potential crime issues when building through existing neighbourhoods ● avoid current Metro Line signalling system
Costs are worth the investment (52 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● higher costs of LRT can be justified if planned to provide long-term value and use ● preferable to pay a higher upfront cost for a system that best serves the city's needs
Learn from previous mistakes (52 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● learn from previous issues faced by existing NAIT and Metro line ● spend more upfront to avoid similar frustrations
Address existing LRT issues first (41 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● address current traffic and signalling issues faced by NAIT and Metro line before proceeding with extension
General opposition to LRT extension (41 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● extension of the LRT system will not provide long-term value

Engagement Summary – In Person

Street Team

To promote the survey and the project as a whole, a small street team was formed that consisted of three engineering students working within LRT projects for the City. They visited locations along the Metro Line NW LRT Extension alignment to encourage people to complete the survey using a provided tablet. If someone did not want to complete the survey with a street team member, they were given a card that directed them to the site so they could complete the survey whenever was convenient for them.

Ward 2 Fun Day

On September 8, 2018, members of the project team participated in the Ward 2 Fun Day. This was an opportunity to share project information and to promote the upcoming public information sessions with residents in the Ward 2 constituency.

Public Information Sessions

On September 13 and 18, 2018, three public information sessions were hosted in the phase 1 (NAIT to Rampart) and phase 2 (Rampart to Campbell Road) areas of the Metro Line NW LRT extension alignment. The public was invited to learn about the project team's recommended design options for each intersection along the alignment. Between the two events, project team members spoke with upwards of 300 attendees. All information was shared through a series of panels and a project fact sheet. Additional information was shared on mid-block crossings, centre-running track, tree removal, and property impacts. In addition to the display panels, attendees were able to view a roll plot of the full alignment and watch a video that showcased the stations and the proposed bridge over Yellowhead Trail and the CN Rail Walker Yard.

The events were highly promoted through a maildrop that circulated over 46,000 'save-the-date' cards to houses, apartments, and businesses spanning across the communities that fall in and around the current and future Metro Line. In addition, roadway signs and social media were used.

Project team members facilitating the sessions recounted the following:

The majority of attendees voiced support for the project, commenting that they would like to see the Metro Line extension proceed as soon as possible and for the entire alignment; if not the entire alignment, attendees would like to see the first phase of construction extend north to the Castle Downs YMCA.

Support was expressed for the recommended grade separations with the exception of the at-grade crossing at the intersection of Castle Downs Road and 153 Avenue. Many attendees voiced a preference for a trenched crossing of the intersection, noting concerns about the potential for significant traffic delays and accidents if the crossing stays at-grade.

Urban style LRT was supported by a majority of respondents for the Metro Line up to Castle Downs Road and 153 Avenue. Several attendees noted that the slower travel speeds would reduce the efficiency of LRT service. At the same time, however, some attendees expressed concerns about the bells and gates associated with 'suburban' style LRT proposed for 153 Avenue; noise impacts to adjacent residences were the primary concern.

Comments were also received on the need for Park and Ride facilities, and concerns about people parking in neighbourhoods or at the Castle Downs YMCA to access the LRT stations if parking facilities are not provided. The need for parking restrictions in neighbourhoods was identified as a possible requirement.

How Public Input Was Used

The fall public information sessions and summer survey were intended to inform the public of the recommendations being presented to Council and gather the public's opinion on these recommendations. The public's opinion of the recommendations will be one of multiple factors considered by Council during the approval process.

Next Steps

Communications and engagement activities for the Concept Validation and Preliminary Engineering phases are now complete.

The project team's proposed concept plan amendments, including grade separation recommendations, will be taken to City Council for approval as part of a **non-statutory public hearing on November 6, 2018**.